

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | OCTOBER 2017

TOASTMASTER®

Genein Letford:

the Power of Music

Award-winning teacher overcomes a speech impediment to find her voice

How to Prepare to Impress

A 4-step formula to acing your job interview

Build a Better Future



The famous Scottish philosopher Thomas Carlyle hit the nail on the head when he said, “*Man is a tool-using animal. Without tools he is nothing, with tools he is all.*” Do you have all the tools you need to succeed?

Life is a do-it-yourself project, and a well-stocked toolbox can make it much easier. Before starting any project, every “do-it-yourselfer” knows they need a set of basic tools, and they know that the bigger, more complicated jobs require more specialized devices. Toastmasters is also a do-it-yourself project, and it provides a variety of toolkits. All you need to do is take the specialized tools out, one by one, and become proficient with each.

I recently heard about a man in Maryland named Thomas Lane. Thomas had been incarcerated for more than 20 years when he learned about a Toastmasters club at his correctional institution. He attended out of curiosity but stayed because he saw something worthwhile. He said he found the program fun, challenging and rewarding. He served as president of the club—NU Genesis Toastmasters—earned a Competent Leader award and greatly expanded his personal toolkit.

I see so many members stop as soon as they have reached their initial goal, not seeing new paths open right before their very eyes.

After his release 11 years ago, how did Thomas use the skills he had acquired? He became an area governor, attended college and graduated with a degree in graphic design. He now is a valued employee at Maryland Correctional Enterprises, teaches college and gives motivational speeches to numerous organizations. His toolbox is overflowing.

I see so many members stop as soon as they have reached their initial goal, not seeing new paths open right before their very eyes. We, like Thomas, need to keep building our skills, one upon another, by continuing to complete each of our projects. This is the way we can create our Toastmasters Toolbox.

The next time you apply for a job, seek a promotion, tackle a new endeavor or organize a special event, do you want to show up with an empty or partially filled toolbox? Or would you prefer one that is equipped with plenty of pieces to help you do the work? Make sure your box is well stocked. Working on Toastmasters manuals, projects and modules, and actively participating in club or district meetings, allows you to pick up new tips and enhance your talents.

No one can build the future you envision except you. So pick out the tools you need and start building a new you.

Balraj Arunasalam, DTM
International President

TOASTMASTER®

Publisher

Daniel Rex

Managing Editor

Suzanne Frey

Senior Editor

Paul Sterman

Associate Editor

Mary Nesfield

Digital Content Editor

Shannon Dewey

Editorial Assistant

Mariam Jehangir

Graphic Design

Susan Campbell

Cover Design

Bianca Montoya

2017-2018 OFFICERS

International President

Balraj Arunasalam, DTM

International President-Elect

Lark Doley, DTM

First Vice President

Deepak Menon, DTM

Second Vice President

Richard Peck, DTM

Immediate Past President

Mike Storkey, DTM

Chief Executive Officer

Daniel Rex

Secretary-Treasurer

Jennifer Quinn

2017-2018 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mary Morrison, DTM

Region 1

Jim Kohli, DTM

Region 2

Tracy M. Thomason, DTM

Region 3

Monique Levesque-Pharoah, DTM

Region 4

Donald F. Bittick, DTM

Region 5

Vera Johnson, DTM

Region 6

Reginald Darnell Ford, DTM

Region 7

Matt Kinsey, DTM

Region 8

Radhi Spear, DTM

Region 9

Michael Osur, DTM

Region 10

Morag Mathieson, DTM

Region 11

David Fisher, DTM

Region 12

Derek Wong, DTM

Region 13

Elisa W. Tay, DTM

Region 14

TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL®

P.O. Box 9052, Mission Viejo, CA 92690 U.S.A.

+1 949-858-8255 • Fax: +1 949-858-1207

Voicemail: +1 949-835-1300

www.toastmasters.org

CONTACTING WORLD HEADQUARTERS

For information on joining

or building a club, visit:

www.toastmasters.org

Article submission:

submissions@toastmasters.org

Letters to the Editor:

letters@toastmasters.org

To change address,

log in to:

www.toastmasters.org

Toastmasters International Mission:

We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE
www.toastmasters.org

The *Toastmaster* magazine (ISSN 00408263) is published monthly by Toastmasters International, Inc., 23182 Arroyo Vista, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688, U.S.A. Periodicals postage paid at Mission Viejo, CA and additional mailing office. POSTMASTER: Send address change to the *Toastmaster* magazine, P.O. Box 9052, Mission Viejo, CA 92690, U.S.A.

Published to promote the ideas and goals of Toastmasters International, a nonprofit educational organization of clubs throughout the world dedicated to teaching skills in public speaking and leadership. Members' subscriptions are included in the \$45 semi-annual dues.

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

Copyright 2017 Toastmasters International, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited. Not responsible for unsolicited material.

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

Printed in U.S.A.

Club anniversaries are a great reason to celebrate. Cheers to the following clubs!



Berlaymont Toastmasters of Brussels, Belgium, have reasons to smile at their club's 10th anniversary.



The Navigators Club in Vienna, Virginia, celebrated the club's 25th anniversary earlier this year with balloons, banners and cheer.



Members and guests of the USM Toastmasters club in Penang, Malaysia, celebrate the club's 10th anniversary at the Eastern & Oriental Hotel.



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.

Features

14



14

COMMUNICATION

Genein Letford: The Power of Music

Award-winning teacher
overcomes a speech
impediment to find her voice.

By Mary Nesfield

COVER PHOTO BY CLAUDIA GINER PHOTOGRAPHY

22



Articles

12

SUCCESS STORIES

MEMBER ACHIEVEMENTS

Four Toastmasters share stories
of new beginnings.

17

COMMUNICATION

KEEPING STUDENTS SAFE

Speaker's anti-bullying message
strikes a chord with youths.

By Othello Curry, CC

19

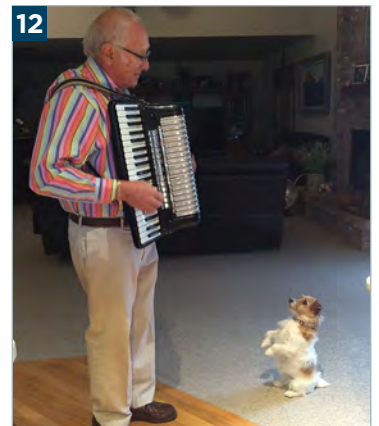
COMMUNICATION

ADVOCATING FOR
THE UNDERSERVED

ESL teacher Leila Kubesch helps
young people improve their lives.

By Mary Nesfield

12



17



22

COMMUNICATION

A 4-Step Formula to Acing Your Job Interview

How to prepare to impress.

By Jennifer L. Blanck, DTM

Toastmaster Magazine Online

See more photos, videos and links online at www.toastmasters.org/Magazine.

October Online Extras:

- **Rhetoric-The Public Speaking Game™**—Watch a video from the co-creators and learn how to play. ▶
- **Lessons Beyond the Classroom**—Discover how three educators advocate for youth through additional photos and videos. 📷 ▶
- **ToastED: a Toastmasters Club with a Focus on TED Talks**—View additional photos of members in this South African TEDx club. 📷



Articles

26

CLUB EXPERIENCE

ToastED: A TOASTMASTERS CLUB WITH A FOCUS ON TEDx TALKS

Preparing members for the TEDx stage in Capetown.

By Verity Price, ACB

27

NEWS FROM TI

THE FACTS ARE IN!

The past Toastmasters year proved to be one of growth for the organization.

28

PERSONAL GROWTH

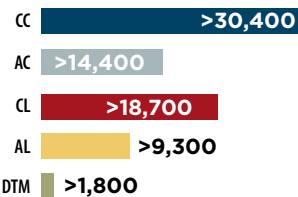
FOLLOW AND FLOURISH

How to master the art of followership.

By Caren Schnur Neile, ATMS



27 Awards



Columns

2 VIEWPOINT

Build a Better Future

By Balraj Arunasalam, DTM, International President

11 MY TURN

A Traveling Toastmaster

By Sara Safari, DTM

21 TOASTMASTERS TOOLBOX

Let's Talk Table Topics

By Bill Brown, DTM

30 FUNNY YOU SHOULD SAY THAT

Rest in Peace

By John Cadley

Departments

3 MEMBERS' FORUM

6 QUICK TAKES

10 TRAVELING TOASTMASTER

▶ MEMBER MOMENT  

Rhetoric—The Public Speaking Game

Two Toastmasters in Europe create a fun game that teaches speaking skills.

BY SHANNON DEWEY

Florian Mueck's transformation from consultant and business development manager to professional speaker began when he joined Toastmasters in Barcelona, Spain, in 2005. Over the next four years he turned his passion for public speaking into a successful profession. Today, Mueck, ACG, ALB, is a presenter, coach, moderator and author.



Before John Zimmer became a corporate trainer and public speaker he worked as a lawyer in a private practice and then in public law at the United Nations, where he gained experience speaking in front of international audiences. To continue honing his public speaking skills, he became a Toastmaster in 2007. A seven-time district champion of Toastmasters speech contests, Zimmer, ACB, ALB, lives in Geneva, Switzerland, and is an international speaker, coach, moderator and blogger.

“Gamification turns fear into fun.”

—FLORIAN MUECK

The two crossed paths during a division conference in 2010 where Zimmer was the keynote speaker and Mueck a speech contestant. They walked away with a friendship that would blossom into a business partnership soon after. By combining their professional experiences, Toastmasters journeys and newfound camaraderie, they set out to create a board game that helps participants improve their public speaking skills.

In 2012, the duo's brainchild, Rhetoric—The Public Speaking Game™ was born. It is an engaging board game that allows players to step “onstage” and embark on a rhetorical journey during which they encounter different speech tasks. In 2016, Zimmer, originally from Canada, and Mueck, from Germany, released the app version of the game for iOS and Android devices. The board game and app are now played on all continents and used by business professionals, teachers, trainers, learning coaches and many Toastmasters.



From left: John Zimmer and Florian Mueck

How did you meet?

Florian: In spring 2010, John and I met at a Toastmasters division conference in Porto, Portugal. He was the keynote speaker; I was one of the International Speech contestants. What I did not know was that he was also a competitor in his division that year. The competition was on!

John: (laughing) In the end, we each won our division, but neither of us placed at district. But we came away with something better: the foundation of what has become a great friendship and partnership. Today, besides Toastmasters, we work together with clients, co-author books and products, and enjoy more than a few beers together.

How can a game help those who fear public speaking?

Florian: Before joining Toastmasters, my heart wasn't pounding when I had to speak in public; it was a galloping herd of 1,000 wild horses. Playing Rhetoric can help you tame those horses. Yes, you are giving speeches, but you are also playing a game with others. Gamification turns fear into fun.

