

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | NOVEMBER 2017

# TOASTMASTER

**John Mabry**

TURNING  
**TRAUMA**  
INTO  
**TRIUMPH**

How a former actor  
overcame addiction and  
helps others do the same

Capture Your  
Audience with a  
Powerful Opening

How to Ace the  
Job Interview

# Achieving Your Potential

I recently heard a speaker say, “Your current situation does not have to be your final destination.” There is great truth to that statement. Who we are now does not have to be who we will be in the future. Making difficult changes for the better is called personal growth.

When I think of personal growth, I think of the three “P’s” required to make that happen. First is patience. It takes time to make things happen, to develop and grow as a person. Be patient and maintain your commitment. (“Patience is the key that solves all problems”—a Sudanese proverb.)

Second is persistence. With persistence we can overcome almost any challenge. When we put our mind to something and are willing to do everything it takes, we will achieve success. (“There is nothing impossible to him who will try”—Alexander the Great.)

Third is perseverance. Perseverance is the ability to overcome setbacks and maintain our motivation in the face of periodic failures and disappointment. (“You just can’t beat the person who never gives up”—legendary baseball player Babe Ruth.)

Toastmasters is a great change agent. It allows us to take small, positive steps in a safe environment. As we steadily enhance our communication and leadership skills, we begin to feel the difference. Our confidence and self-esteem improves. That difference is the growth in who we are and how we think, feel and behave.

**With persistence we can overcome almost any challenge.**

Ananda Jayawardane, ACB, ALB, is a powerful example of personal growth. He started his career as an engineer and eventually rose to become the vice chancellor of the most prestigious technical university in Sri Lanka, the University of Moratuwa. He attributes his success in large part to his growth in Toastmasters.

“It has boosted my confidence tremendously, changed my attitude about leadership and molded my character,” Jayawardane told me. “It helps my work as vice chancellor, and in other engagements I am much more effective both in public speaking and leadership.”

He treasured his Toastmasters training so much that in 2006 he established a University of Moratuwa Toastmasters club, which he says has benefited many staff members. The university also has a club for students. Jayawardane says it helps them build the communication and leadership skills sought by employers.

So, fellow Toastmasters, don’t think of your club as just a club. Think of it as a laboratory in which you can experiment with ways to learn and grow. Tackle all the projects, accept all the challenges and ask for feedback from those you look up to and trust.

Embrace the three “P’s” of personal growth inside and outside of Toastmasters, and you will soon come to realize your full potential.

**Balraj Arunasalam, DTM**

International President



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“The article on Erin Gruwell and the Freedom Writers is the most inspiring article I’ve ever read in the *Toastmaster* magazine and I’ve been reading it for over 30 years.”

—Arthur Thomas Ware, DTM  
Dundas Club  
Dundas Valley, New South Wales, Australia

### A Passion for Table Topics

I’d like to thank Christopher Cox, DTM, for his inspirational message in the article “10 Tips for Terrific Table Topics” [July]. After reading it, my inhibitions vanished and Table Topics has become my passion. The points he gives are thrilling, exciting and motivating. I would suggest that all my fellow members read through the article and be enriched.

**Tomy Joseph**  
Muhaisnah Toastmasters club  
Muhaisnah, Dubai

### Online Option

It is great to be able to read the *Toastmaster* online now. Thanks so much for all your effort to make the great magazine available much faster. Members might now pass on the printed magazine (the online version is always available) to friends and prospective members—an excellent way to spread Toastmasters.

**Engelbert Olesch, CL**  
Munich Toastmasters club  
Munich, Germany

### The CL Manual

I am surprised that in his article “Your First Few Speech Evaluations” [August], Bill

Brown didn’t mention that most obvious training tool for club roles: the *Competent Leadership* (CL) manual. Our club encourages new members and their mentors to use this manual as a guide when the newbie begins to take on club roles. The first three projects show what is expected:

- ▶ First time: *Just show that you can listen.*
- ▶ Second time: *Demonstrate that you understand the speaker’s ideas and feelings.*
- ▶ Third time: *Help the speaker by noticing and encouraging their strengths and by offering suggestions for how they might improve.*

The CL manual not only guides new members, it also provides an outline for the general evaluator or the mentor, to give feedback. By the time new members do the three projects, they will be well on their way to becoming valuable contributors to the club.

**Elaine MacDonald, ACB, ALB**  
Ladysmith Toastmasters club  
Ladysmith, British Columbia, Canada

### A New Path

I read with fascination the article “Second Chances” by inmate Neal Goyal [July]. The Toastmasters program gives exactly what Mr. Goyal states and much more.

