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in a Digital World**

The Meaning of Recognition

One of the cornerstones of our organization is recognition. We all thrive on it. With the end of the Toastmasters year at hand, and the last-minute rush to finish and submit our educational achievements before the July deadline, it is time to consider the ninth commitment in the Toastmaster's Promise: *"To adhere to the guidelines and rules for all Toastmasters education and recognition programs."* There are no shortcuts to earning genuine recognition. Recognition that has not been earned in the prescribed manner is not meaningful recognition. To believe there is a way to "beat the system" both demeans the achievement you are claiming and the genuine achievements of others who followed the rules.

Occasionally, the temptation to reach a personal goal clouds one's ability to realize that the value is in completing the task fully and properly; not in receiving the recognition. We must remember our organization's core values of integrity, respect, service and excellence, and apply these values when seeking education or recognition awards.

There are no shortcuts to earning genuine recognition.

Clubs, too, are bound by the ninth promise. Take, for example, the club that has fulfilled all its goals under the Distinguished Club Program in the current program year and so decides to withhold additional member achievements during the year and instead wait to apply the credit toward the next year. I have heard an over-enthusiastic vice president education say, "It gives us a flying start in the new year." But this does not truly represent what the club accomplishes in the coming year. Any recognition that depends on the member achievements of the previous year is not genuinely earned—and it also denies such members the timely recognition they deserve.

The same holds true for districts, as the desire to become Distinguished can occasionally override adherence to the promise. Unfortunately, at times one hears of "paper clubs and paper members" submitted at the eleventh hour to achieve recognition to which the district is not entitled. In such instances, little thought is given to the district leaders who follow—the ones who are left to pick up the pieces.

I urge you all to do the work that truly entitles you to the recognition you are seeking. Such accomplishments are memorable and something to feel proud of. Does an award for something you have not done properly mean anything? Only you can answer that question. Please *"Remember Your Fellow Member"* when submitting your achievements for recognition.

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Clubs around the world find plenty of reasons to celebrate. See how these members had fun in different settings.



Carrington club members in Carrington, North Dakota, bundle up for a photo in the snow while celebrating the club's 25th anniversary.



Members, founders, dignitaries and guests of the Eclectic Dialectics Toastmasters in Cerritos, California, celebrate the club's 35th anniversary.



Hannover Speakers club celebrates its 15th anniversary on the well-known Maschsee lake in Hanover, Germany.



Send your fun club photos to 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.

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▶ MEMBER MOMENT 

Young Technology Professional Rises to the Top

BY MARIAM JEHANGIR

When Maryna Hradovich, CC, CL, joined the digital marketing firm SEMrush in 2011, she was part of a three-person team responsible for setting up the North American division of the company—which at the time was an early-stage startup from Europe—in the United States.

Today Hradovich is the president of SEMrush, and has helped facilitate its massive growth over the past few years, both in revenue and its employee roster. The company is now recognized as a market leader, has more than 400 employees in four countries and boasts big-name clients including eBay, Disney and Overstock.com.

Hradovich is a passionate technology and business professional who continues to make a name for herself and the company. She recently won two awards—based on industry impact, market leadership and company growth—from the American business magazine *SmartCEO*. And she has achieved all this before reaching the age of 30. The Northeast Philly Toastmasters member shares her experience below.

Tell us more about the *SmartCEO* awards.

I won the 2016 Philadelphia Circle of Excellence Award and the 2017 Philadelphia Future 50 Award, which honor the region's accomplished business leaders and the fastest-growing organizations. Winning both awards was more than I expected. It was a great experience not just in terms of winning, but also in terms of enjoying the journey. When you are in the thick of things, you sometimes don't get the opportunity to really take in all the milestones you are reaching.

What kind of work do you do as president of your company?

At SEMrush, the scope of my work includes everything from general operations management to fiscal management to strategic business development. Our niche within the tech industry is digital marketing—our solutions help our users better market themselves online. This is a highly competitive and complex space and we have stayed ahead of the curve. What I like most about this industry is that it continually evolves. There is never a dull moment, and that reflects within our company culture. We are an increasingly flat organization [which means there is little or no middle management between staff and executives] where an entrepreneurial spirit and innovative mindset are job requirements.



Maryna Hradovich accepts the 2016 Philadelphia Circle of Excellence Award for medium-sized companies in the technology sector.

How has Toastmasters benefited you?

I immigrated to the United States from the small nation of Belarus in Eastern Europe on my own in my early 20s, after studying international business at Belarus State Economic University. I didn't speak much English and I was self-conscious about it. I picked up the language fast, but that was not enough. As I grew in my career in the highly visible field of digital marketing, I knew that it was critical for me to build my public speaking skills. I had great ideas and knew what I wanted to say—Toastmasters helped me with the “how.” Thanks to Toastmasters, I am increasingly more comfortable and confident while speaking in public forums. I have also noticed that I communicate much better in one-on-one settings.

Elaborate on your personal mantra, “No job is too big or too small.”

Anyone who has worked in an entrepreneurial culture knows that the learning curve is steep and work demand is high. Often, there is no one to whom you can delegate tasks. What that means is you figure out and do whatever needs to be done without complaining—whether that is taking on a new, unexplored market or driving to the notary public to get a stamp on a document. I truly believe that my success, past or future, is directly tied to how closely I follow this mantra.

Do you have any advice for members?

Trust the Toastmasters process because it works. Those simple, small speeches are very powerful exercises, and they will cumulatively help you with expression, communication and confidence no matter what kind of work you do. Even if you may never need to give a speech to a room full of people, the Toastmasters experience will help you make strides in your field.

Mariam Jehangir is the editorial assistant for the Toastmaster magazine.



REACHING NEW HEIGHTS

Four Toastmasters from different clubs in Cebu conquered Mount Pulag, the third-highest mountain in the Philippines, at 2,922 meters elevation. The group was formed after Jorjames R. Sajulla, ACG, ALB, (Sinulog Toastmasters club) and Daniel Perez, CC, CL, (Taipan Club) successfully climbed Mount Kinabalu, in Sabah, Malaysia, at 4,095.2 meters elevation in 2015. This was the group's second attempt to climb Mount Pulag, and after reaching the summit they were finally able to witness the sea of clouds and beautiful sunrise. From left to right, Sajulla, Perez, Jinky Suarez (PICPA-Cebu Toastmasters club) and Dave Visaya CC, CL, (Cebu South Toastmasters club).

▶ ADVICE FROM THE PROS

The Danger of Vocal Intensity

BY BILL BROWN, DTM

Expressiveness in a speech is best when it is natural and organic. I find it helpful to break it into its various components; that way it is more of a series of techniques that we can employ. Of the nine different dimensions of vocal variety, intensity is the one that can do real damage to your message. (The other eight dimensions are: volume, pitch, pace, pause, emotion, energy, character voices and tonal quality).

In most of the other dimensions, you don't damage your message, you just don't have the greatest effect. If the various techniques to emphasize your message are not fully utilized, your message may

not have as strong an impact, but it can still get through. If you don't have enough energy, your audience may drift away, but they are still only neutral toward you. Intensity, however, has the potential to push them away.

This one is different from all of the other dimensions. Your speech is better if you have the other eight. With intensity, more times than not, your speech is better if you do not have it. If you do use it, do so sporadically. Give your audience a chance to rest.

Yes, intensity can be good—if it is intentional, if it serves a purpose. But all too often it is inherent and constant in your speaking style, and that creates tension in your audience's mind. They may be think-

ing, "I don't like this message." Or worse, "I don't like this person."

Intensity has its place, but it does have its dark side. Be aware of its negative potential. Be alert to its possible presence in your speeches. Be prepared to make any changes that might be necessary in your speaking style to moderate or eliminate it.

This article was reprinted from Bill Brown's Speech Delivery Tips email series.

Bill Brown, DTM, is a Speech Delivery Coach from Las Vegas and a member of Powerhouse Pros, which specializes in observational humor. Learn more by visiting www.billbrownspeechcoach.com.

▶ MEET MY MENTOR 

Ian Cunliffe, CC

BY MARY NESFIELD

If not for the encouragement of Ian Cunliffe, of West Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, Stefano Cossalter’s story may not have ended as happily.

Cossalter was 32, with a wife and child, when he faced financial disaster. His business investment in a manufacturing company, along with his life savings, went up in smoke—literally—when a fire consumed the entire plant. With the prospect of building a new company, Cossalter lacked the confidence and courage to talk face-to-face to gain new clients. His father, once a Toastmaster, recommended he join a club. “I was a desperate man,” Cossalter says, “the first time I walked into my first meeting.”

How did that go?

I decided to return to the Burnaby Toasters club and participate in Table Topics! When the time came, I raised my hand and walked to the front of the room. When I heard the question, I was elated because I knew how to answer it. I stepped forward confidently and opened my mouth to speak ... but nothing came out. And then I babbled something unrecognizable. I started to sweat, turned red and sat down humiliated. I vowed never to return.

The next week the phone rang. It was Mel, a member, asking why I missed the meeting. Mel convinced me to return, and later, to join.

Much later, I met Ian at another club and watched as he delivered insightful speaker evaluations. I thought if I had an ounce of the skill he had, there would be no limit to what I could achieve. I asked him to mentor me; he agreed.



Stefano Cossalter, DTM, left, Tall Tales Champion, and Ian Cunliffe

How did he help you?