John: The nerves never go away entirely. When you play Rhetoric, there is that same adrenaline rush every time it is your turn. But instead of days or weeks, there are only minutes between one speech and the next. We have seen incredible progress over the course of a single game. People who were nervous at the start are jumping onto the stage by the end of the game. They don't even realize that they are sharpening their speaking skills.

Since you live in different countries, how did you collaborate on this project?

Florian: Usually when we work on specific issues, we use Google Docs. Next to our computer screens we place our smart phones and use the video function of **Whatsapp**. We see each other and work simultaneously on specific challenges. Once I edited a sentence that John was editing at the same time. He uttered those immortal words: "Get the cursor out of my face!"

John: We come from different countries, have different backgrounds and have different personalities. Just compare us onstage! But that is our strength. When we combine our different qualities, cool things happen. If we were a car, Florian would be the gas pedal and I would be the brake. Without the gas, you won't move; without the brake, you are going to crash. With both, you can go anywhere.

Did you test the game on family and friends?

Florian: Feedback is a cornerstone of Toastmasters' success. With the prototype, the board version and now the app, we have

played with, and listened to, hundreds of people. Their feedback has been invaluable.

What future developments can we expect from Rhetoric?

John: Right now, the app can be played in six languages: English; Spanish; French; Russian; German; and Catalan. We plan to add more such as Mandarin, Italian and Portuguese. For themes, we already have Classic and Family (suitable for all ages). Future themes will include Business and Comedy. And we are always open to suggestions, so get in touch!

For more details about the board game or app version of *Rhetoric*, go to www.rhetoricgame.com.

Shannon Dewey is the digital content editor for *Toastmaster magazine*.



ONLINE EXTRAS: Watch a video from the co-creators of *Rhetoric* and learn how to play.

▶ SNAPSHOT



Members of the Tlaquepaque Club in Tlaquepaque, Mexico, celebrate Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) dressed in full costume. The club was invited by local authorities to give speeches while walking around the town center in Tlaquepaque; they concluded with seven speeches at the cemetery.

QUICK TAKES

▶ MEET MY MENTOR



Saher Uneeb, CC, CL

BY MARY NESFIELD

Saher Uneeb, CC, CL, is pursuing studies at Liaquat National Hospital and Medical College in Karachi, Pakistan, to become a medical doctor. Her Toastmaster father, a plant manager at a power generating company, encouraged her to join Toastmasters. She joined the Karachi Toastmasters club, where she serves as a leader.

As an accounting student, Muhammad Zaid Kaliya, CC, ALB, had no time to develop his speaking skills; his work colleagues pegged him as an introvert. After attending a club demo meeting hosted by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan, he joined Karachi Toastmasters and asked Uneeb for guidance. Today, Kaliya is a chief financial officer at Shield Corporation Ltd., and he's participating in speech competitions and taking on club leadership positions.

Muhammad, what was it like for you to join a club?

When I joined, I didn't have any idea of how to write a speech; I couldn't even decide on a topic. Saher was generous in accepting the responsibility to be my mentor. She is open-minded, friendly and a good listener. She adds value to the club with her enthusiasm and innovative ideas, and she's always ready to help others.

What did you learn from her?

She encouraged me to tell personal stories and to use vocal variety and movement in my presentations, and she explained the importance of pauses to avoid a monotonous tone. She has also taught me leadership skills and how to listen and evaluate effectively. I value her feedback and, as a result, I received my Competent Communicator and Competent Leader awards in 13 months.

▶ CLUB EXPERIENCE



A Whimsical Win

Intergraph Toastmasters—a corporate club at Hexagon, an information technology solutions company in Madison, Alabama—took its company's scarecrow-design competition as a chance to promote the club. Competing against 15 other teams, these Toastmasters highlighted common struggles people face when speaking in public. After a few planning sessions and some hard work, they created "Russell, the Scare (... d of public speaking) Crow."

Exhibiting clammy hands, a stomach full of butterflies, a racing heart and knocking knees, Russell won the company contest and even went on to the citywide competition at Madison County's Huntsville Botanical Garden.

Andrew Fandre, CC, ALB, the club's vice president education, says, "The challenge was an incredible exercise that proved our leadership, team-building and collaboration skills could take our



Muhammad Zaid Kaliya and his mentor, Saher Uneeb

What feedback helped you the most?

Her best advice was to try something new, so I spent more time selecting speech topics and making them more interesting. It really paid off, as my 10th speech, "Ignite the Fire," was well-received. After delivering it in my club, I was asked to deliver it again at a demo meeting. I also delivered a modified version of it in March at the club's speech contest and won second place. And we recently chartered the CA Toastmasters Club Karachi at the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan, which I was chosen to lead as club president.

At work, my colleagues say that I am totally changed; they remark on my effective communication skills. "Hat's off" to Saher for playing such an important role in my achievements.

Mary Nesfield is 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.



whimsical idea and turn it into a powerful tool to showcase what Toastmasters is all about."

The club has since used the momentum generated by co-worker interest in the scarecrow to grow its club membership.

► ADVICE FROM THE PROS

4 Types of Confidence that Determine Your Effectiveness

BY BILL BROWN, DTM

While you may know all the *techniques* of expressiveness, the factor that most determines the *level* of your expressiveness—how effective you really are—is confidence.

Four types of confidence determine your expressiveness. The first is your **confidence in the quality of your speech**. That is one of the reasons it is important to have a well-written speech. If you believe that your speech is only so-so, you will not present it boldly. Take the time to learn how to craft a good speech. Seek help, if you need it.

The second is your **confidence in your knowledge of, and comfort with,**

performing your speech. The more you know your speech—the words and phrases that are coming up, how you are going to say them, and what you are going to do on stage—the more demonstrative and expressive you will be. If you are constantly trying to remember your script, you will hold back. Your attention is focused on your words, not your audience. As a result, you will sound flat, mechanical and rehearsed. That is why practice is so important. Plan plenty of rehearsal time into each speech or presentation.

The third type of confidence is **confidence in your speaking ability.** If you don't think you can do it, you won't. Don't



worry. Your confidence will grow over time, as you speak more and more.

The fourth type of confidence is **confidence in yourself**. Let's face it. It takes guts to perform at a high level. If you are worried about what others will think, you will hold back. The more confident you are in your own skin, as the saying goes, the bolder you will be on stage.

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.

► PATHWAYS LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Region 14 Launch Hits the Mark

The Pathways learning experience continues to make great strides. The new education program had its first region-wide launch in late July—in Region 14. Members were so eager to experience the program that about 500 signed up within the first 24 hours.

The launch encompassed five districts in Southeast Asia: 75, 80, 87, 97 and 102. (District 51 in Malaysia was part of the Pathways pilot earlier this year.) District 75 in the Philippines tried something that other districts might want to emulate: A handful of its clubs re-scheduled their regular meeting dates to meet instead on the day Pathways became available to them, using the occasion to begin their Pathways journey together.

During the various meetings that day, members took the first steps. They logged into the Toastmasters website, went to the Pathways learning experience webpage and took the online Pathways Assessment, which helps members choose a path that is right for them. A few clubs invited their

Pathways Guides and Ambassadors to the meetings to guide them through the process.

The Taipan Toastmasters meeting, in Cebu City, was led by club member Johnny Uy, DTM, Toastmasters' 2006–2007 International President. He says the group “walked through the Pathways registration

to see that a lot of the members took the assessment,” says Du, who is working in Pathways' Visionary Communication path.

Du expresses gratitude to her team of district Ambassadors—member volunteers who meet with fellow members to update them on the program and the various ways

“This being a country with so many islands, some Ambassadors even traveled by land, sea and air to meet with clubs. They served without expecting anything in return.”

—DOROTHY DU, DTM

process together so everyone could see how it is done—to make it easier for them to do it at home. People were curious, and they were happy we did it.”

Dorothy Du, DTM, Pathways Chief Ambassador for District 75, says that in the weeks before the launch, she posted several messages on the district's Facebook page to “pique the members' interest.” “On the day of the launch, I was so excited

it benefits them. “This being a country with so many islands, some Ambassadors even traveled by land, sea and air to meet with clubs. They served without expecting anything in return.”

Last month, Pathways launched in Region 2 in the western United States. Learn more about the Pathways learning experience by visiting www.toastmasters.org/Pathways.

1



1 | PATRICK KIMMITT, ACB, from Fort Collins, Colorado, takes in the sunrise at 12,454 feet on Mount Chapin, Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado.

2 | JACQUELINE COLLIER JESPERSEN, ACS, ALB, from Geneva, Switzerland, enjoys the stunning architecture in Isfahan, Iran.

3 | MARK BROWN, ATM, CL, from Lizella, Georgia, visits Checkpoint Charlie, near the Berlin Wall in Berlin, Germany.

4 | GALE McCREARY, CC, CL, and MICHAEL TRIONFETTI from California, pose while on safari in the Okavango Delta in Botswana.

2



3



4



View additional photos in this month's *Traveling Toastmaster* photo gallery at www.toastmasters.org/Magazine.



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!

A Traveling Toastmaster

How my trip to Paris led to a TEDx speech and new friendships.

BY SARA SAFARI, DTM

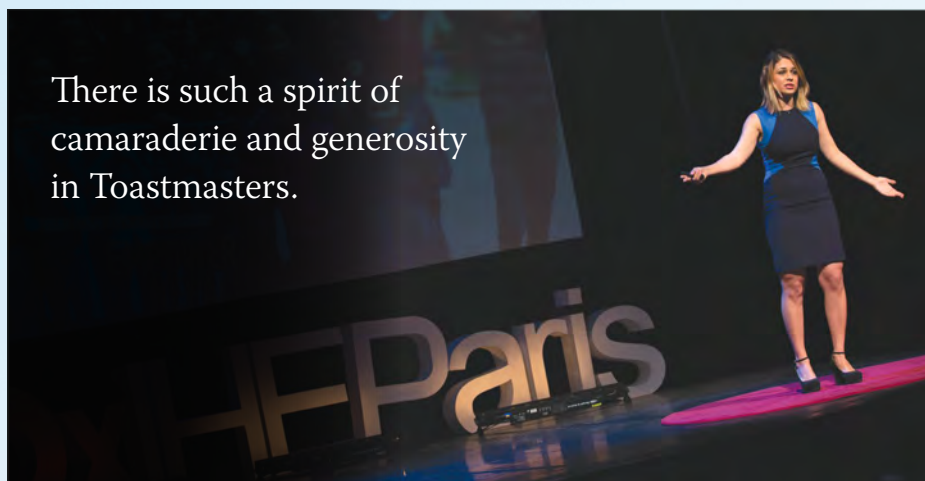
It's May 20, 2017, and I am about to give a TEDx speech in Paris. I only have 18 minutes to share with the audience how I survived a 7.8 earthquake while climbing Mount Everest in 2015. As I walk on the stage toward the round red carpet where the speaker stands, I find myself wishing that TED presentations didn't have the 18-minute time limit. Fortunately, I have been trained well in Toastmasters and know how to keep my speeches on time.