I am a 29-year volunteer for three Toastmasters prison clubs in Massachusetts and every word Goyal writes rings true. Toastmasters has been a part of our prison system since the mid-1970s, and is regarded here as the best program within the system. Many volunteers offer their time and talents to help hundreds of men and women behind prison walls. Coincidentally, one club here in Massachusetts is also named “Second Chances,” and meetings give inmates the opportunity to begin a new path in their lives after making poor choices and wrong decisions.

**George Manoogian, DTM**  
Spirited Speakers  
Middleboro, Massachusetts

### Overcoming Barriers

Having grown up with a stutter, I actively avoided speaking in public. It was just a few months ago that I decided to overcome my fear and observe a Toastmasters meeting. I was determined not to say a word. However, by the end of the meeting

I felt comfortable enough to participate in Table Topics. I then proceeded to join the club and prepare my first-ever speech. It was a nerve-wracking experience, but I have never met such a supportive group of people. They encouraged me from the beginning and I am going to be presenting my second speech at the next meeting. It was a difficult first step, but Toastmasters has done wonders for my confidence and I now feel more comfortable speaking up and participating in discussions at university.

**Mikaela Rijkmans**  
Pinelands Club  
Cape Town, South Africa

### Inspiring Read

The article on Erin Gruwell and the Freedom Writers [May] is the most inspiring article I’ve ever read in the *Toastmaster* magazine and I’ve been reading it for over 30 years. My congratulations to Dave Zielinski for writing it up so well.

**Arthur Thomas Ware, DTM**  
Dundas Club  
Dundas Valley, New South Wales, Australia

### Fun Meetings

“The Importance of Having Fun” (August) by Maureen Zappala reminded me of why I joined Taichung Toastmasters club. Just as Maureen described of other clubs—“fun twists on tradition, fun meeting themes and fun events outside the normal meeting site”—my club added a fun twist to meetings. The Toastmaster of the meeting came prepared with interesting themes and we celebrated holidays. After each meeting we gathered at a nearby restaurant for food, conversation and fun. The atmosphere was fun. Members never hesitated to take on leadership roles, and achieving President’s Distinguished was a piece of cake.

**Bruce Yang, DTM**  
Taichung Toastmasters club  
Taichung, Taiwan

### DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

Write it in 200 words or less. State your name, member number and home club, and send it to [letters@toastmasters.org](mailto:letters@toastmasters.org). Please note: Letters are subject to editing for length and clarity, and may be published in both the print and electronic editions.



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- **John Mabry: Turning Trauma into Triumph**—Learn more about John Mabry’s journey to overcome addiction through additional photos and videos. ▶ 📷
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## Creating Visual Stories

BY MARIAM JEHangIR

Although glass artistry, motivational writing and public speaking are three distinct areas of expertise, for Martiña Reyes, they share a common theme: They all communicate visual stories, be it through the conventional sense with a physical piece of art, or by conjuring imagery in the audience's mind with words. Reyes, DTM, credits her passion for this specific type of communication as her driving force.

A member of two clubs in Puerto Rico, Elite Advanced Speakers and Executive Leaders, Reyes runs Martiña Reyes NLP International©, helping clients—primarily millennials, athletes, IT engineers and businesswomen—improve their visual, verbal and non-verbal communication skills. Her techniques include neuro-linguistic programming, optical emotion decoding, hypnotherapy and public speaking mentoring. Reyes has also penned the book *Conquista Tu Grandeza* (Conquer Your Greatness), which aims to help readers overcome challenges and find their voice.

### Please describe your career path.

Visual communication and art have always been important in my life. In the 1990s, I was enjoying a successful career as a glass artist, but after 20 years in the field, my respiratory health started to decline and doctors said it was too dangerous to continue exposing my lungs to glass pigment chemicals. Despite loving my career, I knew I had to change professions. I started thinking about what I was most passionate about: creating visual stories and impacting people's emotions. So I explored new things and became interested in public speaking. I attended seminars, read books, found a mentor and started working on the business aspect of communication. This route ultimately led to Toastmasters.

In 2003, my fellow artists encouraged me to write a book, because I was always sharing my stories and mentoring them on how to improve their visual message and sell their art.

But I suffered from dysgraphia and dyslexia, learning disabilities that made it challenging to write a book. But the idea stuck with me for several years until I finally enrolled in a master's degree program in creative writing from Universidad del Sagrado Corazón.

I discovered how to rewire and train my brain to express in writing what I could easily convey in my conversations. In 2010, after a year as a Toastmaster, writing and practicing my speeches, my confidence grew and I decided to start writing my first book, *Conquista Tu Grandeza*. It teaches readers the art of finding their own voice of greatness.