Of all the countless hours Ian spent helping me hone a winning attitude ... the best advice was to give as much as I can to others. And that inspired me to mentor others just as selflessly as he has mentored me. I have more confidence today than ever before. I’ve recovered financially and my new electronics business grows daily. It makes me realize how important the mentoring process is in Toastmasters, especially for those who feel as vulnerable as I once felt. I owe it all to Toastmasters and my mentors.

Mary Nesfield is the associate editor for *Toastmaster magazine*.

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.

▶ VISITING A CLUB WHILE TRAVELING

From Canada to India

Sukhbir Singh Hanspal, center, from Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, poses with members of the ISC Bhopal Toastmasters International club in Bhopal, India. Hanspal contacted the club before his vacation to India and in turn was invited to its 200th anniversary meeting. Pictured are awards for the members as mementos for the special occasion. “I wanted to observe and compare their meetings with those we have in District 86,” Hanspal says. “Amazingly, I found them to be exactly the same. All speeches were done in English (with good command of the English language) and the subject matters (stories and humor) were excellent.” Hanspal finished his visit by giving an impromptu speech.



► ADVICE FROM MEMBERS

How to Deliver a Speech ... Without Notes

BY WILLIAM NEUMAN, ACG

You just gave your fourth speech and you're still using notes. Maybe it was a great speech; you might have even received a ribbon for "Most Improved" or "Best Speaker." Could it have been better? Absolutely! If you review the instructions in your Toastmasters manuals, they encourage you to deliver your speeches without referring to notes.

Why is that so important? There are several reasons. Eye contact, rhythm, confidence and connection with the audience are all affected when you read your speech. And you're probably not going to get far in speech contests if you have to rely on written notes.

Is memorization the answer? No. It is much harder than you might think to memorize a seven-minute speech. I have given 53 speeches without notes, and only one was memorized—and that was the worst speech I have ever delivered. I should not have even tried. I delivered it with so many awkward pauses as I fumbled, and tried to recover, that I failed to notice that the red timing light had come on. When the timer began frantically waving the dreaded red card, I knew I was running out of time. I spoke the next two sentences so fast that I confused everyone. And then I abruptly stopped speaking. Disaster.



So how do you do it? Here are some ideas.

1. Decide on a subject.
2. Write down a working title.
3. Jot down the key points of your speech.
4. Reduce each point to one word.
5. Put the words in logical order so that the speech flows with a rhythm that makes sense.

Each word will become a "trigger" that will remind you of each point you want to discuss in your speech. If you hear a short story you can pretty well repeat that story just about the way you heard it, not word-for-word, but in a way that makes sense. Just remember six or seven key words, each of which will serve to remind you, collectively, of your speech "story." If you try to speak about more points than that, your speech will confuse many of your listeners.

Still not convinced that you can speak without notes? Let me issue a challenge. Think of it as an extended version of Table Topics. I will come up with a few words that I believe you will immediately be able to tell a five-minute story about.

Here they are: Cinderella and Robin Hood.

Can you do it? Of course you can, if you know the stories. Even though you haven't memorized the stories word-for-word, you can summarize each one without difficulty.

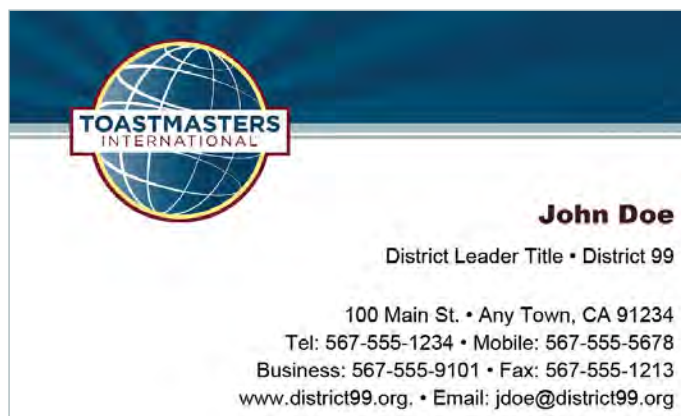
Know the stories that make up your next speech, and let the trigger words remind you of the stories. You'll be able to deliver your speech—without notes—and then collect the Best Speaker ribbon. **T**

William Neuman, CL, ACG, is a member of Chats Toastmasters club in Scottsdale, Arizona and Talk of the Town Toastmasters in Batavia, Illinois. He has been a Toastmaster since 2013.

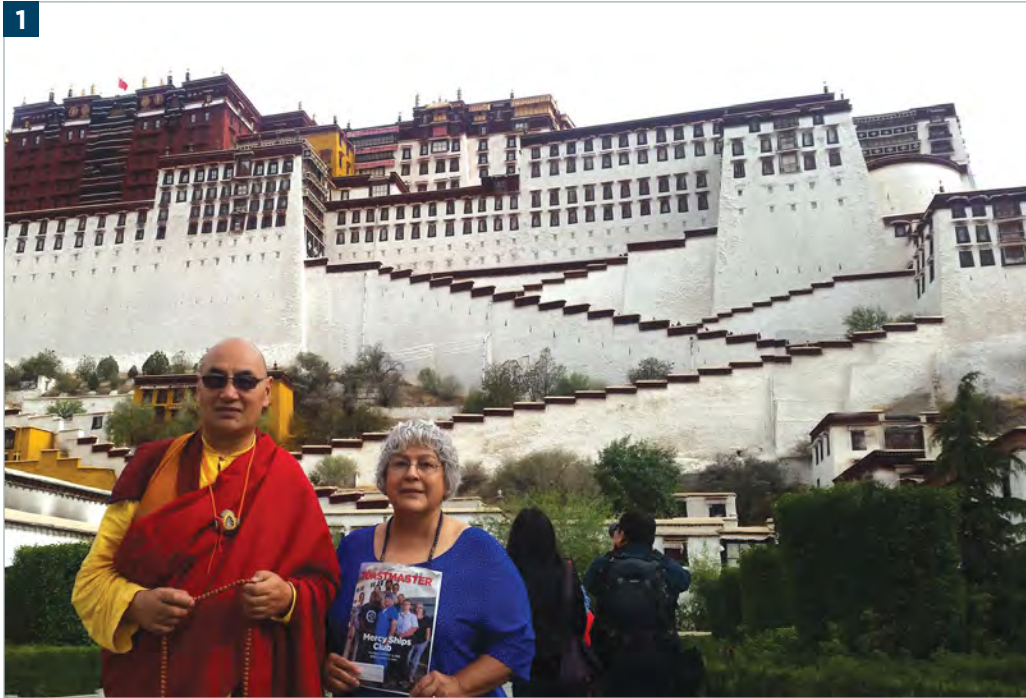
► NEWS FROM TI

Look Professional with Branded Business Cards

As members, you have the opportunity to create your own Toastmasters International branded business cards! Make a lasting impression at your next club meeting, open house or event. Use the branded business card template to create your cards and hand them to prospective members so they can easily contact you. Go to www.toastmasters.org/Resources/Club-Business-Cards to access the template. For questions regarding business cards, please email brand@toastmasters.org.



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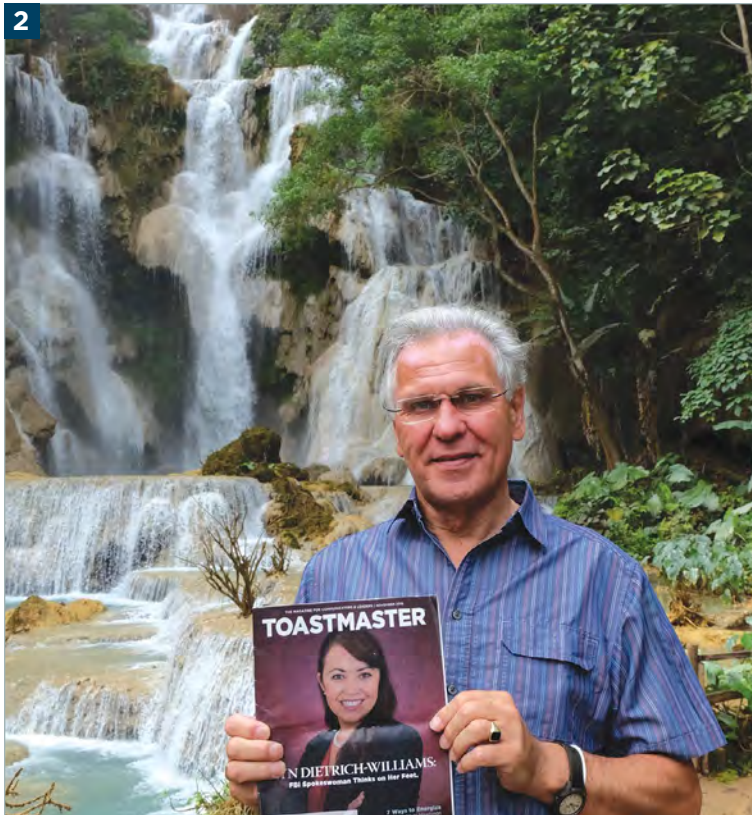
1 | ARLENE JAYME, DTM, from Palm Bay, Florida, stands with a monk in front of Potala Palace in Lhasa, Tibet.

2 | BOB NISBET, DTM, from Guildford, United Kingdom, at Kuang Si Falls in Luang Prabang, Laos.

3 | MEMONA ABUOBAIDA, from East Riffa, Bahrain, poses in front of the Great Pyramid of Giza in Cairo, Egypt.

4 | RAVI PATIL, CC, CL, from Doha, Qatar, poses in the Dubai Miracle Garden, a flower garden located in the United Arab Emirates.

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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. Bon voyage!

Unity Amid Diversity

Learning how to address controversial topics appropriately.