In fact, it is because of Toastmasters that I am giving a TEDx speech in the first place. Last year, as I was preparing for a trip to Paris with my family, I emailed the Busy Professionals Toastmasters club there to see if I could attend a meeting. The club wasn't scheduled to meet during that period, so club members invited me to a picnic by the Seine River. Members of three different clubs showed up with yummy snacks, and we all had a wonderful time together.

A couple of weeks later, one of the women I met at the picnic invited me to participate in this year's TEDx event at a Paris business school. (TED is the international program where diverse achievers give speeches about "ideas worth spreading"; independently produced TEDx events bring the concept to local communities.) I was so excited to share my story on such a big platform: Not only would a live audience see and hear me, but so could countless others around the world, since videos of TED-related speeches are available to anyone on the TED website.

The Paris TEDx drew almost 800 people, and it took place at the Théâtre de la Madeleine, built in 1924. In the weeks before the program, I was excited but nervous. I practiced many times with my club in Southern California to get more comfortable. Harry Yan, DTM, of my local club, and David Martin, ACB, ALB, of the Paris club, gave me great coaching tips. I

There is such a spirit of camaraderie and generosity in Toastmasters.



Sara Safari delivers her TEDx presentation in Paris this past May.

could never have imagined doing any kind of TED presentation when I joined Toastmasters seven years ago! Giving that speech in Paris was a measure of how much I've grown as a speaker.

There is such a spirit of camaraderie and generosity in Toastmasters. I have definitely experienced that visiting clubs around the world. After I published a book last year, *Follow My Footsteps*, about my Mount Everest experience, I went on a book tour to share my message, and my travels included visits to Toastmasters clubs in many different countries, including Peru, Chile, France, Italy, Portugal, Malta, Turkey and Colombia.

I wasn't expecting the extreme kindness with which club members greeted and treated me. In Lisbon, Portugal, members offered to pick me up from the airport because their club meeting would be taking place just 30 minutes after my arrival. In Ankara, Turkey, club members invited me to stay in their homes so I wouldn't have to pay for a hotel room.

Members introduced me to their families, cooked me delicious food and gave me tours of their cities, showing me

the hidden gems that tourists don't know about. Everywhere I went, I received love, warmth and smiles. I was not expecting to make friends around the world when I joined Toastmasters—this was a huge bonus!

My adventures continue. In February I will travel to Indonesia and then climb the Carstensz Pyramid, the highest mountain in the Oceania region. I'll also be visiting Toastmasters clubs during my time in Indonesia.

I feel so honored to be part of this organization. Thank you, Toastmasters, for all the wonderful opportunities you have provided me. **T**

Sara Safari was profiled in the October 2015 issue of Toastmaster magazine. Watch a video of her TEDx speech at bit.ly/2hO6hks.

SARA SAFARI, DTM, is a member of the Irvine Lunchtime Toastmasters club in Irvine, California. She is an author, speaker, mountain climber, college professor and advocate for women empowerment. Learn more about her at www.sarasafari.com.

Member Achievements

Four Toastmasters share stories of new beginnings.

Gary Malner, ACB



Audible Experience Toastmasters • Yakima, Washington

Old Bones, New Growth

I have experienced 75 years of growing to find out who I am and what I want to do with my life. As the song *Old Bones* states, “And I bet by now you’d think I wouldn’t care”—but yes, I do care, and more deeply than ever because I realize most of my life is behind me yet there is still so much to do and explore. That is the reason I joined Toastmasters. After seeing a classified advertisement for a club, I felt this was something my wife, LaRayne, and I could enjoy together. Thus we unfold the mystery of life in a new way.

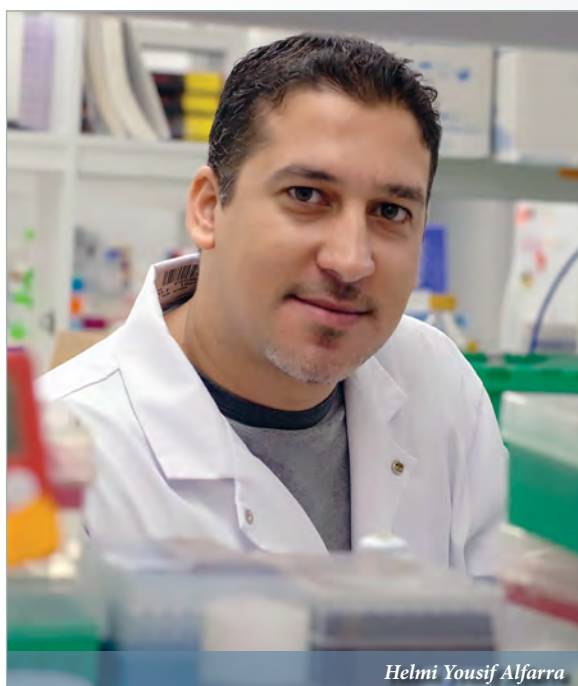
On October 10, 1950, I had my first accordion lesson, and since then my life has been a journey of performing and learning. But through all the schooling, from earning a bachelor’s degree to teaching others, nothing has matched the impact of the Toastmasters experience. With LaRayne, I am now active in three clubs. Our conversations bristle with Toastmasters chatter.

I currently perform with the accordion seven to 11 times a week for seniors in retirement homes and for a variety of service organizations. Onstage, dialogue and monologue are now big parts of my music, as I have moved from just a “musician” to a “musical entertainer”; for that, I thank Toastmasters and my new loving families of club members who evaluate me and encourage me to grow.

Toastmasters has given me tools to entertain my audiences, and help them reflect on memories and publicly share experiences from their own lives.



Gary Malner



Helmi Yousif Alfarra

Helmi Yousif Alfarra, CC

Creatively Speaking Toastmasters Halifax • Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada



The Secret is Toastmasters!

As an international student from Gaza Strip, I was earning my Ph.D. in Malaysia. I was eager to learn the leadership, public speaking and communication skills that would help me in my future career. One day, I saw a poster on campus that caught my eye. It read “Toastmasters, Where Leaders Are Made.” *What’s Toastmasters?* I asked myself. *This is what I want!*

I looked for a club near my home and finally found Kuantan Toastmasters club. I immediately joined and started my Competent Communicator projects. I was excited about finishing them before I left Malaysia, and I did.

In 2015, I presented my Ph.D. thesis in front of professors of the faculty of science as well as graduate students. No one knew how anxious I was. I prepared for my presentation by following the Toastmasters guidelines I had learned from each project in the *Competent Communication* manual. The day I delivered it, professors and others in the audience were amazed by how clear it was. When someone asked how I learned to speak like that, I replied, “The secret is Toastmasters!” That became my motivation to continue my journey in Toastmasters.



Naneh V. H.

Naneh V. H., CC

Heart of England club • West Midlands, England



A Safe Place to Fail

In 2012, a few years after our son's sudden death, I sat in a quiet corner of England. For days, I'd have no contact with adults apart from my husband. Once he left for work, I'd take my toddler daughter out and proceed to drag myself through the day. A full-time mother and housewife, I fear I was more like a zombie.

I owe thanks to Sonia, who lived nearby and befriended me. Sensing my isolation, she invited me to her Toastmasters club for some stimulation. Her message to me was essentially "get out of your head and get a life."

My first visit to Toastmasters felt strange. However, a weird pull made me return and sign up.

It was fun. I loved the diversity: a retired pilot, a ballroom dancer and a TV chef, among others. I heard a speech on female genital mutilation and saw a Pavlova baking demonstration. I wouldn't otherwise have met such people, because our friends and family tend to mirror us in terms of lifestyle, outlook and age. Finally, I sensed camaraderie: Everyone's on a journey and all are here to learn.

Ultimately, Toastmasters is a safe place to *fail*. What happens when you freeze? Lose your lines? Monotonously deliver a poorly structured argument? You're

supported, accepted and invited back. Failing safely is a chance to get feedback and bounce back. It builds mental muscle and expands our comfort zone.

As a member of another club now, I'm hooked for good. And good it has been. I've completed my first set of manuals, competed at club-level speech contests and am working through my advanced manuals. I also recently delivered my first-ever non-Toastmasters speech at Ignite Liverpool, an event where people speak for five minutes on a subject they are passionate about [bit.ly/2uDRXw2]. Lastly, as I type this, I've accepted an invitation to speak at the Nursery World Awards in London. Wish me luck!

Robert Gallant, ACB, ALB

Southside Toastmasters • Jacksonville, Florida



Robert Gallant


A Leader Within

In May 2013, I was three years into serving a seven-year prison sentence. I had been addicted heavily to alcohol for almost 20 years and homeless for three. But that fateful month, an organization that was new to me came into my life. It was Toastmasters. I had already pledged to devote my life to self-betterment, and so I dove into the Toastmasters program with delight.

I was a member of a brand-new club and had the opportunity to take part in building it from the ground up. Talk about a confidence builder. I became very involved with the club's leadership team, and we soon developed a well-oiled machine to facilitate the education and mentoring needs of our club's members. I never would have thought a leader was waiting patiently under the darkness of my addiction to spring forth like a lion.

Then, of course, came the speeches. I dove into those with relish as well, taking every opportunity to speak. It paid off in a multitude of ways. I became quite the proficient speaker, and I even won my club's Motivational and Inspirational Speaker of the Year award for 2014.

Speech evaluations changed my life for the better. Not only did they help me accept constructive criticism in regard to my speeches, Toastmasters evaluations also helped me to accept correction in all areas of my life. Humility is one of life's vital skills, and evaluations helped me tremendously in this aspect.

My communication skills also continued to evolve. In April 2016, I went to work on writing a memoir of the victory I had gained over my life of homelessness and addiction. I am now working on my third book while still active in Toastmasters. 

Do you have a Toastmasters success story you'd like to share about yourself or another member? Write it in 300 words or less and send with a high-resolution photo to submissions@toastmasters.org.

Genein Letford: The Power of Music

Award-winning teacher overcomes a speech impediment to find her voice.

BY MARY NESFIELD

When Genein Letford was in third grade, she was labeled a special education student because of her speech impediment; she stuttered when speaking.

Her mother insisted she learn to play an instrument, and she chose the trumpet, mainly because it was one of the least expensive instruments to rent.

She joined the school band in fourth grade and found her voice through music. Now a music teacher, Letford, 38, says the liberating feeling of self-expression and fluency transformed her life. “There was no stutter. There was no stammer. It was just me—able to say fluently, ‘I am here!’”