Finally, my career as a mentor blossomed when I had the opportunity to mentor Stephanie Del Valle, Miss World 2016 from Puerto Rico.



Martiña Reyes

### Tell us more about that.

I've worked with clients before on personal transformation and communication skills, but Stephanie was a revelation for me.

When I met her, I saw a humble, intelligent and poised 19-year-old woman determined to achieve her goal. I recognized that she was a natural motivator, so before mentoring her on communication skills, I told her my intention was to teach her skills that a true leader should master. She accepted the challenge with greatness.

My first strategy was boosting her confidence using a powerful formula I learned in Toastmasters: **mentoring + evaluation + recognition = success**. Over time I helped her create a new awareness for her mission in life and design a powerful message. By reprogramming her body language, tone of voice, vocabulary, camera skills and emotional well-being and upgrading her confidence on the stage, she conquered her greatness!

On December 18, 2016, she was crowned the second-ever Puerto Rican Miss World!

### What do you mean by “a WE is more powerful than a ME”?

“WE” is about humanity, compassion, collaboration, transparency, and conquests that can inspire others. It's the root of all relationships. We don't get ahead by diminishing each other; we get ahead by helping each other and learning from one another. The goal of a “WE” is to make a better version of oneself.

Mariam Jehangir is the editorial assistant for the Toastmaster magazine.



**ONLINE EXTRAS:** Discover how Toastmasters helped Martiña Reyes become a confident speaker and leader by watching her testimonial video.

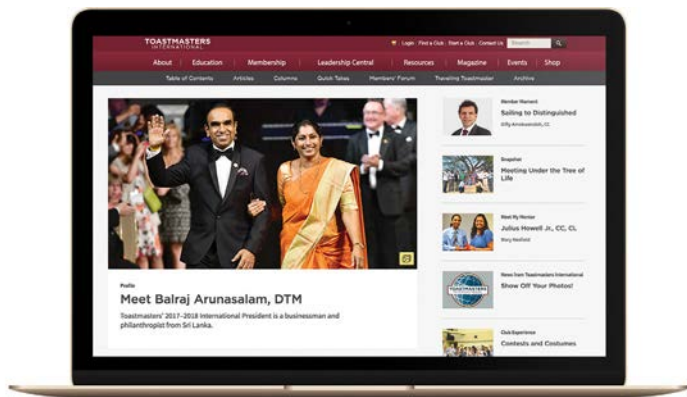


▶ **SNAPSHOT**



More than 15 members from Nantou Mentor Toastmasters and Harmony Bilingual clubs in Taiwan joined together for the 2017 Nantou Chung Hsing New Village City Run.

▶ **NEWS FROM TI**



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## The Six Triads in "Say It With Flair"

In the article on page 15, "Say It With Flair," there are six triads in the text, separate from the triad examples that are pointed out by author Bill Brown. He challenges the reader to find the six. So go read "Say It With Flair," then come back to this page and give it a try. The answers are as follows:

1. Perhaps it is Abraham Lincoln's classic phrase, "of the people, by the people, and for the people." Perhaps it is Julius Caesar's "I came, I saw, I conquered." Perhaps it is real estate's mantra "location, location, location." (anaphoric)
2. It makes the point memorable. It makes it stand out. It makes it linger in the mind of the listener. (anaphoric)
3. Maybe it's the beat. Maybe it's the sound. Maybe it's the mental picture. (anaphoric)
4. Speeches, presentations and conversations. (triad)
5. A certain cadence, a certain drama, a certain melody. (anaphoric)
6. Learn them. Master them. And use them. (triad)

## QUICK TAKES

### ▶ MEET MY MENTOR



## Rick Kantor, CC, CL

BY MARY NESFIELD

Rick Kantor is a consultant, public speaker and adjunct professor at Drexel University Online where he teaches Creativity in the Workplace. A former member of a Broadway production team, he joined the Toast of Petaluma club in Petaluma, California, in 2014. He now takes the stage at conferences worldwide to speak about innovation and creativity.

Cara Wasden, ACB, CL, a former special education teacher, suffers from Tourette Syndrome. Since joining Toastmasters in 2005, she has become a public speaking coach, a middle-school speech teacher and an accomplished speaker. When Kantor joined the club he began mentoring her and, since last year, the two have teamed up to co-teach public speaking and interviewing skills to high schoolers.

#### Cara, what drove you to public speaking?

At a time when I was greatly lacking in confidence and needed something more in my life, someone asked me what I had enjoyed in the past. I said I loved being a tour guide at Hearst Castle and on Alcatraz Island (in California). She suggested Toastmasters, so I joined to become a better public speaker and get past being absolutely terrified of impromptu speaking.