BY MITCH MIRKIN, CTM

It was at our January 18 club meeting, a couple of days before the inauguration of U.S. President Donald Trump, that the thought hit me: Our country, the United States, had just been through one of the most rancorous, divisive political election seasons in recent memory. Yet I couldn't recall a single incident when political tensions and divisions had bubbled to the surface during our meetings.

It's not that we're a politically monolithic club, by any means. I haven't taken a poll, but I imagine our 30 or so members are probably split down the middle in terms of being liberal or conservative, Democrat or Republican. And I'm sure we have a few Independents, too.

We are diverse in just about every other way, as well: Our Baltimore, Maryland, club has young adults and octogenarians. Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, Hindus and Jews, among others (and probably a few folks who don't identify with any formal religion). Doctors and blue-collar workers. Executives and students. People who trace their ancestry back to Africa, Asia, Europe or South America. Some who were born and raised right here in Baltimore and others who arrived in the U.S. from lands far away only a few years ago.

Yet, somehow we all come together every other Wednesday night united in purpose and spirit. We are a true reflection, I believe, of the melting pot that is America.

The topics of our speeches and presentations, as at most Toastmasters clubs, are themselves diverse. And yes, they do occasionally touch on politics. For example, one member recently brought up Colin Kaepernick, the National Football League quarterback who sparked wide controversy in the U.S. by not standing during the national anthem, as an expression of protest against racial injustice. Talk about hot topics! But this member, as is typical in our club, displayed discretion and good judgment. He made his point appropri-



The author's Toastmasters club is a widely diverse group that remains unified when speaking about controversial topics.

ately, without inciting debate—or arguments—and without alienating anyone in his audience, regardless of where they may have stood on the issue.

And just the other night, our Table Topicsmaster made a reference to President Trump in his introduction. In some settings, just mentioning the new president's name—even in a neutral context—seems enough to set off a ruckus. I've seen it happen in the workplace and at family gatherings. But notably, and thankfully, no such scene ensued at our meeting. Maybe the Toastmasters format and culture engender an extra degree of tolerance, respect, civility and open-mindedness to topics of discussion.

Toastmasters International on the whole does not shy away from controversy. The rules don't say to steer clear of politics, sex and religion, although many clubs, especially in countries outside North America, choose to do so. Learning how to address controversial topics appropriately and effectively is a valuable part of a public speaker's education. At the same time, individual clubs may establish their own guidelines to suit their particular situations.

In an excellent article that appeared in this magazine in April 2012—titled “You’re Speaking About *What?!?*”—Ruth Nasrullah, ACB, ALB, of Texas offered tips on “how to make controversial speech topics work for any audience.” Her bottom-line message: “Don’t let sensitive topics scare you off. The Toastmasters program can help you master speaking about them.”

I hope, for the good of my country, that our divisions heal. Politics will always ignite strong passions and vigorous debate. As long as those debates stay within the realm of respectful discourse—and do not lead to violence—it's all good. That's what democracy and freedom are all about.

Society at large can learn from Toastmasters. We can be diverse, in our backgrounds and our views, but unified. We can sound different notes, yet be in harmony. I am proud of my club because it embodies this quality. As Toastmasters, let's spread this mindset. Perhaps it's what the world needs most. ■

MITCH MIRKIN, CTM, is a member of *Randallstown Network Toastmasters in Baltimore, Maryland.*

Pathways Off to a Strong Start

District 57 members praise the new learning experience and its “digital transformation.”

BY PAUL STERMAN

Shyam Nath, ACB, recently started working in the Pathways learning experience. As the director of technology integrations for GE Digital—the software arm of General Electric—in San Ramon, California, he is a savvy judge of all things technological.

Happily, when it comes to Toastmasters’ new education program, Nath’s verdict is a positive one. He offers high praise for Base Camp, Pathways’ online learning management system. The “self-service” aspect of Base Camp makes the education process more efficient, he says, because the system guides you through the Pathways journey step by step, providing many useful learning tools along the way.

In a world of ever-advancing technology, the new learning experience puts the



“Pathways is the digital transformation of Toastmasters.”

—SHYAM NATH, ACB

organization on the right track for the future, says Nath. “Pathways is the digital transformation of Toastmasters,” he says.

Nath, who belongs to a General Electric corporate club, is a member of District 57 in Northern California, the first district eligible to enroll in Pathways. In February, Toastmasters International began a three-district pilot program: After District 57 started off the program that month, District 27 in the Washington, D.C., area followed in March, and District 51 in Malaysia was scheduled to start next.

In late July, Pathways is scheduled to launch in Region 14, the start of a phased rollout to regions around the world. Pathways education materials will be translated into the eight non-English languages supported by Toastmasters International: Arabic, French, German, Japanese, Portuguese, Simplified Chinese, Spanish and Traditional Chinese. To see the order in which regions will roll out and translated materials will be available, view the rollout schedule on the Pathways learning experience webpage: www.toastmasters.org/Pathways.

First Impressions

District 57 members participating in the pilot have many good things to say about Pathways. Among those working in the program is George Marshall, DTM, a dedicated Pathways volunteer from the start. The 14-year Toastmaster, who is working in the **Presentation Mastery** path, says he is impressed by the program’s instructional design. The projects are well-structured, engaging and relevant to members’ needs, he says.



“I think the likely result will be to raise the quality of mentoring consistently across clubs.”

—GEORGE MARSHALL, DTM

“I think it shows a lot of thought went into the development of Pathways,” says Marshall, a retired marketing executive. “When you dig into it, you can see that the Pathway design team drew heavily on the current education program, but also added a lot of new projects that did not exist before, like ones on social media, podcasting and blogging.” He also appreciates the mobile accessibility of the program, noting that he’s worked in Pathways on a computer and a tablet.

While Marshall is a veteran Toastmaster, Annie Li is a new member. She joined at just about the time Pathways rolled out in District 57, so this is the only education program she’s known



in Toastmasters. “I think it’s great,” she says.

A member of two clubs, Li says the Pathways Assessment was valuable. When members first enroll in the program they take an assessment, in which they answer a series of questions about their skills and goals. Based on their answers, they receive a recommendation for the best path to work in, although they are not required to choose that one. (The program has 10 paths—with titles like **Motivational Strategies, Leadership Development** and **Persuasive Influence**—and a minimum of 14 projects in each path.) Li is working in the path recommended from her assessment results: **Innovative Planning**.

“We know that Toastmasters is incredibly vital to all sorts of communication, but being able to pinpoint exactly what you’re trying to accomplish with your public speaking at least gives you a road map, and a starting point, so you can develop [those skills] and add on to them along the way,” says Li, who works in the financial industry.

Club Visits

Pathways Guides and Ambassadors—two member-volunteer groups who help other members learn about Pathways—team up to visit clubs and explain how the program works and the many ways members can benefit from it. Marshall is a District 57 Pathways Guide and also serves as its Pathways Guide Coordinator. He says

club visits went well in the district, with members responding enthusiastically to the Pathways presentations.

“It’s been a more positive response than what I expected,” says Marshall, who is also an Ambassador. “I expected more of the ‘Why do we have to change?’ feedback.”

A member of three clubs—including an online club—Marshall says one of the highlights of the new education program



The Pathways Assessment “gives you a road map, and a starting point, so you can develop [particular skills] and add on to them along the way.”

—ANNIE LI

is an improved mentoring program, which includes a series of mentoring-focused projects. “I think the likely result will be to raise the quality of mentoring consistently across clubs,” he says.

Marshall is also the lead producer of District 57’s own television program, *Toastmaster Time*, where members give speeches and receive evaluations, just like in club meetings. On a recent episode of the 20-year-old program, Nath delivered a Pathways speech—a first for *Toastmaster Time*. His speech was from the “Using Descriptive Language” project, an elective in several of the paths. Nath, who is working in the **Dynamic Leadership** path, spoke about demystifying the “internet of things.” Marshall was his evaluator. (To watch the episode, go to bit.ly/2pIDMHF.)

Marshall and Nath—who is also a Pathways Guide—note that although most District 57 members are pleased with what they’ve seen of the Pathways projects, many still want to work in the current education program for a while, eager to complete education awards they are working toward. The current and new programs will run concurrently for a minimum of 24 months after all districts have been included in the program rollout.

A number of District 57 members talked about their positive Pathways experience in a testimonials video. (Watch it at [www.toastmasters.org/Pathways Testimonials](http://www.toastmasters.org/Pathways-Testimonials).) In the video, Patricia Gray, DTM, says, “What I like best about Pathways is the fact that it’s much more customized to what you may want to get out of Toastmasters, what your goals are.”

Naomi Takeuchi, DTM, adds, “There are 10 different paths. It’s amazing how much opportunity there is for the future.”

To learn more about Pathways, visit www.toastmasters.org/Pathways. The webpage includes FAQs as well as information about Pathways’ history, Base Camp and the role of member volunteers. **T**

Paul Sterman is senior editor for *Toastmaster magazine*.

Social Network Etiquette

New rules for minding your manners in a digital world.

BY SCOTT STEINBERG

Want to enjoy a more positive online experience, project a more professional image and form more meaningful relationships via digital channels? Thankfully, all it takes to communicate more effectively online is just a little more mindfulness and forethought, as I discovered while researching my new book *Netiquette Essentials: New Rules for Minding Your Manners in a Digital World*.

The following hints and tips will help you to more successfully engage others via high-tech channels and put your best foot forward online.

What's OK to Share?