While she still sometimes struggles with her speech, you would not know it by listening to this District 52 Table Topics speech contest winner, TEDx speaker, keynote speaker, former college athlete, educator and life/finance coach. “She is inspiring, intelligent and has a way of capturing an audience that has you both in laughter and tears simultaneously,” says Brent Tippen, Associate Director of Public Affairs at Gilead Sciences Inc. John Murray, DTM, is Letford’s mentor in the Challengers Toastmasters club in Woodland Hills, California. At first, he explains, “She was reluctant to compete because of her speech impediment, but she accepted my gentle push. When she spoke at each level of competition [in the Table Topics contest], magic came out from within her. She reached for the stars and won the district championship.”

In any given week, Letford, CC, will teach students from ages 4 to 54. As music director at the charter school N.E.W. Academy Canoga Park, she created and teaches a music curriculum for children; older students take her arts integration course at California State University, Northridge (CSUN). She also coaches others in life/finance.

What’s the connection between the arts and finance? you might ask. Letford, the current president of the Challengers club, saw the

“Music and speech are highly connected. ... The manipulation of tone, pitch, cadence and tempo can effectively express meaning and intention more than words themselves.”

— GENEIN LETFORD

relationship between creative literacy and financial literacy through personal experience. Strapped with credit-card and student-loan debt, she says she had to “get pretty creative” to pay off a \$100,000 debt. It made her think about her students and how she might help them avoid financial disaster and give them the tools to thrive.

As Letford explains, “Financial literacy goes beyond basic finances into entrepreneurship skills.” And when she speaks of creative literacy, she includes not only the main forms of creative arts, she includes experiences in “innovation, imagination and creativity.” She believes that to harness the full power of the arts, one must experience four components: *access* to the arts, a *connection* through the arts, *vulnerability* to look within and, of course, *knowledge*. She recently gave a TEDxCSUN Talk about this topic. (You can see her TEDx speech, “Brilliant Yet Broke: The Missing Tools Our Kids Need to Succeed,” at bit.ly/2udsmK6.)

In 2010, the Ron Clark Academy in Alpharetta, Georgia, recognized Letford’s teaching abilities by presenting her with the Great American Teacher Award. More recently, Letford was named 2015 California Charter Teacher of the Year (also known as the Hart Vision Award).

What was your childhood like?

Because of my stutter, I was really shy and quiet in elementary school. But once I picked up that shiny golden instrument, and

sic



Shown here in her classroom at N.E.W Academy at Canoga Park, Letford integrates the different components of the arts into the learning experience of all students at the school. Photo by Claudia Giner Photography

finally mastered it, it was then that I found my voice. I would make up songs, learn songs from listening to them on the radio, and of course, learn the songs that our band teacher taught us. I just love to create, and music was the platform in which I chose to do so. Music saved my life.

What was life like before you played the trumpet?

We all want to express ourselves, and most of us do so early through our speech. But when speech isn't fluent, expressing yourself can be frustrating. So before music, and before competing in track and field in high school, I felt that I couldn't find my place in life. I wasn't really good at anything. But once I put the trumpet in my hand, and once I stepped out onto the track to run, I finally found what actually brought me happiness.

Why did you choose to teach?

When I was 16, I remember watching my mother hold up a shelled walnut in front of a 3-year-old. The child knew the shell was hard but my mom cracked it in front of her, opened it, and gave her a piece of the nut. "You can eat it?" asked the little girl. The amazement in the girl's eyes was indescribable. I never forgot that moment. Just being able to witness the process of discovery was a joy for me and I knew I wanted to be present for future discoveries as well.

You take your students to see the performing arts. Why?

I don't think there's just an achievement gap with students from various backgrounds, there's also an exposure gap. Looking at my own life, my siblings and I were able to advance so much because we were exposed to different experiences early on, either through travel or in academics. I work hard to find grants and scholarships for my students to expose them to the performing arts and other academic opportunities. Most of them see their first classical symphony while in my class. This exposure increases their social capital of what's actually possible and invites them into a world that I hope they'll continue to choose to be a part of in their adulthood.

As I mention in my TEDx Talk, the arts allow you the opportunity to view things from multiple perspectives. To be able to connect the unconnected—and see and create what is not yet there—that is a priceless skill that students will need to have and deserve the exposure to.

Music and speech are obviously different methods of communication, but can you explain their similarities?

Music and speech are highly connected. Speech, intrinsically, is melodic. The manipulation of tone, pitch, cadence and tempo can effectively express meaning and intention more than words themselves.



Letford teaches the concept of a steady beat through dance to prepare her students to begin playing musical instruments.

As we learn in Toastmasters, to master prosody and the melodic structures of speech is very important. Music is no different. But without words, we have only the use of musical elements such as tone, pitch, melody and the careful dance between sound and silence. The brain is wired to hear the message of music even if there are no words.

Tell us about your mentorship program, Alumni360.

I ask my mentorship students, *What are you good at, What do you want to create? What are you passionate about? And can you use entrepreneurial strategies to birth those passions into existence?* It was these questions that compelled me to start Alumni360, a nonprofit mentorship program for middle and high school students from low-income backgrounds. It’s an entrepreneur arts summer camp, and we work directly on the intersection of these two literacies to teach them initiative and confidence.

How did you overcome your speech impediment?

I can’t really say that I’ve overcome it, but I have successfully employed strategies and skills to minimize it in certain circumstances. It’s weird; this stutter that has seemingly been my arch-enemy for so long has now become my partner in inspiring others to reach their full potential. If I can walk onto that red circle and speak for 15 minutes about an idea worth spreading, then anyone with a stutter, or not, can do the same. So I haven’t really overcome my stutter, I just see it differently. It’s now my superpower; it’s now my launch pad.

What is your key message to your students?

I want my students, or anyone I meet, to understand that their story has power and value. I want them to see their story as

a tapestry—an embroidered quilt of experiences, good and bad—that will equip them to live their best life. For years, I was ashamed of the way I spoke and ashamed that I couldn’t communicate effectively. But once I reframed how I saw my experience, it became the thing I use to inspire others. I want my students to look at every experience that they have had, every struggle that they persistently endured, and see them as strengthening cords in their quilt of life.

Where does inspiration come from, and how do you ignite it in others?

My inspiration comes from my faith and my experiences, and the truth—the vulnerable truth—that resides within them. When I deliver my speeches I give my audience a door to walk through—a door through which they can see themselves in their own journey parallel to mine. I also tap into the “potential.” We all have our own pathways in life but the power of potential is universal.

What’s the secret to connecting with an audience?

As Charlie Parker, the American jazz saxophonist and composer, said, “If you don’t live it, it won’t come out of your horn.”

An audience knows when you’re fake. They know when you’re talking about something that you actually have never been through or have no connection with. My most powerful speeches are based on the experiences that I’ve gone through myself. Being financially broken, and climbing out of \$100,000 of debt, I know how to pull myself back to those times and connect with audience members who might be struggling with debt. Dealing with a speech impediment and trying to find my voice, I give my audience the chance to connect with me (even if they don’t have a speech impediment, they’re still struggling with something that they’re trying to overcome). It’s the vulnerability of acknowledging my weaknesses and saying I know how they feel because I’ve been there too.

What advice do you have for those who struggle with public speaking?

It’s very difficult to get good at something that you never do. So even if you’re doing it badly or if you’re doing it with fear, still do it. A trick that I use that’s actually based on research is I tell myself I am excited to speak as opposed to thinking I’m nervous or I’m afraid. The physical reactions to fear and excitement are the same: heart palpitations, sweaty palms, dilated pupils. But if you label your emotion as excitement as opposed to fear, you are more likely to have a better outcome. It’s all psychology.

My second tip is to remember it’s not about you. This is how I got through my TEDx Talk, remembering it’s about advocating for students. You are a conduit of information, transference of inspiration and the messenger of love. When I remember *why* I am speaking—for the betterment of the people in the room and all the people they’re attached to—it makes me focus on what *really* is important: my goal of making sure people live their best life. **T**

Mary Nesfield is associate editor for *Toastmaster magazine*.

Keeping Students

Safe

Speaker's anti-bullying message strikes a chord with youths.

BY OTHELLO CURRY, CC

Imagine a high school gymnasium overflowing with students, faculty, staff and supporters, all roaring with positive enthusiasm. "Each one, reach one! Each one, reach one!" Leading this chant is a charismatic figure named Kevin Bracy, whose fervent anti-bullying message is a staple in Northern California schools.

In 2014 Bracy created the REACH One Alliance, a bullying prevention and character education program in middle schools and high schools. The concept grew out of his frequent speeches to students about the need to eliminate bullying and to demonstrate leadership, vision and character. The "each one, reach one" slogan highlights accountability. Bracy asks for a commitment from everyone: teachers, custodians, students, campus monitors and the school administration.

"We all have the ability to reach out to one other person with kindness and compassion every day," he says.

Bracy, who joined Toastmasters in the late 1990s, is a commanding presence on stage. The onetime professional baseball player, still strong and fit, boasts a powerful voice and a forceful delivery. When he speaks about bullying, he mixes sobering statistics with personal stories of his own journey. Bracy says he grew up in an abusive home environment where his father was violent toward his mother when he was under the influence. Filled with anger and sadness as a teen, Bracy lashed out at fellow students, becoming a bully himself.

"In high school, I was an athlete, so I could say stuff to make people look stupid and feel stupid," he recalled in one speech,



"What I appreciate is even when the room is filled with people, when you are in front of Kevin he makes you feel like you are the only one there."

— EDUCATOR RENEE MELLO

Kevin Bracy speaks to students of all ages about the need to eliminate bullying from all school campuses. Photo by KAMS Yearbook 2016-17

"and everybody laughed because I was popular and I was cool."

His life changed when he was invited to live with a stable family who provided him with encouragement and support. Bracy tells students they all are leaders in their own way, and as leaders they must show compassion to other students and have "zero tolerance" for bullying on their campus.

School administrators say Bracy's ability to communicate with people extends well beyond the stage. "To say that Kevin is charismatic doesn't accurately describe

the impact I have seen him have," says Renee Mello, former supervisor of drug-, alcohol- and violence-prevention programs in the San Juan Unified School District in Carmichael, California. "What I appreciate is even when the room is filled with people, when you are in front of Kevin he makes you feel like you are the only one there. You walk away feeling heard and connected."

Taking the Next Step

Bracy credits his Toastmasters experience for preparing him to be a professional speaker. When he joined the River City Speakers club in Sacramento, California, Bracy was already a successful business owner. He and his wife, Jessica, were co-owners of an off-campus bookstore

for Cosumnes River Community College in Sacramento. Bracy was praised for his speaking ability in business settings, but he wanted speaking success beyond that. The consistent practice in Toastmasters meetings, he says, boosted his confidence and skills to a new level.

“Toastmasters was the bridge [to professional speaking] for me,” he says. “Whenever a speaker was requested, I would volunteer.”