#### What is it like to have Rick as a mentor?

It is incredibly rewarding, both professionally and personally. Rick has had great success in life, but even more admirable is the time and effort he takes to help others achieve success. He is always honest and very clearly aids me in my continuing growth as a speaker, a teacher and a person. He has taught me to be more in



FROM LEFT: Cara Wasden and Rick Kantor

the moment, more flexible and to make the best of every situation. And that makes me a happier, more successful teacher.

#### What have you gained from your experience in Toastmasters?

I went from having no confidence to becoming a confident public speaker and public speaking coach, and I gained lifelong friends and mentors like Rick.

Mary Nesfield is associate editor of *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](mailto:MentorMoment@toastmasters.org).

### ▶ SPEAKING OUTSIDE THE CLUB



Keyem Thomez (left), CC, CL, of Krypton Innovative Toastmasters, in Bahrain, and Alexa Fong Drubay, CC, from Delaware County Toastmasters club, in Springfield, Pennsylvania, meet up at the Global Laughter Yoga Conference in Frankfurt, Germany. As Laughter Ambassadors, both members use their public speaking skills and laughter practices to help make the world a more joyful place.





## ▶ PATHWAYS LEARNING EXPERIENCE

# Strong Start in Singapore

On the day that Pathways, Toastmasters' new education program, launched in District 80, one club broke the ice in a big way. The Thomson Toastmasters in Singapore held a club meeting that featured 10 members delivering their Pathways Ice Breakers.

The speech marathon included a fun meeting format: It was conducted in the style of the popular TV reality series "America's Got Talent." Just as the show's panel of judges assess performers as soon as they finish their act, the six speech evaluators gave their reports on the spot. And they used Pathways evaluation forms.

The club wanted to enter the Pathways era with a strong start and they succeeded, says Dominic Leck, CC, the club's vice president education and one of the 10 speakers. "It was really an enjoyable event, and our members had many takeaways from Pathways," he says. "Besides, it allowed us all to feel new again, especially the veteran members. It injected energy

into our club meeting."

The meeting was held in late July when Pathways rolled out in Region 14 in Southeast Asia. In September, Pathways came to Region 2 in the United States, and the program launched last month in Regions 6 and 7 in Canada and the U.S.

Every member starts in Pathways by delivering an Ice Breaker, no matter which path they work in or how long they've been a member. Among those starting their Pathways journey in the Thomson Toastmasters meeting was 84-year-old David Campbell, CC, the club's oldest member. His speech included reflections on his experiences in World War II, says Leck. Jan Behling, CC, gave a playful



*The Thomson Toastmasters in Singapore celebrated the start of Pathways with a special meeting.*

speech that focused on an ordinary guy being transformed into a superhero upon joining Thomson Toastmasters.

Leck, who is working in the Dynamic Leadership path, says club members are embracing the new learning experience. "Members are excited to learn that in Pathways they can develop skills that are critical and practical in their professional life."

*To learn more about Pathways, visit [www.toastmasters.org/Pathways](http://www.toastmasters.org/Pathways). The webpage includes FAQs, videos and detailed information about the new education program.*

## ▶ MEMBER CONNECTIONS

# Fun in the Wild

Cottonwood Toastmasters members from Cottonwood, Arizona, not only have fun during their meetings, they also have fun outside of the meetings. Laurie Rangel, DTM, arranged with the public relations director at Out of Africa Wildlife Park in Camp Verde, Arizona, for members to have their picture taken with the photogenic giraffe, Kibo.





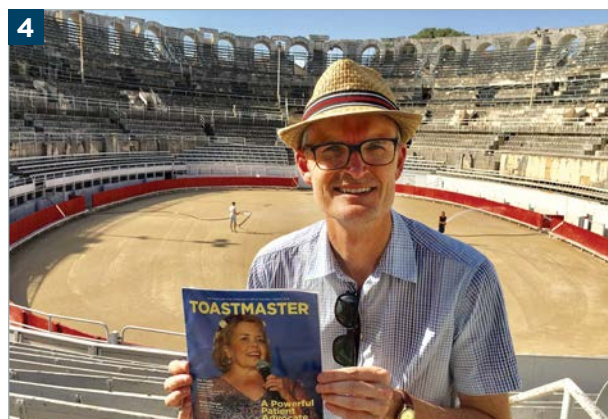



**1 | VERA AMBROSIO**, from Simi Valley, California, poses in front of Mask Temple at the archaeological site of Lamanai in Belize.

**2 | JUSTIN SIGAL, CC, CL**, from Vernon, British Columbia, Canada, competes in the 2017 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Graz, Austria.