- **Sharing extremely opinionated viewpoints (e.g., political leanings or thoughts on controversial topics) can be a lightning rod online.** Think twice before “liking” these types of status updates or posting such opinions; they can incite and aggravate others and live on in perpetuity. If you feel the need to express your opinions, consider confining such communications to individual friends or specific groups. Ultimately, it's important to remember: If you don't have anything nice to say, perhaps it's best left unsaid.
- **Avoid posting embarrassing or negative photos of yourself.** Remember: Images you share may be taken at face value and/or viewed as representative of your character—and they live on the internet forever. All images should show respect; context is often lost online, and even fun and goofy shots may send the wrong message. Always err on the side of caution if you're uncertain how others may interpret your photos or posts.

- **Never post photos of others without first asking permission.** Consider what messages the photos convey about the individuals being portrayed, and also how others may perceive them.

- **Relationships or personal drama is best kept private.** If you cannot resist the urge to share, do so sparingly—and in the most vague, unspecific terms as possible—for the sake of those uninterested or unwilling to participate. No information should be shared about other individuals without their permission.

- **Uncomfortable or revealing personal information should be shared sparingly,** if at all, and—unless acquaintances have indicated that they're comfortable viewing this content—only with others you know in real life.

- **To minimize risks of crime, vandalism or identity theft, never share intimate personal details online**—including birthdates, phone numbers, addresses, schools or hometowns. Never let others know when you'll be away from home, especially for any given length of time, for instance while on vacation.

- **Avoid posting on social networks unless you have a tight grasp over your privacy settings** and are completely comfortable sharing your updates with the group.

- **Before connecting with work colleagues on social networks, consider if you'd still want to be connected to them if you ever leave the position.** In addition, remember that connecting with coworkers online may expose you, or

them, to information and influences that may make either party uncomfortable; be certain to understand the risk you're taking in doing so. Prior to requesting or accepting connections from colleagues, think about material you're apt to share—is it appropriate?

Tone of Voice and Attitude

- **Professionalism is imperative.** If you wouldn't say it in a social or work setting, don't say it online. Politeness and respect are vital: Always be considerate of others, and treat them the way you'd wish to be treated. Maintain a positive tone and attitude. Negativity, complaints and condescending messages reflect poorly on the poster.

- **Be advised that personality, conversational nuances and subtle shifts in tone may be lost in translation.** Individual users interpret messages differently. Consider how posts can be read and interpreted before sending.

- **Poor spelling, punctuation, grammar and word choice also reflect poorly on you**—proofread all communications before sending. Avoid shorthand, abbreviations and online slang.

- **Understand that various online forums (social networks, blogs and digital communities) have their own rules of conduct, social norms and methods of interaction.** Before using one, take a moment to step back and observe how interactions take place so you can discern appropriate rules of posting, sharing and behavior.



If you wouldn't say it in a social or work setting, don't say it online.

■ **Never forget: Despite their appearance of intimacy, social networks and online forums are among the most public of spaces.** It's important to conduct yourself on them as you would in any shared setting.

■ **Be a good "go-to" resource.** When posting online, whether curating others' content or creating your own, make sure the material you share is relevant and useful to your connections. To generate goodwill and service to others, always ask yourself before posting: What's in it for *them*?

■ **To effectively engage others, also ask these questions before posting: Is what's being shared fun and imaginative?** Is it energetic and enthusiastic? Does it draw attention with cool and exciting details? The goal should be to make content inviting, interactive and accessible—it should encourage others to interact with you. Ask questions, start conversations and otherwise incentivize connections to generate and share dialogue.

Networking, Selling and Job Hunting Online

With rare exceptions, if a prospective online contact wanted to be pitched, you would already have their email address.

It is inappropriate to contact your prospects on a social network with a direct sales pitch. Instead, look for ways to help support an organization, effort, topic or project that these individuals support, and present an offer to help. Or, find other positive ways to incentivize interaction and opportunities to get to know one another. For example, start a conversation by offering to feature your online contact on your company blog or begin the process of relationship building by sending a prospect a free copy of your company's latest book.

■ **Under no circumstance should you pitch a product, service or prospective business opportunity on someone else's public wall or profile.** Some users will, however, provide professional contact information on their public profile. It may be acceptable in some cases to use it to contact them, although reaching out via any personal contact information is not.

■ **If you send an email, keep the message short and quickly get to the point.** Include a general summary and key questions or queries in the first few lines. Also include your name and contact information, and be respectful with email and message signatures.

■ **Automatic email signatures are OK, but they shouldn't be overly intrusive.** A name, job title/business name, address, email address and phone number will get your point across. Anything more is overkill (inspirational quotes and rainbow colors included). Once you get a response to your email, delete your signature before your next response to keep the same information from needlessly repeating multiple times.

■ **More employers are turning to online search engines to research prospective partners and hires.** First impressions say a lot. Be aware of the results that come up for your name, including potentially damaging or embarrassing content and links. You can build and maintain a positive online reputation by posting helpful, high-quality content that is of service to others. Do so frequently, so as to surface your pieces more visibly in online search results.

■ **When applying for employment, always review prospective employers' rules for submission.** Resumes should include keywords (specific phrases frequently used to denote job titles and descriptions, professional experience and technical terms when performing online queries) which can give you greater visibility in search results. Keywords (e.g., "systems administrator" vs. "IT expert") are often found in the job description itself. ■

Scott Steinberg is a professional speaker and author. His most recent book is *Netiquette Essentials: New Rules for Minding Your Manners in a Digital World*. Learn more about him at www.AKeynoteSpeaker.com.

HOW TO

Hook

YOUR AUDIENCE IN 30 SECONDS

Learn to create catchy speech openings from top contest winners.

BY LISA B. MARSHALL, CTM

“Have you ever been surprised to find out you weren’t as good or as smart as you thought?” That’s the first sentence from my book, *Smart Talk*. The goal? To make an immediate connection with the reader. It’s the same goal I have for speeches. Powerful opening words, when combined with strong stage presence, can seductively draw the audience in, cleverly hint at the topic and make an emotional connection with the audience.

That’s why, when preparing a keynote speech, I spend 10 times more time developing and practicing the opener than any other part of the speech.

You only have seconds to make a powerful first impression on the audience. And if you don’t hook them, you’ve lost them.

Toastmasters World Champions of Public Speaking are experts at creatively grabbing attention and winning over audiences at the start of their speeches. By analyzing their methods and techniques, and also what could go wrong with them, you can create even stronger openings to impress your audience.

Visual Humor

Darren Tay,
2016 World Champion, Singapore:
“Outsmart; Outlast”

For a full eight seconds Tay says nothing; he just looks around the room confidently. Then he pulls out a pair of white underwear, slides them over his suit’s pant legs and stands there, arms akimbo, staring intensely. After 25 seconds of silence he finally shouts, “Hey, loser, how do you like your new school uniform? I think it looks great on you.” After a moment he explains to the stunned listeners, “Those were the words of my high school bully, Greg UMBERFIELD.”

Why does it work? First, the underwear is unexpected and inherently funny. Second, silently pulling white underwear over dark suit pants creates an unexpected sight gag. It produces laughter, contrast and suspense—*why is he doing that?* Then the startling first words increase the mystery. Finally the tension is released when the audience realizes Tay is talking about being bullied. All these steps together masterfully set the stage, making the audience receptive to the speech’s powerful message: We are our own worst bullies.

But visual humor is tricky. It needs to be thought-provoking, not offensive. What you think is funny might not be universally understood, or even considered funny. Also, it requires prolonged *confident* silence; if the speaker seems uncertain, the audience will be uncomfortable. They may start to worry and wonder—*has something gone wrong?* Finally, the presence of a funny prop can be quite distracting if not presented and removed from sight at exactly the right times. Yes, Tay did everything just right. But this kind of opener takes careful planning, comedic skill and immense poise.



Demonstration

Mohammed Qahtani,
2015 World Champion, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia:
 “The Power of Words”

He walks onstage, puts a cigarette in his mouth ... then looks up as if noticing the audience and says, “What?” As the audience laughs, he continues. “Oh, you all think smoking kills? Ha-ha, let me tell you something. Do you know that the amount of people dying from diabetes are three times as many [as the] people dying from smoking? Yet if I pulled out a Snickers bar, nobody would say anything.” He continues by saying that faulty DNA is the leading cause of lung cancer, not smoking. And then surprises us when he admits that he made *all* of that up!

Qahtani uses fabricated statistics, along with visual humor, to creatively demonstrate his point—which has nothing to do with diabetes or smoking. His topic? The persuasive power of words. Had he just come onstage and said, “Your words have power,” the audience would have yawned—instead, the audience *experiences* the main idea and is primed to listen. That’s the power of a demonstration.

However, demonstrations can be risky—particularly at the beginning of a speech and if they involve the use of props. Even if you sufficiently rehearse, unsettled nerves can cause mistakes in execution, causing the demonstration to either take too long or fail entirely. It is difficult, if not impossible, to recover from a failed opening demonstration.

Comparison

Dananjaya Hettiarachchi,
2014 World Champion, Nawala Rajagiriya, Sri Lanka:
 “I See Something”

He walks onstage with a red rose in his pocket, then takes it out, smells it and says, “You and I are not very different from this flower. Just like this flower is unique, you are unique.”

One danger of comparisons is taking them too far. In fact, the ancient Romans had a saying: “All analogies limp.”