Soon Bracy was hired to travel across the United States giving speeches for Monster’s Making It Count program, aimed at students applying for college. By the end of 1999, he was averaging 140 speeches a year. Meanwhile, in 2000 he came in third place in the Toastmasters International Speech Contest in Region 1 in the western United States.

“Kevin was very focused from the very beginning,” says Marty Taub, DTM, one of Bracy’s mentors from River City Speakers. “He really wanted to improve and actually took the steps to do that. He sought out mentors that could help him in different settings.”

One of Bracy’s most important mentors was motivational speaker Les Brown, recipient of Toastmasters’ 1994 Golden Gavel award. Bracy joined Brown’s Speaker Network in 2002 and traveled around the U.S. with him for two years.

Brown applauds Bracy’s dynamic style of reaching students. “I’ve been doing this work for over 30 years, and I’ve never seen youth respond like this before,” he says. “No other speaker that I’ve ever coached or trained is doing it like this.”

Overcoming Obstacles

Bracy is no stranger to success, but he is also well acquainted with overcoming tough circumstances. As a youth, his painful family situation led him to behavior and academic problems at school. After he was taken in by a supportive family, Bracy blossomed as an athlete and worked hard in the classroom. Eventually, he earned a full scholarship to the University of Utah, where he was a standout baseball player. After college, he played minor league baseball in Canada.

Years later, as Bracy worked as a professional speaker, the national and

local spotlight began to focus on the devastating effects of bullying on students, parents and schools. Jason Harper, founder of the Character Combine, an educational program for sports coaches and athletes, recruited Bracy to work with him at an anti-bullying event. Bracy asked himself, *What in my life can I use for this?* He quickly realized, *Oh my gosh, I was that guy!* He had been a bully. After that first successful event, Bracy became one of the best-known anti-bullying speakers in the area.



Kevin Bracy. Photo by Jenice Ferraro

He was called upon in times of tragedy. When students committed suicide, schools asked Bracy to help bring their community back together. “I remember one time there was a boy in Folsom [California] who was bullied and died,” recalls Taub. “Kevin was just so impactful going out and interacting with that group with the pain that they were experiencing at that time.”

Mello, the former administrator with the San Juan school district, approached Bracy one day after Bracy led a rousing school assembly. She told him, “We need your program, the ‘reach one’ program.” When Bracy replied, “It’s not a program—it’s a chant, a phrase, an assembly,” Mello looked him directly in the eye and repeated, “We need your program.”

Bam, Bracy said to himself. *There it is.* With a sense of urgency, he developed the REACH One Alliance. “I looked at my

experience with schools over the years, and I used my common sense for what I know students need in order to have better self-esteem.”

REACH exists as a self-sustaining campus club on middle school and high school campuses. It features daily messaging and regularly scheduled events. Bracy says his mission is to create a momentous positive shift in school climate and culture, extending to students, teachers, parents and the surrounding community.

Bracy initially instructs REACH members on how to develop as student leaders and reach out to at least one person a day to practice kindness, compassion, inclusion and service. He stresses the importance of academic performance, citizenship and demonstrating “greatness.” (Bracy is known to students as Coach Greatness.) A modified version of the program is also in elementary schools.

“I’m so thankful Kevin stepped out of his comfort zone and started speaking at the elementary-school level,” says Beth Bartkowski, a third-grade teacher at Lake Canyon Elementary School in the Sacramento area. “My students cheer when they know Coach Greatness is coming to visit our room.”

Bracy has a 23-year-old daughter, Kendra, and a 16-year-old son, Kobe. (Another son, Kaleb, died shortly after his birth.) In addition to his efforts in the schools, Bracy works as a trainer, running the Kevin Bracy School of Motivation. “I have a passion for developing speakers from the ground up to earn a living through speaking,” he says.

Clearly, he also has a passion for inspiring young people to do the right thing. Reflecting on his journey toward his life’s calling, Bracy expresses gratitude for the skills he honed in Toastmasters.

“Toastmasters was huge. I’m at a place in my career where I feel very fortunate. I don’t take one moment or one word for granted.” ■

Watch a video of Kevin Bracy speaking: bit.ly/2vgu2Xb

Othello Curry, CC, is a member of Capital City Toastmasters club in Sacramento, California.

Advocating for the Underserved

ESL teacher Leila Kubesch reaches out to aid at-risk youth.

BY MARY NESFIELD

In July 2015, a soft-spoken Ohio child advocate walked onto the TEDx stage, put aside her fear and spoke on behalf of homeless youth. Although she had never done any kind of formal public speaking at the time, Leila Kubesch, ACB, CL, exhorted her Cincinnati, Ohio, audience to encourage children to dream big, just as her grandmother had encouraged her to do. The speech, “How to Dream Big and Pass it On,” was voted Audience Choice.

“I did my best for children,” she says of her talk.

Kubesch started teaching ESL (English as a Second Language) in 1992. She’s a past winner of such honors as the Christa McAuliffe teacher award (named after the high school teacher who died in the 1986 explosion of the Space Shuttle Challenger). She is the founder of Parents 2 Partners, a nonprofit organization in Ohio, through which she offers youth programs, school staff development services and family programs that empower vulnerable family members to help their children achieve success. (Learn more at Parents2Partners.org.)

Kubesch is a member of the Tri-County Toastmasters club in West Chester, Ohio, and served as its 2016–2017 club president. As a young girl, she had a vivid imagination. She never had the opportunity to own a book or even play with a toy while growing up in the African country of Tunisia, yet she says she believed she could do anything. Living in small villages, she dreamed about someday becoming a teacher. Today, her passion is to instill

that belief system in her students, to create for them a vision of their future and set them on a path toward achieving the life they want.

In her 20-plus years of teaching, what Kubesch learned was how many of her students were struggling just to survive. After questioning one middle schooler who was perpetually late to school earlier this year, she learned that his parents

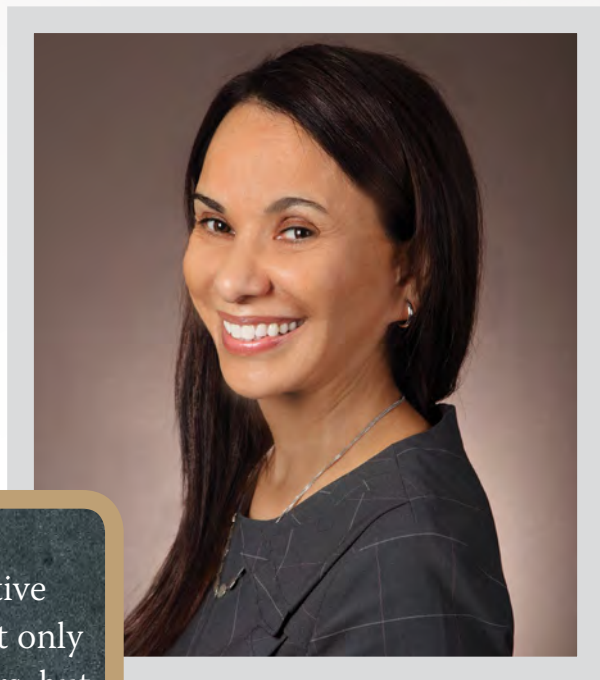
“Imagine the power of positive feedback if we employ it not only with our fellow Toastmasters, but also with our children—or whenever positive change is needed.”

— LEILA KUBESCH

had died in a drug overdose. He was left to care for his brothers and sisters, which for him took priority over punctuality.

A Different Calling

In 2013, four years prior to learning about the middle schooler’s hardship, Kubesch had stopped teaching for three years to serve as a child advocate and activist. She volunteered in 2014 as a court-appointed special advocate (CASA) for kids. “I saw children taken away from good, kind parents and put into foster homes simply



Award-winning teacher Leila Kubesch calls on parents and school staff to help at-risk children achieve success. Photo by Rich Images Photography

because of a lack of beds to sleep on in the home,” she recalls. (Foster care is a system in which a minor has been placed into a ward, group home or private home of a state-certified caregiver.)

She worked to improve the lives of at-risk young people, including those who found themselves homeless after emancipated from foster care (the process of emancipation releases youth from foster care to live an independent life). She mentored the youth and steered them toward resources after they attended the Under the Stars camp, a program she added to her Parents 2 Partners organization. “They [homeless youth] uphold self-defeating



Kubesch delivered her speech “How to Dream Big and Pass it On” last year at TEDxCincinnati. Photo by TEDxCincinnati

beliefs of lack of worth,” Kubesch says, “and have no idea where to begin to seek resources.” She helped the young campers develop a strong support network. In one case, Kubesch observed a 20-year-old with special needs become a mentor to an 18-year-old. “Even those who thought they had nothing to give had a lot to offer,” she says.

Telling Tough Stories

To help her tell the stories of underserved children in her advocacy efforts to extending the age for those in foster care, Kubesch joined a Toastmasters club in 2016, and attended several other club meetings weekly. Eventually she wrote a news article to advocate for an Ohio state bill to extend the age from 18 to 21 for foster care, which passed in June 2016.

Many young people, she says, need a shift in their mindset from victim to victor. “It’s what *they* think about *themselves* that makes a difference,” she wrote in a 2016 article *The Chronicle of Social Change*, “not what *we* think that matters.”

A Return to the Classroom

Last year, Kubesch returned to teaching middle school ESL, and also joined the Ohio chapter of the National Speakers

Association (NSA). At the NSA she met fellow Toastmaster Maureen Zappala, DTM, who admires Kubesch’s approach.

“In spite of her elegant smoothness,” Zappala says, “she understands street-hardened, at-risk kids.”

Reflecting on how her Toastmasters training could help her connect more powerfully with her students, Kubesch asked herself if, as a teacher, she had ever dedicated the time to tell her students what she liked about their work. After visiting several clubs to practice evaluations, Kubesch zeroed in on the principles behind speech evaluations. “Within five months I visited 17 clubs in two states,” she notes. “That club experience elevated my work and my spirit.”

Says Kubesch: “Imagine the power of positive feedback if we employ it not only with our fellow Toastmasters, but also with our children—or whenever positive change is needed.”

Coaching and Contributing

Today, not only does Kubesch teach ESL to middle schoolers, she coaches TEDx speakers to prepare them for the stage. And her school district welcomes her innovative teaching ideas, including the Toastmasters Youth Leadership Program she recently launched there. She also teaches her students social skills, including verbal communication and body language. Through her anti-bullying program (bullyingstopsnow.org), Kubesch helps parents, school staff, administrators and children in grades 1 through 12 to develop skills to negate the damaging effects of bullying.

Equipped with a strong belief in the power of storytelling, Kubesch recently organized a school event in which she invited Toastmasters to the auditorium stage to tell their personal stories. The speakers inspired her students and made them laugh. Afterward, the students wrote thank-you letters to the speakers, and one eighth-grader wrote that she laughed until her ribs hurt, something she hadn’t done in the four years since one of her parents had died.