**3 | EMILY INMAN**, from Highlands Ranch, Colorado, makes her dream trip to Machu Picchu, Peru.

**4 | PAUL MULROONEY, CC, ALB**, from Wellington, New Zealand, visits the Roman amphitheater in Arles, Provence, South of France.



 **View additional photos** in this month's *Traveling Toastmaster* photo gallery at [www.toastmasters.org/Magazine](http://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](http://www.toastmasters.org/Submissions). Bon voyage!



# Reflections of a Pathways Guide

How I embraced our new education program.

BY JUAN CARLOS VELÁZQUEZ, DTM

**C**hange is not easy. It can be met with resistance or uncertainty. Nonetheless, change is inevitable.

I experienced a change when switching to a new car that has many features and innovations. I was told that I was “not driving a car”—I was “hosting an experience.” The same can be said for the change I experienced in becoming a Pathways Guide. After all, the program is called the Pathways learning experience!

Pathways Guides are Toastmasters volunteers who visit clubs and help fellow members learn how Toastmasters’ new education program works. I became a host of a new kind of ride.

Last year, leaders in District 27 (in the Washington, D.C., area) asked me, in a very sweet and persuasive manner, to become a Pathways Guide. At first, I was resistant and turned down the request. But I received enough pleas for help that I eventually accepted the challenge, my feelings of guilt getting the best of me.

I soon discovered that learning the Pathways program is very much like driving a new car. For one thing, just as many drivers never explore all the features on their dashboard, many Toastmasters never visit the Toastmasters website or establish an online profile. In my club visits, I stressed how important it is to log in to the website before starting in Pathways.

My car’s touch screen includes many features to support the comfort of my ride. In Pathways, Base Camp serves a similar function. Base Camp is the online gateway to the Pathways learning experience. It supports a member’s educational and leadership journey as he or she works on projects, tracks progress, views badges and certificates of achievement, and accesses innovative resources. In short, Base Camp makes the member’s ride smoother.

My car came with a service team dedicated to maintaining my vehicle’s performance. As a Pathways Guide, I was part of a larger district support team—the mechanics for the change experience—that includes Ambassadors, the Chief Ambassador, the Program Quality Director and World Headquarters staff. Several fellow Pathways Guides also became part of the service team. The whole group came together to support members as they started the new learning experience. (Pathways rolled out in District 27 in March, as part of the program pilot.)

I did face some resistance. But I stayed focused and moved forward with my plan for change—my road map. At the core of my plan was communication. I outlined key messages that were consistent with the resources provided by World Headquarters. I framed the message of change in a positive and engaging manner. The metaphor of a car-buying experience made the narrative relatable—and less threatening.

**I discovered that learning the Pathways program is very much like driving a new car.**

Part of my change plan involved setting up a process for transitioning into Pathways. Toward that end, I encouraged clubs to select an assistant to help the vice president education (VPE) answer questions about the learning experience. The strategy was to select a member who could potentially assume the role of VPE for the following program year.

Lastly, I decided to map out three additional virtual support sessions—follow-up sessions to answer members’ Pathways questions—to allow newly elected officers



in July to learn more about the Pathways experience in collaboration with the outgoing VPEs and club presidents. So far, the level of interest and motivation among members and officers in the district is rewarding to see.

As I reflect on the change plan, four key principles have emerged from the experience:

- ▶ Anticipate and prepare for resistance.
- ▶ Frame the change through strategic messaging.
- ▶ Create a team to own the change experience.
- ▶ Sustain the change plan with ongoing buy-in.

I am truly hosting a new kind of ride and am glad to be part of a service team that is making change a smooth and innovative experience. I hope that my reflections serve other members well as Pathways is rolled out in their clubs. ■

**JUAN CARLOS VELÁZQUEZ, DTM,** is vice president education of the Crystal City Evening Toastmasters in South Arlington, Virginia. He has completed Level 4 in the Dynamic Leadership path in the Pathways learning experience.

# “Chocolate Queen” Charts New Terrain

Speaker travels the world to perfect her taste for chocolate.

BY MITCH MIRKIN, CTM

**O**K, you say you love chocolate. (Who doesn't?) But have you ever been slathered from head to toe in warm, gooey melted chocolate in a tropical spa? If that sounds like your type of experience, you might want to meet up with Doreen Pendgracs, DTM.

Pendgracs is a longtime travel and food writer, blogger and speaker, with an avid following. Among other topics, she talks about the world of chocolate, including the challenges of growing and harvesting cacao, and the sustainability of the crop. Her articles have appeared in a variety of publications, including *National Geographic Traveler*, *The Costco Connection* and *Farmers' Almanac*.