Technically, Hettiarachchi seamlessly integrates two methods: comparison and prop. Comparisons help audience members quickly understand abstract or complex ideas by connecting those ideas to what they already know, and props create intrigue and interest. The audience members wonder, Why does he have a flower? In this case, his response to that unspoken



Ryan Avery



Presiyan Vasilev

question is a comparison, which in turn heightens the appeal. Had he used only words rather than the additional prop for reinforcement, the comparison wouldn’t have been as strong.

One danger of comparisons is taking them too far. In fact, the ancient Romans had a saying: “All analogies limp.” None are perfect, so when speech-making, stick to one or two key comparative elements. Extending the comparison too far can weaken the speech.

Quasi Chiasmus, and Universal Question

Presiyan Vasilev,
2013 World Champion, Chicago, Illinois:
 “Changed by a Tire”

“The steering wheel jerked. I tried to keep the car in control. That night in Chicago ... a flat tire changed me ... Mr. Contest Chair, Toastmasters and guests, have you ever done anything stupid?”

Chiasmus is a reversal of words in two or more parallel phrases. The most famous example? Former U.S. President John F. Kennedy’s “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.” Why is Vasilev’s phrase a quasi chiasmus? Because the audience expects him to say, “I changed a tire,” not “a tire changed me.” That’s what makes this phrase so appealing and memorable. It’s an unexpected reversal of the usual order of those particular words.

A well-executed rhetorical chiasmus requires the reversal to be obvious, which often means the words slightly change in meaning. For example, notice how the word “power” changes in this quote from former U.S. President Bill Clinton, “People the world over have always been more impressed by the power of our example than by the example of our power.”

To add even more strength, Vasilev follows the quasi chiasmus with a universal question, which allows the audience to put themselves into the situation. Not everyone has experienced a tire blowout, but everyone has done something stupid. If a universal question is crafted well—thoughtful phrasing is the key—it will be relevant to everyone in the audience and it won’t feel gratuitous.



Dananjaya Hettiarachchi



Josephine Lee



Mohammed Qahtani



Darren Tay

Preview Flashback

Ryan Avery,
2012 World Champion, Portland, Oregon:
“Trust Is a Must”

First, Avery paints the scene: He’s at the altar, about to answer the most important question of his life—“Do you promise ...” Then he flashes back to his high school days and the false promises he made to his mother. As the story of his life unfolds, he leads us back to his wedding, and at the end we hear his answer.

We’ve all seen flashbacks in movies. Why does it work in a speech? For the same reason movie directors do it: You start on a high note of action, creating immediate suspense. And the structure requires a return to the beginning at the end, which naturally creates a satisfying circle of closure.

However, flashbacks can be risky because an audience may not notice that a flashback has occurred and they may get confused. It’s critical to say and show that the time frame has shifted. Avery solves this problem by physically stepping back on the stage while saying, “Rewind like an old-school VHS tape.”

Quotation

Josephine Lee,
3rd place in the 2016 World Championship,
Santa Ana, California:
“I Will Be There”

Lee didn’t win the 2016 championship, but her speech offers another example of a strong and creative opening. She starts by speaking slowly and with emotion. “I ... will be there.” Those four words can help you make a friend.”

She highlights the importance of these words by making that phrase the title *and* by repeating it throughout the speech. Lee’s

opening shows that quotations at the beginning of a speech don’t have to be from literature. They can be from someone you know, or from the news, or from an authority or celebrity. Her opening also demonstrates that quotes need to be delivered in a natural, conversational manner, with direct eye contact.

What typically goes wrong? If a quotation is too long or has a complicated word structure, it can be difficult for an audience to understand. They won’t get it. Or if the quote is read, it forces the speaker to lose eye contact and connection. Finally, some people choose a quote that’s meaningful to them but not necessarily to the listeners, so it’s important to ensure that the quote is relevant to your audience.

One Size Does Not Fit All

It’s important to notice that all these speakers chose different primary techniques and usually combined several methods for the greatest impact. And, very likely, each speech took several weeks to initially craft, and required multiple deliveries and modifications to refine these excellent openings. The goal for you is to use these examples as starting points for your own creativity. By understanding why these openings work, and what can go wrong, you’ll be better equipped to develop your own winning opening. ■

Lisa B. Marshall, CTM, is a communications expert who delivers consulting and workshops, the author of *Smart Talk and Ace Your Interview*, and host of the *Public Speaker and Smart Talk* podcasts. Learn more at www.lisabmarshall.com.

Contest Life Lessons: You Don't Have to Win to Win

A trophy is only one of many rewards for speech contestants.

BY JENNIFER L. BLANCK, DTM,
AND LÁSZLÓ (LACI) SZÜCS, ACB

Mr. Szücs, I have good news and bad news for you.”

With those words, Laci Szücs, ACB, started his 2016 semifinal speech in front of the International Convention audience in Washington, D.C. He didn't know it yet, but it was the beginning of the end of his contest journey—a six-month adventure of speaking, meeting people and learning that took him to six countries.

After winning the club portion of the International Speech Contest at Skylarks Toastmasters club in Budapest, Hungary, Szücs continued to win at the area competition in Budapest; the division level in Vienna, Austria; and the district contest in Timișoara, Romania. Like other competitors continuing to the International Speech Contest semifinals at the convention, Szücs took his speech on the road to test his message and fine-tune his delivery. In addition to practicing at other Hungarian clubs, he spoke to a club in Berlin, Germany, and at several events in London. He then flew to the United States before the convention and spoke at three clubs in Virginia. Along the way, he worked with his mentor and a team of supporters. He also received advice from 2000 Toastmasters World Champion of Public Speaking Ed Tate.

After all that work, you might think Szücs was devastated when his journey ended at the semifinals. But something happened during this whole process, and Szücs and many other contestants will tell you that even though they didn't win the competition, they did indeed win a great deal from the experience.

The moments when we feel connected matter the most

Even compared to when Szücs was competing on the Slovakia national boxing team, those six months leading up to the semifinals—filled with successes, failures and obstacles—comprised the most intense period of his life. He says, “One day, I felt like the king of the world. The next, I felt like my speeches and I barely mattered.” At first, the second feeling dominated. Then he started to appreciate the moments when he faced big and unknown challenges, like speaking in front of 700 people at the district contest. Szücs, who joined Toastmasters in 2013 to cope with his then-new position leading 40 engineers, learned to channel the overwhelming emotions and sensations—fear, stress, adrenaline, excitement, encouragement and more—into his speech to connect with others and drive his message home. The moments he remembers most are when he felt that connection with others—even with himself.

The competition isn't with other speakers; it's with your own brain

Leading up to the 2012 International Speech Contest semifinals, Carol Carter, DTM, a member of three clubs in British Columbia, Canada, vowed to never again participate in a speech competition. Before joining Toastmasters, she had a debilitating fear of being judged—she had always played it safe and waited to feel “ready” and “worthy.” Speech contests changed this.

Six months of crafting and delivering the same seven-minute speech and wel-

coming all feedback helped her discover new strengths. During this period, she also persevered through whiplash, a concussion and the death of her father. Then, one week before the semifinals, her stammer returned along with searing self-doubt. Pushing past this new level of fear was worth it, says Carter, a workplace communication and leadership trainer.

Szücs learned to channel the overwhelming emotions and sensations ... into his speech to connect with others and drive his message home.

“I have only moved forward and grown when I've taken a deep breath and a leap of faith, no matter how unprepared or unworthy I felt.” When asked after the semifinals if she would compete again, her immediate answer was, “Yes! Of course!”

You don't have to wish for others to fail for you to win

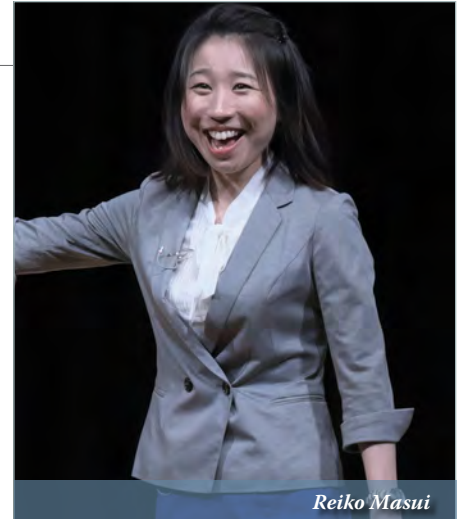
As a former U.S. Marine, Joel Dawson, DTM, from Evangeline Toastmasters in Lafayette, Louisiana, excelled at mental toughness. He says, “I was totally prepared for the pressure of competing for the world title.” Approaching the 2016 semifinals at the convention, he thought of his fellow competitors as “enemies.”



Laci Szücs



Joel Dawson



Reiko Masui

However, when everyone arrived for the contest briefing, their “war faces” weren’t that of people preparing for battle. They were full of smiles. Everyone became friends. On the night of the competition, nothing had changed: “It wasn’t like any competition or battle I knew. Everyone was still friendly. The handshakes we exchanged the night before became hugs!”

Dawson genuinely wanted everyone to do well and was actually cheering for others. “I was able to enjoy watching friends compete at the highest level. It’s a memory as well as a lesson I will cherish for the rest of my life!”

Speaking to help others

Reiko Masui, CC, CL, from Tokyo, Japan, received an email after she won at the district level of the 2016 contest. The writer of the message said Masui’s speech inspired his mentee to pursue her dream of studying English in the United States. The mentee was about to give up until she heard Masui’s speech at the district conference. The email changed Masui’s understanding of public speaking, because she realized the only reason to give a speech is to help someone.

“It’s not about winning or even being confident. It’s about giving,” she says. “There is always someone who needs to hear your speech. Your mission is to believe that and uplift that person.”