Kubesch’s next goal is to have her students practice sharing their thoughts,

EVALUATION TIPS FOR THE CLASSROOM

Kubesch uses these Toastmasters-based evaluation tips in her classroom:

- ▶ Connect with the student prior to their speech. That helps give them a feeling of support.
- ▶ Offer no more than what one student can take in. Keep suggestions to no more than three.
- ▶ Indicate parts of a speech that need clarification and point to areas that work well. Students tend to redo all of their work not knowing if any portion of it is good.
- ▶ Go easy on praise. Sharing only positive feedback is detrimental. Many educators fall into this trap in a misguided effort to increase their students’ self-esteem, Kubesch says. This backfires as it quells a student’s ability to accept that their work is not perfect, and educators lose their constructive feedback skills.
- ▶ Keep a student’s dignity intact. Address them by name while sharing what went well in their speech. Address the audience when mentioning what can be improved. Focus on the speech, not the speaker.

ideas and dreams through public speaking in a Gavel club she’s working to charter.

“Kids love her,” says Zappala, “and she’s making a difference.” ■

Watch Leila Kubesch’s TEDxCincinnati Talk at youtu.be/e3LvLIFu214, and read her 2016 article “The Chronicle of Social Change” at bit.ly/2xbcxXa.

Mary Nesfield is associate editor for *Toastmaster magazine*.



ONLINE EXTRAS: Discover how these three educators advocate for youth through additional photos and videos.



Let's Talk Table Topics

What to do when the Topicsmaster calls your name.

BY BILL BROWN, DTM

There is a time in every Toastmasters meeting when eyes look down, avoiding eye contact with the speaker. We have a name for that: Table Topics. The thought is, *if I don't look at the Table Topicsmaster, maybe she won't call on me.* Does this sound familiar?

Yes, Table Topics, the time for impromptu speaking, is what some members relish—and others dread. But is Table Topics really that hard? It is frequently introduced, explained or perhaps justified with a comment such as, “From time to time, in real life, we are asked a question and we must respond right away, without writing out a formal answer.” And that is true. But it doesn't make everyone look forward to the opportunity. Let me paint, perhaps, a stronger picture of its importance and relevance in our daily lives.

Years ago, I was a member of a club in Southern California. One of our members was a manager for a large corporation. One day the news department from a local Los Angeles television station visited his company to do a story on his product and he was the tour guide. Toward the end of their time together the news reporter turned to him and said, “I would like to do a short segment with someone who works for the company—and I pick you.” Suddenly the manager had a microphone and a camera in his face. And his words were to be broadcast on the evening news throughout the second-largest media market in the United States. Talk about pressure. That manager told our club, “If it wasn't for Table Topics, I wouldn't have been able to do it.” I don't know about you,

but that makes Table Topics seem very “real world” to me.

When the Table Topicsmaster picks you to speak, what do you do? First, recognize that a Table Topics response is just like any other speech. It should have an opening, a body and a closing. It should also have a premise—a basic idea that unifies the speech. I suggest that you first make a quick decision on your premise. How will you approach the question? What is your point? That, hopefully, will guide your words. Don't worry. There aren't any right or wrong answers. Fortunately, you don't have to start talking right away. It's OK to pause and think for 10 to 15 seconds.

We gain experience talking coherently and trying to eliminate the ums and ahs that so easily inject themselves when we think on our feet.

Knowing about or having a strong opinion on the topic makes it easy. But all too frequently that isn't the kind of topic you get. Here you have several options. You can make something up. (If you make it funny, it could be a big hit.) You can shift the question to a more familiar, related issue. Or you could change the question entirely. (Many clubs have the rule that changing the question is fine.) In fact, that sounds a lot like the way politi-

cians answer questions, doesn't it? If it works for them ...

Finally, finish with a strong closing. If it is funny, all the better. Remember, Table Topics is designed to give you practice speaking. All too often I have been asked a question where I couldn't even come up with a premise. I started talking and sometimes a direction became obvious. Other times I wasn't so lucky. No problem. We still gain experience talking coherently and have an opportunity to eliminate the *ums* and *ahs* that so easily inject themselves when we think on our feet.

When you first start out, try to make it to the green timing light. If you can't, that's OK too. Many new members talk for just 10 seconds their first time. As they gain experience and confidence, they talk longer. And the first time that they hit the minimum time, the club gives them a big ovation. That is a good feeling, for both the new Toastmaster and the entire club.

You may be one who absolutely loves Table Topics. Then again, you might be like me and hope against hope that looking down will cause the Topicsmaster to pick someone else. But, alas, all too often we hear our name called. When that happens, there is only one thing to do. Stand up, decide on an approach and give the best speech that you know how to give. Oh, and watch for the green light.

Whew! I made it. ■

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.

A 4-Step Formula to

Acining

Your Job Interview

BY JENNIFER L. BLANCK, DTM

How to prepare to impress.

You might be pretty good at interviewing for a job. You may have even searched for information on how to make yourself stand above the crowd. In today's competitive environment, that's a good start, but it's not enough.

The real key to success lies in four steps you can take before your next interview. These steps will help you answer the tough questions better, decrease your nerves and increase your chances of getting the right job for you. These steps aren't revolutionary; however, most people skip at least one, if not more. By completing all four, you will be on your way to giving your strongest interview ever.



STEP 1

Know Yourself

Sound simple? It might appear easy, but this first step involves critical reflection and self-awareness. It will help you with every aspect of the job search, not just interview preparation. It's a step that ideally should be taken long before you ever apply for a job. And it's probably the step that most people skip.

Knowing yourself starts with understanding your values and priorities. Your values can be lofty (e.g., I want to make a difference) or very practical (e.g., I want a short commute). They can include an interest in developing specific skills, making more

money, being entrepreneurial or working on a particular issue. Once you've identified your values, you need to prioritize them. Which ones are the most relevant to your job?

After values and priorities, you'll want to consider strengths and interests. Jan Fiscoeder, career services consultant at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin, Germany, says, "You should consider your own strengths and weaknesses and how to present them. The crucial point in conveying your weaknesses is to present them as challenges or dynamic strengths. For example, if one has a problem delegating work to team members, it's good to mention that one knows about this problem and has developed an open communication strategy to meet this challenge. This, in turn, makes you come across as open to learning and [having] a thought-through personality."

Make a list in each category: priorities, values, strengths and interests, and focus on those relevant to your job search and, more specifically, your upcoming interview.

Using your four lists, you will be able to develop questions for your interviewer. Questions demonstrate your knowledge of the organization. They also show that you're seriously interested in the position, have taken initiative and understand how you could fit in the organization. As you develop your questions, show your knowledge of the organization or industry, when possible.

Know exactly which job you're interviewing for. But don't just read the announcement, study it.

This is also a time to prepare concrete examples or anecdotes that demonstrate your relevant strengths, skills and experience. Paul Binkley, director of student career development at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, says, "Too many people don't know their own résumé. This may seem obvious, but many don't think they need to review what they included in their application. Remembering what you put on your résumé will help you remember different examples to use."

This preparation is especially helpful for behavioral-based interviews, where the interviewer looks at past performance in similar situations as the most accurate predictor of future performance.

You also want to think about your salary requirements. What do you want, and what do you need? Research the field and learn what is realistic for compensation. By doing this ahead of time, you will be more prepared to handle any surprise salary questions.

Fiscoeder notes, "Once you know your values, you are also in a much better position to present your value in terms of salary expectations." Just remember, you want to avoid discussions related to salary until you have an offer; this is when you have the most negotiating power.



**STEP
2**

Know the Organization and the Job

It's time to learn more about where you're potentially going. Of course, you should have conducted extensive research into the job and organization before you submitted an application. Now it's time to revisit that research.

Even if you examined it before, study the organization's website. In addition to the obvious sections, review press releases, executive summaries, what other jobs are offered and even obscure pages. Leave no link unchecked. Know the organization's mission, vision, history, accomplishments and current projects. Review all of the organization's social media channels to see what it's promoting and how it's positioning itself. Follow the organization to stay informed of the latest announcements. Examine the online presence of the supervisor and team members—including social media, blogs, profiles and interviews—to learn about their background and search for common interests.

This is also the time to double check that your online footprint is professional. Make sure you have a LinkedIn profile that is consistent with your résumé. Remove any unprofessional or embarrassing text or pictures from any of your online sites. Employers conduct searches to see how you're presenting yourself, and some can access password-protected platforms.

Review any other information you can find about the organization. Study similar organizations, including competitors. Talk to people in the organization or field. The more you know, the better answers and questions you will have at the interview.

Next, revisit the job description. Know exactly which job you're interviewing for. But don't just read the announcement, study it.

Katharine S. Brooks, Evans Family Executive Director of the Career Center at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, recommends, "When you read the job description, note the characteristics or skills the employer is seeking and then match yourself to them. Be ready to tell stories that illustrate your skills—don't just tell an employer that, 'yes, I am a hard worker.' Instead, explain how you're a hard worker, as in, 'I noticed that your job description mentioned the hard work involved in this position. You might be interested to know that last year I worked on three projects simultaneously while also ...' or any story that illustrates how/why you have the skills or knowledge the employer is seeking." Have two or three anecdotes for each skill or experience sought.

At this point, you should develop additional questions. Beyond the regular interviewing questions you have, what do you want or need to know about this position or organization? Write the questions down, and take them to the interview. An interview can be stressful, so don't assume you'll remember all the questions you have.

In the corner of the page in small print, make a concise list of the key items about yourself that you want to mention. You can refer to this throughout the interview to ensure you've covered all you have to offer.

Practice

Now it's time to practice. Answer typical interview questions, including the ones offered in the sidebar to this article, and anticipate questions related to the job description. Just like Table Topics, make sure you answer thoroughly but concisely. Focus on any questions that challenge you.

Research and try the STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) or CCAR (Challenge, Context, Action, Result) techniques, especially for behavioral-based questions. Practicing with questions from different interview systems can help you add more clarity and depth to your answers.

As you practice, always answer in the most relevant way. (Of course, do this in the real interview too.) Don't share a fact, such as where you grew up, unless it matters. Brooks notes, "It's great to know your strengths generally, but you need to articulate them in a manner that speaks to the position and the organization. Bringing up strengths that aren't needed for the position will indicate you haven't done the research and don't understand the position."

**STEP
3**

**PRACTICE THESE
SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

General

- Tell me about yourself.
- Where do you see yourself in five years? ... in 10 years?
- If you came to work here, what would you be proud to accomplish?

Personality/Character Traits

- What do you see as your greatest strength? ... your greatest weakness?
- What kind of leader are you?
- Do you mind being the bearer of bad news? At our organization you have to say "no" a lot.

Sample Behavioral

- Tell me about a time that a project you were managing was problematic and how you dealt with the challenges.
- Tell me about a time you had to manage a diverse work group.
- Tell me about an unpopular decision you have made. How long did it take to make the decision? Why did the circumstance arise? How do you think you handled it?