Pendgracs, a member of the Toastmasters in the Arts club in Gimli, Manitoba, Canada, is also among the pioneers of a burgeoning form of eco-tourism: chocolate travel. Known affectionately among her fans as “Doreen the Chocolate Queen,” she calls her travel project Chocolatour—a play on “chocolatier,” one who makes confections from chocolate.

“My mission,” she says, “is to educate, entertain and inspire chocolate lovers to gain greater knowledge of the world of chocolate through travel.” The molten chocolate spa treatment, which Pendgracs has enjoyed in locales from Costa Rica to Switzerland, is one of many chocolate travel adventures she has chronicled on her website, [chocolatour.net](http://chocolatour.net), and in interviews on Canadian TV and radio and other media outlets.

“Cacao has a natural chemical compound that releases serotonin and antioxidants and dopamine in your body, so you feel almost like you're on a natural high,” she explained to one interviewer. “When you get the spa treatment, it gets absorbed into your body, and you feel euphoric. It's amazing.”

This past June, she even took a bath in chocolate. That was at Hershey's Chocolate World in Pennsylvania. When Pendgracs says on her website that she's “immersed in a world of chocolate tasting, events and tours,” she's not kidding.

“I've had quite a few chocolate body wraps, massages, pedicures, facials. But I had never had a chocolate bath,” she notes.

## The Start of Something Sweet

Pendgracs' professional interest in chocolate took root about eight years ago, when she traveled to the Dominican Republic on vacation. She and her traveling companions visited a cacao farm, and the experience captivated her. Pendgracs vividly recalls seeing a cacao pod being cut open and looking at the “luscious seeds” inside. The images, she told an interviewer on a Canadian radio program earlier this year, “somehow lodged themselves in my mind.”

Eventually she decided to make writing about her chocolate travels her professional focus. Indeed, she told the same interviewer, the pursuit “has literally taken over my life.”

Along with the lavish experiences she's enjoyed, she has also had her share of less luxurious chocolate adventures: Pendgracs has stayed in a hut in Peru with no electricity and ridden a mule across rocky

## A CLUB FOR ART LOVERS

**Among other benefits,** Doreen Pendgracs credits Toastmasters for helping her acquire the presentation skills she now uses in speaking gigs across North America. On the way to earning her Distinguished Toastmaster designation, she founded a new club. She worked a year to recruit 20 members, and the Toastmasters in the Arts club, based in Gimli, Manitoba, received its charter from Toastmasters International in September 2013.

The club is geared to artists and art lovers. “Most of the members of our club are involved in some kind of creative endeavor, or they are art enthusiasts,” says Pendgracs. During the summer, the group

meets in a museum and art center where all the walls are adorned with artwork. “It's an artistically exciting venue to be in,” she says.

She explains why she targeted the arts community. “Many people involved with artistic endeavors are introverts. They are shy when it comes to speaking in public. I thought if I could encourage them to join Toastmasters, they could talk about their work, and their passion for art, to groups, whether it's at a book launch or art show or whatever.”

Pendgracs says her club has two founding principles: creativity and fun. “We try to make every meeting fun, and we try to focus on creativity in some way.”



“My mission is to educate, entertain and inspire chocolate lovers to gain greater knowledge of the world of chocolate through travel.”

— DOREEN PENDGRACS

terrain in the Dominican Republic. Her focus is on small organic growers and artisanal chocolate makers, not big companies like Hershey’s, although she points out that the U.S.-based chocolate giant now does make a few products in the artisanal vein that’s she’s fond of.

“I’m trying to promote healthy, sustainable chocolate that’s grown in tropical countries, where either the chocolate makers are sourcing the beans directly from the farmers, or where the cocoa growers themselves are actually making chocolate.” She has participated in the harvesting of cocoa in Ecuador and Peru and was also asked to judge at a chocolate festival in Puerto Viejo, Costa Rica.

Her book *Chocolatour: A Quest for the World’s Best Chocolate*, which won a bronze medal in the 2014 Readers’ Favorite International Book Awards, tells of many of the small chocolate makers she has visited, from Europe to the equator. She’s working on sequel volumes.

Come February 2018, just in time for Valentine’s Day, she will be jetting to Hawaii for *Chocolatour’s* first official group tour. She’s doing it in conjunction with Toronto-based Go Ahead Tours.

Pendgracs describes the itinerary: “Hawaii has everything a tourist could want, plus they grow wonderful-tasting cacao there. Our tour will have visits to cocoa farms, as well as a visit to a coffee plantation. We will have a sacred cacao ceremony. And we’ll visit several chocolate shops, and have some of the best chocolate in the world. To me, this is the ultimate chocolate tour.”