The more we give, the more we receive

During his journey to the 2016 semifinals, Chad Murray, CC, CL, of Freeport, New York, spoke at a different Toastmasters club every night and was constantly

tweaking and rehearsing his speech. He learned that the days when he most wanted to stop were some of the most important ones. “There were days when I wanted to say, ‘I’m staying home tonight,’” Murray recalls. It was on those days when people would tell him how much his speech resonated with them and gave them strength.

“It’s not about winning or even being confident. It’s about giving. There is always someone who needs to hear your speech. Your mission is to believe that and uplift that person.”

— REIKO MASUI

“Choosing to overcome the voices of doubt, fear and comfort allowed me to push myself to compete with the best,” he says. “It gave me strength.” Like Masui, Murray valued the opportunity to serve people in a way that empowered them in their moments of weakness.

It’s not about trophies

After winning her district contest, Josephine Lee didn’t know what to expect from last year’s convention. “I stepped into the semifinals briefing and something interesting happened,” says Lee, a member of two clubs in Southern California. “We all found our seats, introduced ourselves and immediately started joking around

and connecting.” Everyone was warm and supportive, she notes. Just before the contest, the contestants were dancing backstage, taking pictures and having a great time. Even after the contest, they all stayed in contact.

Lee, who advanced to the final round of the competition and finished in third place, says this powerful connection has stayed with her. “I had the most incredible time meeting Toastmasters from all over the world. The trophies are nice, but the best parts were the memories and friendships I formed for a lifetime.”

Competitors in Toastmasters contests will tell you that they gain so much from the experience, regardless of good news or bad news when the results are announced. They’ve been given the opportunity to feel connected to others, push their own limits, be excited for the success of others, help each other, give of themselves and gain knowledge, understanding and friendships—that’s what makes the journey worthwhile. They continue to compete and encourage others to do so too.

“Looking back on my trip to Washington, D.C., I can say these were some of the most memorable moments of my life,” Lee says. “I gained eight lifelong friends from all over the world. I would say that’s winning.” ■

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

László (Laci) Szücs, ACB, is a member of the Skylarks and Pest-Beszéd clubs in Budapest, Hungary.

A Toastmasters
Guide to

Civil Social Communication

How to avoid shattering personal relationships when you disagree.

BY DAVE ZIELINSKI

Chances are you've found yourself in this uncomfortable situation during a recent conversation with a co-worker, family member or Toastmasters colleague: A topic arises that stops a seemingly pleasant discussion in its tracks or that escalates into a simmering

discussion with both sides quickly digging in their heels. Whether tied to a political, work-based, religious or other sensitive topic, what had been an innocent interaction becomes a battle of wills and entrenched belief systems with little attempt to find common ground or mutual understanding.

Few would disagree that it's become harder for us to talk to one another in a civil, thoughtful and constructive fashion. Recent polarizing political elections, the proliferation of social media and a shift in norms around societal decorum have led to walls replacing bridges in many of our personal or work-related interactions. Incivility, close-minded thinking or demeaning comments not only can shatter personal relationships, they can splinter Toastmasters clubs or work teams, undermine trust, impair collaboration and negatively impact organizational or group performance.

How can we learn to communicate and interact more effectively with those who don't share our points of view, our cultures or our life experiences? Experts say there are some guidelines that

can help navigate these difficult conversations toward more productive outcomes.

Developing Open Mindsets

Having open-minded conversations with those who have different perspectives not only honors the rules of civil behavior, communication experts say, it's also a critical skill for life success. Ann Van Eron, founder of Potentials, a global coaching and organization development firm in Chicago, Illinois, and author of the book *OASIS Conversations: Leading with an Open Mindset to Maximize Potential*, says one of the most important things we can do in these challenging scenarios is to "assume positive intent" in other parties. "Assume that most people are doing the best they can based on what they are hearing or seeing," Van Eron says. "Most are not consciously plotting to upset or hurt you. It's a human condition to judge others, but it's essential that we learn how to manage our judgments."

Van Eron, who has taught her methods to organizations like the United Nations and the World Bank, says it's in our nature to make assumptions based on limited data. During highly emotional conversations, when the brain's amygdala system is activated, we have a limited capacity to see the bigger picture or seek out areas of mutual agreement. "When we sit in judgment we don't see other options or solutions," Van Eron says. For example, it's easy for us to think someone is wrong simply because they support a different political party than we do, advocate or reject gun control or because of their position on abortion. "We have to learn to notice the signals that push us into this judgment state, such as the tightening of our stomachs or a voice in our heads,



and force ourselves to stop, step back and shift into a more open-minded state,” Van Eron says.

While it’s important to have empathy for, and understanding of, others’ beliefs, it doesn’t mean acquiescing to their viewpoints, Van Eron says. “When we give empathy it doesn’t mean we agree,” she says. “It simply means we’ve listened closely to and we understood the other person’s point of view. By doing that, the other party naturally becomes more interested in what you have to say.”

Facts Aren’t What They Used to Be

Another factor driving growing divides is a conviction that by simply employing enough data, statistics or shrewd arguments, we can get others to see the error of their ways and join our side. But those appeals bump up against a hard reality, experts say.

“When it comes to strongly-held beliefs, research shows it is very rare to get people to change their minds,” says Jesse Scinto, an active Toastmaster and associate director of curriculum development in strategic communications at Columbia University in New York City.

A joint study by University of Michigan and Georgia State University sought to understand how effective facts are at swaying belief systems. The study focused on documented misconcep-

tions that prevail around political views, and addressed the question: *Could blatantly false or unsubstantiated beliefs be corrected with an objective communication of the truth?* The research came to an eye-opening conclusion: When people believe something very strongly, the exposure to contradictory information—even if that information is proven to be true by impartial sources—can actually *reinforce* their existing belief system, even if those beliefs are incorrect.

“People will go to great lengths to avoid the cognitive dissonance created when their beliefs don’t seem to jive with the facts,” says Jim Endicott, president of Distinction Communication in Newberg, Oregon, a presentation skills coaching firm.

David Livermore, president of the Cultural Intelligence Center in Holt, Michigan, and an expert in cross-cultural communi-

cation, says that *confirmation bias*, or our tendency to look for and favor information that confirms what we already think, also contributes to today's divisive environments. "We tend to scour social media, the news and conversations for confirmation of what we already believe and ignore any information to the contrary," Livermore says.

Seeking Common Ground

How then do we approach situations where relating more effectively to—or influencing—others is the goal, but we know our counterparts hold opposing views? Endicott says success starts by setting the right expectations.

People have what psychologists call a "latitude of acceptance" or willingness to consider and accept different viewpoints. Let's say, for example, a "1" might represent a conservative mindset and "10" a liberal belief system. "Your ability to influence someone else's thinking can be greatly impaired if you attempt to move them too far along that scale," Endicott says. "If you try to move someone from a 9 to a 2 it likely won't happen. But it might be possible to move them from a 9 to a 7. People will sometimes consider a change in thinking if your goal is to move them incrementally along a belief system." In baseball parlance, your odds of success grow if you seek to hit a single or double with audiences rather than a home run.

"We tend to scour social media, the news and conversations for confirmation of what we already believe and ignore any information to the contrary."

—DAVID LIVERMORE

Scinto says seeking out shared values also can help in these scenarios. "Instead of stating your own point of view, start with something you presume your audience might agree with," he says. For example, if the topic is the environment, rather than beginning with a focus on deforestation practices, you might address the future of next generations. "The shared value of our children's and grandchildren's futures would be an entry point to the discussion," Scinto says.

Humor and Storytelling as Bridge Builders

Humor also can help people find common ground and decrease the tension that arises around disagreement or division, says Judy Carter, an author, speaker and coach who's also a stand-up comedian. Carter often speaks to groups that she knows likely don't share her politics or some of her belief systems.

"It doesn't matter your politics, religious beliefs, cultural identity or sexual orientation, we all have universal things in common," says Carter. "Those might be things like stress, concerns



about our families or financial issues, and finding humor in those situations can build bridges that connect us."

Carter says the simple act of being interested in and respectful of others goes a long way toward creating more civil and productive conversations.

"When I stop being angry and just focus on listening, and my intent purely is to understand the other person without trying to change them, I find magic often happens," says Carter. "The question we have to ask ourselves is do we want to be right or do we want to connect with other people? Do we need everyone in our lives to think and believe exactly like we do, or do we want to reach out, learn about and connect with those who are different from us?"

In situations where persuading others with different views is the end-game—be it a sales situation in the workplace or as the goal of a Toastmasters speech—experts say we're best served by appealing to the right side rather than left side of audiences' brains. Use of data and statistics is processed by the left brain. "The problem with the left brain is that it's the most defense-intensive and where people tend to dig in their heels more," Endicott says. Better to use strategies like storytelling that target the right brain, he says. "The best stories are not right or wrong, they are simply recounting an experience or moment of transformation and letting listeners draw their own conclusions. Stories also reside in long-term memory."

There's also the challenge of how to respond appropriately to offensive statements made online or in person. Some believe it's better to remain silent and avoid escalating a conflict by speaking up. But experts say there is a cost to such avoidance. Expressing your own view is essential, Scinto says, because if you don't, others might assume you agree with them. Not speaking up also deprives those who've said something considered inflammatory a chance to make things right.

Avoid labeling what others have said and instead talk about your own reaction to the offensive comment, Scinto suggests. "Just like in a good evaluation of a Toastmasters speech, focus on using the 'I' word," he says. "You might say, 'I'm uncomfortable with the use of that word or phrase' rather than labeling what the other person has said or done."