Wrap Up

- Do you have any questions for me?
- Is there anything else you would like to talk about?
- Why should I hire you?



“Be ready to tell stories that illustrate your skills.”

—KATHARINE S. BROOKS, A CAREER CENTER DIRECTOR

If you can, demonstrate knowledge of the organization by paralleling what you’ve done and inserting examples of projects, approaches or techniques similar to what the organization is doing. Be concrete, positive and naturally enthusiastic. Take a moment to think about your answers. And don’t forget to smile.

It’s also important to practice out loud. Catherine Stace, career education advisor at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, says, “If you’re a student, visit your career center for a mock interview. If you’re not a student, there are many community organizations that offer interview skills workshops and practice sessions. If all else fails, ask a friend to find someone you don’t know to conduct a mock interview.”

Of course, your Toastmasters club meeting is also a perfect place to practice. Arrange a Table Topics session dedicated to interview questions or videotape yourself practicing with fellow Toastmasters. If you are interviewing via a web-based video platform, such as Skype or Google Talk, practice with it. This will ensure you can use the system properly and understand what will appear onscreen so you can prepare the most professional presentation not only by what you say but also by what is visible to the camera.

Regardless of how you practice, it’s important to vocalize your answers. Don’t memorize answers word for word. Instead, work to reach a comfort level. You might be asked a tough question—one you never anticipated—but your research and practice will make it easier to handle.

STEP 4

Make the Right Impression

Unless you are told differently, dress in standard business attire. Most often, this means a suit. Look completely polished. Take a briefcase, professional bag or portfolio. Bring extra copies of your résumé, and consider bringing references or samples of past work. And don’t forget your sheet of questions, with the list of items you want to share about yourself.

Arrive 10 to 15 minutes before your interview. Any earlier will be an imposition. You can arrive earlier to the general area, as long as you don’t go into the office. Arriving extra early can help you regain composure if you’ve had a stressful day or travel experience. Visit a nearby restroom to put that final polish on your appearance and recheck your portfolio items. For video interviews, log on at least 10 to 15 minutes beforehand to ensure you won’t be surprised by a last-minute software update or technology glitch.

Now you’re ready. Take the time to go through each of these four steps and you will find yourself giving your best interview ever! 📌

Jennifer L. Blanck, DTM, has more than 14 years of career development experience and is currently a freelance career coach. She is a member of Conestoga Club in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and a regular contributor to the *Toastmaster* magazine.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR INTERVIEW

Challenge: Describe the problem you faced or the goal you were trying to achieve.

Context: Provide a few details about the environment or the groups or stakeholders involved. If appropriate, mention issues with personnel, budget, schedule, or others.

Action: Discuss the steps taken to address the challenge described above. Focus on what you initiated, solved, or accomplished and be as specific as possible, using data whenever possible.

Result: Close by reporting outcomes, final measurements, impact on the organization. As with other steps, use data whenever possible.

ToastED: a Toastmasters Club with a Focus on TEDx Talks

Preparing members for the TEDx stage in Cape Town.

BY VERITY PRICE, ACB

Cape Town, South Africa, is host to a number of TEDx events each year. In 2016, organizers of TEDxTableMountain, an independently organized TED event, approached me when I was division director to ask for experienced Toastmasters to help mentor speakers for their upcoming event. Aletta Rochat, DTM (region advisor), Kay Price-Lindsay, CC, ALB, (2012 district speech champion) and I (2015 district evaluations champion) stepped up to work with speakers in preparation of their TEDx debuts. The six-week process we embarked on gave birth to an idea: Why not use the Toastmasters platform to help aspiring TEDx speakers build confidence and competence to present their “ideas worth spreading,” as the official TED slogan states?

What was clear was that TEDx has a huge following of people who are passionate about communicating their ideas but have no formal way to build the skills to do so. It made perfect sense to use the Toastmasters program to help them. I held numerous meetings with local TEDx organizers and we fleshed out the idea of

a Toastmasters club that could serve the TEDx community. Within two months a date was set for a demonstration meeting and, with TEDx inviting its followers to attend, the meeting had an enthusiastic audience of more than 70 who came to see what the new club was about. The reception was fantastic. By the end of the demo meeting, 18 attendees signed up to join. A month after the first meeting 25 members had signed up. ToastED was ready to charter.

Initially, the idea was for the club to collaborate with TEDx organizers by having them speak during a club meeting once a month, in place of Table Topics, to help members prepare for the TEDx stage. But it soon became apparent that this plan was not sustainable; club members preferred to follow the Toastmasters program. With a majority of the club's members being aspiring TEDx speakers, they began using the *Competent Communication* manual to develop and improve their ideas. They recognized the value in building each of the skills as outlined in the manual and worked to incorporate


their newly developed skills into their pitches to TEDx.

What makes ToastED unique is the focus it places on preparing members for the TEDx stage while also giving them access to the broader TEDx community in Cape Town. The idea is to marry the strengths of both organizations and use them to better serve the members. Members are passionate about developing their abilities to share their ideas with power and they love how the Toastmasters program helps them do that.

Many of the club's members volunteer at the TEDx events, and a few of them have already spoken on the TEDx stage. There is even talk of the club hosting its own small ToastED TEDx event.

The ToastED club is also popular with visitors. As a result, membership is growing and meetings are vibrant and fascinating. Members are even creating short TED-inspired meeting segments where they watch a TED Talk and do group evaluations.

In a fun twist, members use a new vintage-style toaster as a trophy for the best contributors at each meeting. Each winner has their picture taken with the toaster in lieu of taking home a printed certificate. It's another addition to a club that is already in a league of its own, and is only promising to go from strong to stronger.

For more information about the ToastED club, visit bit.ly/2i254pV. 

Former Division Director **Verity Price, ACB, ALS**, is a singer, songwriter, actress and professional speaker on innovation and strategic thinking. She's a member of the Two Oceans club in Cape Town and sponsor and mentor of the ToastED club. Watch her TEDxJohannesburg speech at bit.ly/2vZot0y.



ONLINE EXTRAS: View even more photos of members in this South African TEDx club.



Verity Price (third from the right) is a member of the Two Oceans club in Cape Town, South Africa. The former division director sponsored the ToastED club to help aspiring TEDx speakers prepare to speak on the TEDx stage.

The Facts Are In!

The past Toastmasters year (July 1, 2016–June 30, 2017) proved to be one of growth for the organization.

CLUBS

141
COUNTRIES

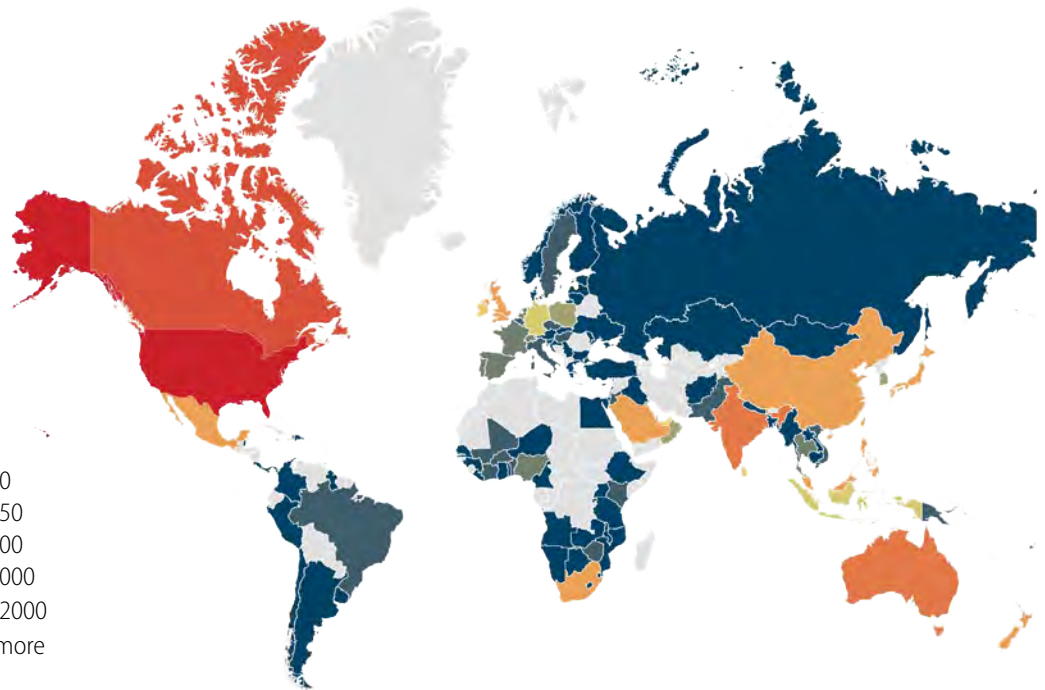
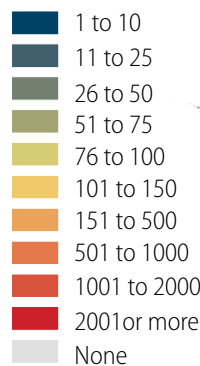
+3.1%
CLUB GROWTH

>16,400
CLUBS

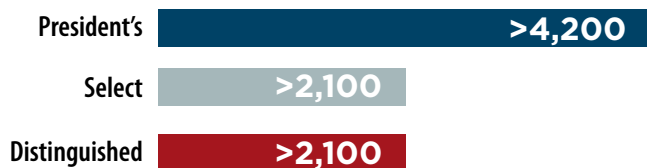
>1,500
NEW CLUBS

51.7%
ACHIEVED
DISTINGUISHED

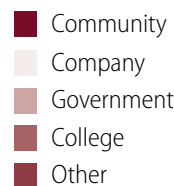
Total Clubs



Recognition

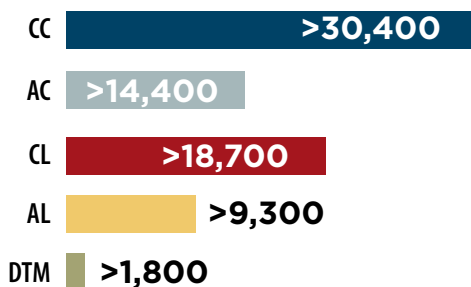


Type



MEMBERS

Awards



Membership

>352,000
MEMBERS*

+2.1%
GROWTH



*Total membership for the October 2016 renewal period (includes dual memberships).

Follow and Flourish

How to master the art of followership.

BY CAREN SCHNUR NEILE, ATMS

“How well the followers follow is probably just as important to enterprise success as how well the leaders lead.”

— JOHN S. MCCALLUM, UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

There’s an old story in which a prophet curses a community with these words: “May every one of you become a leader.” And yet, in nearly every business school seminar and college graduation ceremony—not to mention Toastmasters meeting—the goal seems to be to *nurture* leadership. Can there be such a thing as too *many* leaders?