*Pendgracs displays her handcrafted chocolate bar in the Läderach kitchen in Vevey, Switzerland.*

Sorry, dear reader, but it’s already too late to book a spot—although she notes she would have loved to have been joined by Toastmasters from around the world. She urges those interested in such adventures to sign up on her website for notices about other future tours.

### **A Colorful Travel Blog**

One consolation to missing Pendgracs’ Hawaii trip is you’ll be able to read about it afterward on her blog—and experience it, to a degree. A talented writer and photographer, she creates vivid accounts of her travels, rich in colorful descriptions and images, and chockful of interesting facts. Her posts typically generate dozens of enthusiastic comments from followers, and her goal is to respond personally to each one.

Here’s a sampling of comments she received on posts about her travels in picturesque New Brunswick, Canada:


“I very much enjoy your writing. The colors, flavors and personalities of the places you visit really shine through.”

Regarding Pendgracs write-up about Switzerland that included a lavish description of a spa treatment she received there, one follower wryly commented:

“Your chocolate massage sounds amazing, although I think I prefer to take my chocolate via my mouth.”

And then there are comments like these, from readers who appreciate the big picture of Pendgracs’ pursuits: “Traveling the world and eating chocolate? Life goals! What a fun niche,” and, “Such fascinating work you do, and all the great people you get to meet!”

When Pendgracs was interviewed for this story, she had just received a box from an Oregon-based company that pairs products from small-batch coffee roasters and artisan chocolate-makers. “The box includes three different single-origin chocolate bars, and three different packages of coffee,” Pendgracs said about the package of goodies she was about to explore. “The idea is to try the chocolate with each of the different coffees, and find the perfect match.”

It’s a tough job, but someone has to do it. 

**Mitch Mirkin, CTM**, is a member of *Randallstown Network Toastmasters*, based in Baltimore, Maryland. He works as a writer and editor for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.



# 7 Tips to Elevate Your Elevator Pitch

Draw potential customers with a 60-second speech.

BY BETH KOTZ

**T**he world of business moves quickly and you may have less than 60 seconds to make an impression that lasts. Enter the elevator pitch, so named to reflect the short period of time it takes to travel between floors. It's a short and impactful summary intended to communicate the most important details of you or your business and capture the attention of your boss, an executive or potential investor. To ensure you're making the most of every opportunity, check out these seven tips to create and deliver a perfect, powerful business pitch.

**1 Go with your gut.** A positive, energetic disposition is key to creating a great first impression, so make sure you're ready to go by eating a healthy, nutritious breakfast. It's tempting to grab a quick snack or skip the meal altogether, but that's a sure recipe for sagging willpower and energy levels. Stay fueled up with a meal of lean proteins and healthy carbs that'll leave you feeling confident and ready to impress.

**2 Present your business as an opportunity.** An elevator pitch is not intended as an advertisement, nor is it a call for help. Instead, hook your target by framing your pitch as an opportunity. If you'd like someone to engage with you and your business, treat them as a potential partner and offer a compelling case that working together can be mutually beneficial.

**3 Keep it simple.** Perhaps more than anything else, the key to a great elevator pitch is ruthless efficiency. Don't get bogged down with extraneous details and

technical jargon. Carefully consider every word that you add to your pitch and ensure that it serves a direct purpose. Remember that the end goal is to quickly communicate your business vision in less than one minute and inspire a desire to find out more.

**4 Remember your enthusiasm.** Your words are essential, but they only represent a small portion of your pitch. A beautifully worded pitch delivered without joy is bound to land with a thud, but kindling enthusiasm and anticipation is a surefire way to keep your message lodged in the front of a potential investor's mind. Use your pitch as a chance to share your passion. Practice delivering it in a way that conveys your excitement and conviction.

**5 Cut the keywords.** The business world is rife with banal buzzwords and overused execuspeak. Scrap these canned clichés and set yourself apart by crafting a wholly original speech that highlights what makes you and your business unique. To ensure that your speech flows naturally and doesn't sound like a soulless infomercial, have someone read it aloud to you and keep an ear out for any words or phrases that sound overly trite or formal.

**6 Build the hype.** Assuming you've managed to hook your listeners effectively, the next step is to demonstrate legitimacy and build some real excitement. Have you recently won a prestigious award or graduated from a premier business school? Work those details into your brief message, along with any other outstanding accomplishments that speak to your

business bona fides. It's also a good idea to provide a bit of financial background. Inform your listeners that you've identified a monetary target and you're working to secure the funding you need for your venture. If it's relevant to your industry, you may also wish to work in a mention of your follower count on social media.