THE ONLINE DIVIDE: HOW SOCIAL MEDIA AFFECTS OUR COMMUNICATION STYLES

Social media has had a significant impact on the way we communicate in both the online and offline worlds, communication experts say. The absence of a face-to-face factor often emboldens people to speak more freely and derisively, stripping away time-honored conventions that can facilitate more civil interactions.

“Social media conditions us to use proactive and one-way behaviors like posting our own opinions, but in the process we forget that relationships only grow deeper when we ask questions, when we pause to think or when we rephrase to confirm that we’ve listened to and understood others,” says Jim Endicott, president of Distinction Communication. “That’s becoming a lost art, because people often are so anxious on social media to make their own arguments and balance the scales of opinions.”

Cultural intelligence expert David Livermore says he has yet to see someone change their perspective based upon an exchange of ideas or an argument on Facebook. While social media can be a force for good, people too often use it to entrench in their own belief systems and not consider other viewpoints, he says.

“I say pick up the phone, go to coffee and see what can be discovered together through conversation, mutual understanding and disagreement,” Livermore says.



Communicating Across Cultures

The risks of communication going awry are amplified when we interact with those from other cultures, Livermore says, given the different norms and behaviors practiced around the globe. The time-honored advice of striving to see from another’s eyes can pay big dividends in these interactions.

“Perhaps the greatest test of your cultural intelligence (CQ) is seeing whether you can take on the perspective of someone who exercises low CQ,” Livermore writes. “Good intentions don’t eradicate inappropriate behavior. But consideration of the intent is required before figuring out how to respond.”

“Instead of stating your own point of view, start with something you presume your audience might agree with.”

—JESSE SCINTO

Livermore says one of the biggest impediments to communicating constructively across cultures is use of the “single story,” which refers to viewing those from different countries or backgrounds in one-dimensional ways. He says the idea comes from a TED talk by Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, where she says, “The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but they are *incomplete*. They make the one story become the only story.”

Says Livermore: “All of us are more complicated than a single story based on where we’re from, how we voted or the color of our skin. Challenge any attempts at reducing an individual or a group to a single story.”

Role of Body Language

How we use body language, vocal tone and eye contact also contributes to the civility or acrimony of our in-person conversations. “Strive for an open body posture with hands open, head and shoulders back, good eye contact and an appropriate tone,” says Endicott.

Scinto says that while it’s important to monitor your body language, there is danger in doing so at the expense of concealing true feelings. “Trying to bottle up our true beliefs often doesn’t work, because audiences can sense our feelings through our body language,” he says. “When you’re speaking from your heart your body language naturally conforms to that. But when you try to cover up what’s inside, body language becomes misaligned with feelings.”

In the end, experts say we all should ponder this fundamental question when interacting with those who have different belief systems: Is it more important to be *right* or to dig a little deeper to find the common ground that can help us develop a better understanding of why those with opposing views think, believe and act the way they do?

“There is so much that can divide us all, but as Toastmasters part of our job is to be ambassadors of inspiration and unity,” Carter says. “We should seek to connect with all of the audiences of our lives, not simply to be right. Our job is to break down walls and try to lead others gently down the path toward understanding and acceptance.” ■

Dave Zielinski is a freelance journalist in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and a frequent contributor to the *Toastmaster* magazine.



Official Notice of Vote Your 2017–2018 Officer and Director Candidates

On Saturday, August 26, 2017, you will have the opportunity to vote for the international officer and director candidates of your choice while attending the International Convention in Vancouver, Canada.

The International Leadership Committee nominated officer candidates for the

positions of International President-Elect, First Vice President and Second Vice President. International director candidates were nominated for Regions 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 and 13. The Committee’s selection is presented in accordance with the Bylaws of Toastmasters International, Article VIII.

2017 Annual Business Meeting
1:00 p.m.
Saturday, August 26, 2017
Vancouver Convention Centre West
Vancouver, Canada

Officer Candidates



INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT-ELECT
Lark Doley, DTM



FIRST VICE PRESIDENT
Deepak Menon, DTM



SECOND VICE PRESIDENT
Karen Blake, DTM



SECOND VICE PRESIDENT
Richard Peck, DTM

Director Candidates

From Region 1

Mary Morrison, DTM

From Region 9

Jeff Sobel, DTM

Radhi Spear, DTM

From Region 3

Tracy M. Thomason, DTM

Linda Williams, DTM

From Region 11

Maria Victoria Ferrer, DTM

Morag Mathieson, DTM

From Region 5

Don F. Bittick, DTM

From Region 13

Grace Shih, DTM

Derek Wong, DTM

From Region 7

Reginald Darnell Ford, DTM

To review details of each officer and director nominee’s qualifications, visit the Toastmasters International website at:

www.toastmasters.org/officercandidates
www.toastmasters.org/directorcandidates

It is the right and duty of all clubs to participate in the vote, either through their representatives at the convention or by proxy.

If you are attending the Toastmasters International convention this August, you will have the opportunity to meet and talk with all the international officer and director candidates before the election. Additional nominations for officers and directors may be made from the floor at the Annual Business Meeting.

Cast Your Vote

for the Following Proposals

Make your voice heard.

The Board of Directors of Toastmasters International, at its March 2017 meeting, unanimously voted to present these amendments to the Bylaws of Toastmasters International and Club Constitution in August at the 2017 Annual Business Meeting. Every Toastmasters club will have the opportunity to vote on these proposed amendments.

PROPOSAL A

Dues Payments: Methods

In the development of the 2015 Strategic Plan, the Board identified the need to expand and improve the use of technology. An area of consistent challenge at the club level is the payment of dues. Today, members pay the club by check or debit or credit card. Once payment is received, the club officer submits it to Toastmasters International. To do so, they must manually enter all personal and financial information into Club Central. Many individuals are uncomfortable with this process because of the inherent security and privacy concerns. Furthermore, data entry by club officers often results in inaccurate information.

The Board directed World Headquarters to develop technology that will create a simple and secure way for members to submit payments directly to Toastmasters International. Such technology should:

- ▶ Improve the user experience
- ▶ Improve the accuracy of member data submitted
- ▶ Reduce credit card data security risks

The Board proposes amending the Bylaws of Toastmasters International and the Club Constitution to allow individual members to submit their application and

pay their dues online. The dues payment would not be fully processed by Toastmasters International until the individual is verified electronically by a club officer. Through this verification process the club officer certifies that the individual has attended at least one meeting and has been admitted to membership by the club. A similar process would be conducted for renewing members. Membership applications and renewals would continue to be accepted by regular mail.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

1. **Bylaws of Toastmasters International**
 - a. Article III: Membership, Sections 8 and 12
 - b. Article IV: Revenue, Section 2b
 - c. Article IV: Revenue, Section 2d
2. **Club Constitution for Clubs of Toastmasters International**
 - a. Article II: Membership, Section 2

PROPOSAL B

Dues Payments: Timing

The Bylaws of Toastmasters International require the club to pay individual dues by April 1 and October 1 of each year. This frequency of payments can be cumbersome for members, clubs and districts. In addition, some college and university clubs are challenged to pay dues on the current



FOR

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

To view the full text of the proposed amendments to the Bylaws of Toastmasters International and Club Constitution for Clubs of Toastmasters International, visit

www.toastmasters.org/2017Proposals.

Toastmasters calendar because of their academic calendar. Several members have suggested that a possible solution would be to pay dues by anniversary date; however, that is only one possible solution. There are many other alternatives to explore.

Moving this provision from the Bylaws to policy enables the Board to determine the most appropriate solution and modify the calendar to the benefit of the members, clubs and districts.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

1. **Bylaws of Toastmasters International**
 - a. Article IV: Revenue, Section 2a
 - b. Article IV: Revenue, Section 2c

PROPOSAL C

International Leadership Committee Service Timeline

The International Leadership Committee (ILC) begins its service on September 1 of each year; however, most committee members attend the Toastmasters International Convention, creating an opportunity for the chair to conduct orientation and begin the committee’s work there. Several past ILC chairs have recommended changing the committee’s start date from September 1 to August.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

1. **Bylaws of Toastmasters International**
 - a. Article VII: Committees, Section 3

PROPOSAL D

Floor Candidacy Prerequisites

The ILC was established to review, evaluate and identify leadership development potential and opportunities throughout the organization, and to nominate international officer and director candidates each year for election at the August Annual Business Meeting.

The Board proposes that all candidates (including floor candidates) who stand for election at an Annual Business Meeting must have been evaluated by the ILC in the same election cycle in which the candidate stands for election. This allows the ILC to evaluate each individual’s potential and appropriateness for the role, which ultimately informs the members’ voting decision; additionally, it provides potential candidates with valuable insight into expectations and the competencies, skills and attributes necessary to be a successful Board member.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

1. **Bylaws of Toastmasters International**
 - a. Article VIII: Nominations, Section 3

PROPOSAL E

International Director Qualifications

Today, an Immediate Past District Director may stand for election as an international director candidate while serving their term. This negatively impacts the districts by removing a valuable resource from the district leadership team. Successful completion of the Immediate Past District Director can help an individual develop and demonstrate the competencies, skills and attributes necessary to be a successful Board member.