Think about it: While good leadership is a must, not everyone can be in charge at the same time. Too many leaders in a single group can make for chaos and dysfunction. So in any given organization, followers must outnumber leaders. What’s more, leaders can’t accomplish much of anything without followers. This means the latter had better be good at what they do.

Which brings us to the relatively new field of “followership.” Followership focuses on the ingredients required for a positive, successful relationship between followers and leaders. While leadership training has tended to put the onus for this relationship squarely on the shoulders of leaders, strong followership empowers the rest of us to reach our goals for the good of the company, our leaders and ourselves.

In today’s information age, followers (non-managers, for example) work more

independently than before, say workplace experts. “This requires an entirely different relationship between leaders and followers,” writes Ira Chaleff in his book *The Courageous Follower: Standing Up to and for Our Leaders*. Chaleff is chairman emeritus of the Congressional Management Foundation in Washington, D.C.

John S. McCallum, professor of finance at the University of Manitoba in Canada, says, “How well the followers follow is probably just as important to enterprise success as how well the leaders lead.” McCallum describes the fallout for an organization if a leader can’t depend on his or her followers: poor work ethic, bad morale, distraction from goals, unsatisfied customers, high costs and product quality issues, all of which can lead to organizational confusion and poor performance.

Lead and Follow

In many ways, leaders must learn to follow and followers must learn to lead. In the same organization on any given day, an employee might serve in both roles depending on the situation. Lorraine Whitmore, DTM, club president of Metrowest Toastmasters in Framingham, Massachusetts, sees effective followership as “support,” and considers it inextricably linked to her role as a leader.

“This is my fifth club serving as president,” she says, “and I see the role as constantly alternating between leading (teaching, demonstrating, etc.) and then stepping back and giving the opportunity for the members to rise up and perform their roles to the best of their ability.”

“I strongly believe this is what good leaders do. A large part of our role is to create a space for others to lead.”

Lori Vinikoor, DTM, is a former division governor in Florida. (She served in the role before the title was changed to “division director.”) She agrees that it’s crucial for a leader’s followers to be good leaders themselves. “As division governor, I worked with excellent area governors [now called ‘area directors’] who were leaders in their own jobs,” says Vinikoor, a member of the West Boca Raton Toastmasters.

One of the greatest mistakes in business is the belief that somehow followers are either leaders-in-training—or losers.

She credits those area leaders for helping her division earn Distinguished status, and for helping her achieve a “Division Governor of the Year” award.

“Whenever I got a lead to create a new club,” she explains, “I gave it to one of my area governors. I said, ‘Here, I have a potential club. Meet me at such and such place; we’re going to do a test meeting, and then I need you to help create the club.’ They knew just what to do, and they did it. They wanted to go above and beyond. That’s what it’s all about.”

Followers Are Winners Too

While many of these area governors advanced further on the Toastmasters leadership ladder, a good number of



In any given organization, followers must outnumber leaders.

Traits like these can also help followers nurture successful leaders. That's right: Rob Asghar, a management consultant and author of *Leadership is Hell: How to Manage Well and Escape with Your Soul*, says that by being a capable and generous follower, you can nurture better leaders in your workplace and your everyday life. He offered advice in a 2016 **Forbes.com** article, "Why Followership Is Now More Important Than Leadership."

- ▶ **Be a producer.** Instead of impatiently judging talent, help instill confidence in a young leader who is talented but may not know it.
- ▶ **Listen and affirm.** Listen attentively if a normally reserved staff member speaks up. If they're nervous, reassure them, and be gracious in responding to their comments.
- ▶ **Sit still, already.** If you're at an event or conference, don't leave when a lesser known speaker is announced. Stay, be open, affirming and ready to applaud.
- ▶ **Give generous but honest feedback.** Offer positive comments and encouragement without going overboard.
- ▶ **See it as a dance.** The interplay between leader and follower is a give-and-take, with each helping the other to shine.

This all adds up to great working relationships and benefits for all. And that's good news wherever you are on the followership/leadership spectrum, and wherever you want to be. **T**

Caren S. Neile, Ph.D., ATMS, CL, is an affiliate professor at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton. She is a frequent contributor to *Toastmaster magazine* and has presented at two *Toastmasters International* conventions.

employees in companies and organizations have no interest in ever securing a corner office. Which isn't to say they're pushovers. One of the greatest mistakes in business, say leadership experts, is the belief that somehow followers are either leaders-in-training—or losers.

Chaleff conceived of the concept of "courageous follower" as a model of followership because he felt that "courage is so antithetical to the prevailing image of followers and so crucial to balancing the relationship with leaders."

Management consultant and CEO Nancy Proffitt says, "I've seen too many employees who love what they do and do it well. Then one day someone says, 'So, when are you going to get into management?' Now these great workers begin to feel that there's something wrong with them if they don't get into a position of leadership. But when they climb the corporate ladder, they're miserable."

"Everyone has to have a sense of his or her own purpose," she says. "That doesn't always include having a bigger title or taking a leadership role."

So if you're not planning to become a leader, how can you become the best follower you can be? Here are some tips.

What Type of Follower Are You?

The first step to becoming a better follower is to recognize your current followership style. Robert Kelley, professor at the Grad-

uate School of Industrial Administration at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, coined the term "followership." He describes five types of followers:

- 1 **Sheep:** Passive. Require external motivation and supervision. Lack commitment.
- 2 **Yes-People:** Totally committed to the leader and the goal. Conformists. Do not question what they are told to do or think.
- 3 **Pragmatics:** Stay in the background. Wait to follow the majority on all matters.
- 4 **Alienated:** Critical of others; consider themselves the rightful leaders.
- 5 **Star Followers:** Positive, proactive, independent thinkers. Self-motivated.

Of course, certain leaders and situations can bring out responses that we wouldn't have in other cases, but identifying our general tendencies can help us thrive.

How to Be a Star

Business experts agree that great followers exhibit ego management—that is, the ability to take a back seat when the situation is warranted and to know when to forego personal gain for the good of the team. Other important traits are courage, commitment, competence and self-management, judgment, work ethic, honesty, discretion and loyalty.



Rest in Peace

Which might be hard to do when you see what they put on your tombstone.

BY JOHN CADLEY

One of life's great disappointments is death. There are others—like not winning Salesperson of the Year with the free cruise to Cancún—but death is right up there. You're rolling along in your happy little life and *THWACK!!!*—some guy in a black suit is stuffing you in a coffin and making you look like you just spent two weeks in Florida. The good news is that it's over. "It" meaning *EVERYTHING*. Burnt meat loaf, cat hair, hemorrhoids, elevator music, your brother-in-law, no toilet paper, telemarketers—it's *OVER!* All of it! Now you can Rest in Peace. They'll even put it on your tombstone: Rest in Peace. There's only one question: Is that what you *want* on your tombstone? All your life they've been telling you what to do—fix the faucet, boost sales, get in line, don't pick at it—and now you're dead and they're *still* telling you what to do. What if you don't *want* to rest in peace? What if you want to play chess with Henry VIII or ask Napoleon: "Really—why the hand in the coat?" Don't say nothing is carved in stone because your epitaph is For. Ev. Er. And you didn't even get to write it. Talk about *The Final Insult*.

There are reasons for this, of course. People don't like to think about death, least of all their own, and a tombstone, nice and polished as it may be, is a pretty strong hint in that direction. Even if we did contemplate our own mortality, what would we say? You don't want to brag, but you don't want to tear yourself down either. I mean, you're dead. Give yourself a break. So how do you say just the right thing? You don't. You let someone tell you to Rest in Peace.

Or worse. People who have known you all your life suddenly don't know you when you're dead. So they consult experts, like stoneletters.com, which advises people on heartfelt inscriptions: Keep it short, make it emotional and consider who you want the epitaph to speak to, which may be "a passerby or the loved one themselves." I don't know how you speak to yourself when you're dead but I like the passerby idea. If it were me I'd say: "Don't laugh. You could be next." If

You don't want to brag,
but you don't want to tear
yourself down, either.
I mean, you're dead.
Give yourself a break.

you're still stuck, the website gives you over 150 ideas. There's always *Beloved*—or *Dearly Beloved* if you want to get wordy. You can also go with the somewhat optimistic *Until We Meet Again*. For those with a flair for the unusual, not to mention the unlikely, there's *Sleep Till Eternity* (aren't you already in eternity?), *Once Met, Never Forgotten* (never forgotten for *what* would be the question), and my favorite: *Non hodie, Quod heri* (I am not today what I was yesterday). Well, that's for sure. And despite recommending brevity, the website offers this example from the English poet Thomas Lovell Beddoes: *How many times do I love thee, dear?!*

Tell me how many thoughts there be/In the atmosphere/Of a new-fall'n year/Whose white and sable hours appear/The latest flake of Eternity/So many times do I love thee, dear. For this you either need a really big tombstone or a footnote at the bottom: **Cont'd on adjacent grave.**

I said people don't write their own epitaphs but a few do. Merv Griffin, for instance, the famous American talk show host, wrote: *I will NOT be right back after this message.* And the American comedian Rodney Dangerfield, who insisted on being funny right till the end, dictated the inscription: *There goes the neighborhood.* Shree Rajneesh, the Indian spiritual teacher and mystic, requested that his headstone read: *Never born, Never died: visited the planet Earth between December 11, 1931 and, January 19, 1990.* Well ... if you say so.

Here are some famous epitaphs that cannot be verified but I hope are real:

- ▶ *Here lies my husband Tom—Now I know where he is at night.*
- ▶ *Here lies an atheist: All dressed up and no place to go.*
- ▶ *Wish you were here.*

Of course, there's a simple, easy answer to all this: cremation. All they can fit on an urn is your name and the price tag. *John Cadley. \$27.50, reduced from \$50.* I can live with that. ■

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

eBookIt!

Self-Publishing Solutions for the Independent Author & Small Press

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

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



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


Limited-time offer: includes FREE press release distribution!

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




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

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



Audiobook Creation and Distribution

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



Print On Demand

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



Author/Book Websites

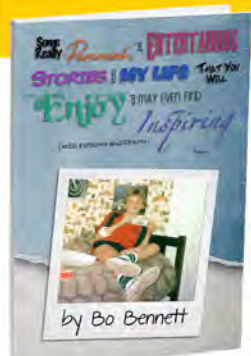
One of the best ways to promote your book(s) and yourself as an author is through your own website. We have developed software specifically for authors and their needs.



Online Course

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


CLIENT SPOTLIGHT - 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>.



Celebrate 93 years of transforming lives

Happy Birthday, Toastmasters!

Show your support by making a donation to the Ralph C. Smedley Memorial Fund.®

Visit www.toastmasters.org/Smedley to contribute today.

93rd
ANNIVERSARY