The Board proposes that international director candidate qualifications be strengthened to ensure that candidates complete the Immediate Past District Director term before standing for election. A candidate may submit their Letter of Intent while serving as an Immediate Past District Director. However, an Immediate Past District Director would not be eligible to stand for election while serving in that role.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

1. **Bylaws of Toastmasters International**
 - a. Article IX: Elections, Section 2

PROPOSAL F

Minimum Vote Percentage

International officers and directors are elected by the membership each year during the Annual Business Meeting. A candidate must receive a majority of the votes cast to be elected to any position on the Board of Directors. If a majority is not reached, a next ballot is conducted and the candidate with the lowest vote on each ballot is dropped before proceeding to the next ballot. In 2015, the members voted to amend the Bylaws to expand the number of candidates who may be nominated by the International Leadership Committee (ILC) for Second Vice President and international director. This has resulted in an increase in the number of candidates running for the Board and in the number of ballots that must be cast for many

contested positions. It has also extended the length of the Annual Business Meeting. The Board proposes that a candidate must receive 10% or more of the votes cast to move to any subsequent ballot. The provision that the candidate who receives the fewest votes on any ballot is dropped from any subsequent ballot would remain in effect.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

1. **Bylaws of Toastmasters International**
 - a. Article IX: Elections, Section 3

PROPOSAL G

Honorary Club Membership

Individual membership in a club is classified as active, inactive or honorary. This classification is defined and further described in the Club Constitution, Article II, Sections 2, 4, 5, and 6. The intended purpose of the honorary membership classification was to enable clubs to recognize influential individuals within the community or sponsoring organization. The individual’s membership dues are paid by the club.

Over time, this intended purpose has been misinterpreted and expanded by some clubs to include paying for individual members with the intention of increasing the club’s membership count. Today, Toastmasters International only records whether a membership is paid.

The Board proposes that the Club Constitution be amended to clarify that honorary memberships are a club-level function enabling clubs to continue to recognize individuals for their own purposes; however, these nonpaid memberships would not count for any type of recognition program or award, nor would such honorary members have any membership privileges.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

1. **Club Constitution for Clubs of Toastmasters International**
 - a. Article II: Membership, Section 5
 - b. Article II: Membership, Section 6

The Leadership Track in Toastmasters

It's not all talk.

BY BILL BROWN, DTM

Mention Toastmasters and someone's first reaction may be, "Oh, that's the organization that helps you become a better speaker." Toastmasters, however, is a whole lot more. Not only does its program develop speakers, it develops leaders as well.

I remember when I started. I received two manuals in my New Member Kit so I opened the one titled *Competent Communication* and got to work. After all, I was one of those who joined to practice public speaking.

About a month later, I opened the other manual—the *Competent Leadership* (CL) manual. At first, it looked like a really complicated program. Wow. Ten projects. And each one had multiple projects within it. So I put it down for another month.

On Second Glance

When I picked it up again, I actually read it and was stunned by just how simple it seemed. The content was clearly something that was of value to me in my profession. A quick look at the table of contents showed that, just like the *Competent Communication* manual, this manual has 10 projects, and it outlines 10 different aspects of leadership. Each one is learned by reading the corresponding section in the manual and performing a number of tasks, most of which are meeting roles.

Do the meeting roles really serve to help improve one's leadership skills? If you asked me that question when I joined, I would have answered *no*. But one month into my Toastmasters membership, when I had only served as the timer, grammarian and Ah-Counter, I was shocked to realize that I was noticeably more confident. The system works!

The CL manual takes what is already happening in the club and augments it with additional information to accelerate

learning. It still can, however, look like a daunting task. Ten projects ... multiple tasks in each. Ouch!

That is why I look at the manual as a whole. When I do I see that I either need to do 19 meeting roles and three projects or 17 meeting roles and four projects, depending on what I decide to do in Project 10. Since I am going to be serving in the various meeting roles anyway, I really only have to do three or four additional tasks to complete the manual. How simple is that?



Meeting Roles

Let's look at the meeting roles first. I like how the manual gives choices on what roles we want to perform in the club. For example, in Project 1, four roles are listed (Ah-Counter, Speech Evaluator, grammarian and Table Topics speaker), but we only have to do three of them. And we get to choose the three that *we* want to do. As you perform any one role, tell your evaluator which project you want credit applied toward, for instance Project 1, in this example. Read over the requirements for your project beforehand to ensure you cover the necessary criteria.

Let's now look at some individual projects.

Projects and Tasks

Project 6 calls for us to help out with a key event, campaign or publication for our club. The key phrase is *help out*. We don't have to *chair* the project. That's why it is great for the new Toastmaster.

Would you rather be the project chair? Project 10 has you covered. This is an optional project, but it is perfect if you'd like to take on more responsibility. And if you *are* the project chair, you can have multiple helpers, all of whom can get credit toward their CL designation.

Project 9, like Project 6, is another relatively easy one. It involves mentoring someone. That someone is typically a new member. The requirement is that you mentor them through three projects, helping them write their speeches and learn the various meeting roles and protocols. Two other options exist, but those are usually selected by the more advanced Toastmaster.

Project 8 requires you to chair a membership or public relations project. Note, however, that this project addresses the motivation aspect of leadership. Going out and doing something on your own does not qualify. You must motivate others—and that requires a team.

The CL manual is the foundation of the leadership track in Toastmasters. It teaches the basic skills that you will employ as you advance in your profession and assume leadership positions within the club and district.

Take it seriously—and you will reap the corresponding rewards.

Bill Brown, DTM, is a speech delivery coach from Las Vegas and a member of *Powerhouse Pros*, which specializes in observational humor. Learn more at www.billbrownspeechcoach.com.



To the Class of 2017

Be bold, take risks, dream big. Who knows? Maybe it'll work.

BY JOHN CADLEY

It's graduation time. Millions of students are celebrating the completion of their degrees—and millions of parents are sending “Thank You” cards to their financial advisors for keeping them out of bankruptcy court in the process. I've heard that some colleges actually have a roped-off area on the commencement grounds where travel agents are standing by to help Mom and Dad take their first vacation in four years. Clap for the kid, take the pictures, book the cruise.

But first comes the commencement address, otherwise known as The Long Goodbye. This time, however, it's not about math or biology or history. It's about life—specifically, what the speaker believes the graduates should do with each of theirs as they move on to “the next chapter” (which, by the way, is titled “How to Make Your First Student Loan Payment”). It's a hard gig. The speaker must stand before a large audience of young people who are waiting to party their faces off ... and talk for 15 minutes about the meaning of life. This is why commencement speakers are chosen with such care. They must be successful and interesting, but not controversial. The last thing you want on graduation day is for the student body to rise up *en masse* shouting “war criminal!” at the person behind the dais. This is not what the grandparents came up from Florida for. Schools compile lists of potential speakers and often invite the students to comment during the selection process, so as to avoid any unpleasant scenarios like the one above. Still, there is never complete agreement. Even the Dali Lama got some thumbs down from a

university selection committee. What did he do wrong—smile too much?

It is for this reason that I'm throwing *my* hat into the ring. I may not be famous but I can absolutely guarantee a 100 percent controversy-free speech. This is because I have studied all the great commencement speeches since 1774, as catalogued by America's National Public Radio (check them out at apps.npr.org/commencement/), and I have taken careful note of the common themes. These are proven, time-tested words of advice that *cannot go wrong*.

**I may not be famous
but I can absolutely
guarantee a 100
percent controversy-
free speech.**

Topping the list is **Don't Be Afraid to Fail**. This always gets a round of applause because that's exactly what everyone in the audience is afraid of, including the parents, who didn't shell out a hundred grand to produce a failure. Giving the grads permission to fail is like saying: “Don't worry. If you don't get a job you can move back home”—a reassuring message, to be sure. Another related theme is **Take Risks**. Safe to say, the young men and women in the audience have, throughout their four years away from home, taken more risks than their parents would care to know about. So this is a concept with which the graduates are thoroughly familiar. Likewise with

the advice to **Have Passion**, for reasons we really don't need to go into.

Another fail-safe admonition is any variation on the **Be Yourself** angle—e.g., **Be True to Yourself, To Thine Own Self Be True** (quoting Shakespeare never fails to impress) or my personal favorite, **Be the Best Version of Yourself**. This theme is near-universal in the great commencement speeches, and for good reason. It resonates instantly with an audience that is wondering just what they *are* going to be, and here is a respected authority figure telling them it's easy! Just be yourself! The implication is that this is precisely how the successful person on the podium got to be the successful person on the podium. But ... is our distinguished speaker being a tad disingenuous? Did he or she really scale the heights of success without compromising *any* personal principles, ideals, ethics or values along the way? Better to say, “Don't sacrifice your values. Just bend, twist and distort them until you get enough money and power to tell everyone to go take a flying leap. Then you can *afford* to be yourself.” But then again, why bother young minds with confusing details? And **Be Yourself—When You Can Afford It** doesn't have quite the same ring.

If this doesn't convince a university to hire me, I can recommend one other proven alternative: Kermit the Frog. Kermit gave the commencement address at Southampton College in 1996. The theme was: **Be a Leader—Not a Puppet**. ■

John Cadley, a former advertising copywriter, is a freelance writer and musician living in Fayetteville, New York. Learn more at www.cadleys.com.

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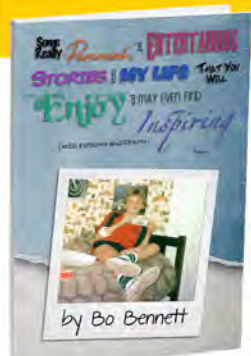
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CLIENT SPOTLIGHT - BO BENNETT, DTM



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

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

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

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

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>.



“The International Convention is a magical place where you will be enlightened, empowered and enriched! It opened my eyes to how international this organization is, and that is why I keep coming back every year.”

– Kelly Guo, DTM, District 89, District Director

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