**7 Find common ground.** After you've done the dirty work of making your pitch, be sure to close with some conversation. Remember that the goal of an effective business pitch is to create a connection, and the quickest way to do that is to find common ground with your audience upon which to begin building a relationship. Let others talk and take a genuine interest in what they have to say, paying particular attention to shared interests and aspirations. Follow up by asking insightful questions, and remember—you can never go amiss with a few kind words!

Summarizing your business venture and capturing the interest of your audience in the span of 30 to 60 seconds is no small task, but it doesn't have to be a complicated affair. Armed with the tips above, and some Toastmasters confidence, you can craft a perfect pitch that's sure to drum up interest and leave an impression on your listeners. **T**

**Beth Kotz** is a contributing writer to **Credit.com**. She specializes in financial advice for female entrepreneurs, college students and recent graduates. She earned a degree in Communications and Media from DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois, where she continues to live and work.





# Say It With Flair

Enhance your speech's message with rhetorical devices.

BY BILL BROWN, DTM

“A rose by any other name  
would smell as sweet.”

—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

**W**e like objects that have a pleasing aroma, that land pleasantly in the nose. Likewise, we like sounds that land pleasantly in the ear. In addition to songs and poems, phrases can also have a pleasant pattern to them, particularly when rhetorical devices are employed, like the ones discussed in Project 4 of the *Competent Communication* manual.

Perhaps it is Abraham Lincoln's classic phrase, “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” Perhaps it is Julius Caesar's “I came, I saw, I conquered.” Perhaps it is real estate's mantra “location, location, location.” These are known as **triads**.

We like **anaphora**, as used in Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I Have a Dream* speech. In eight successive paragraphs, King begins with those words—“I have a dream.” This is a powerful device and it is, in my opinion, why that speech is so memorable.

We like **alliteration** and **rhyme**, such as former U.S. Vice President Spiro Agnew's “nattering nabobs of negativism,” and O.J. Simpson lawyer Johnnie Cochran's “If the glove doesn't fit, you must acquit.” Alliteration doesn't even have to start with the same letter. What are the Three R's? “Readin', Writin' and ‘Rithmetic.”

We like **metaphors** and **similes**, like Shakespeare's “all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players.” Or the phrase “He stood there like the Rock of Gibraltar”?

We like **hyperbole**, such as, “He was as big as a grizzly bear, and twice as mean.”

We like **antithesis**, like American Founding Father Patrick Henry's “Give me liberty or give me death,” and John F. Kennedy's “Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country.” This is the technique where you pair exact opposites.

And we like **contrapuntal turn-arounds**, like Kennedy's “... never negotiate out of fear, but never fear to negotiate.” This is the technique where you switch words around in a phrase.

Did you notice what I did? In the last six paragraphs, I began with the words “We like ...” That is **anaphora**. See how easy it is? You can even combine techniques. Anaphoric triads and alliterative or rhyming triads are very effective tools.

When I was growing up, one of my favorite television programs was *The Adventures of Superman*. The show began with an opening that included these words, “It's a bird ... It's a plane ... It's Superman.” That is an anaphoric triad. The show aired about 60 years ago, and I still remember that line.

Are you competing in a Toastmasters contest? In one of my contest speeches, I talked about trials in our lives and said, “Sometimes they slow you down, sometimes they knock you down, and sometimes they turn your life upside down.” Not only is that an anaphoric triad, it includes a form of rhyming, as well, where I finished with the same word each time. If you want help with alliteration or rhyming, check out [thesaurus.com](http://thesaurus.com) and [rhymetimer.com](http://rhymetimer.com).

There is something satisfying about a rhetorical device that, when employed, stands in sharp contrast to a plain construction. It makes your point memorable.

It makes it stand out. It makes it linger in the mind of the listener.

Maybe it's the beat, maybe it's the sound, maybe it's the mental picture. Whatever the reason, rhetorical devices enhance the effectiveness and longevity of your message. That is reason enough to include them as often as we can in our speeches, presentations and conversations. But there is another interesting factor—they are fun to say. I learned this in the voice-over work I do. Phrases that have the right cadence more easily roll off of your tongue. And that enables you to say them with more flair.

My favorite rhetorical device is the triad. For some reason, most people like things listed in threes. No one seems to definitively know why, but I think that it is because they give us a feeling of completeness. In fact, triads are so comfortable that you can include as many of them as you want. They never wear out their welcome. In a five-to-seven-minute speech, I sometimes include as many as 15 to 20 of them.

In addition to the triad quotes above, I have used six triads myself within this article. Can you find them? I'll give you a hint—four of them are anaphoric. To find the answers, go to page 7.

The spoken word, just like a song, has a certain cadence to it, a certain drama, a certain melody. And each of these is enhanced by using rhetorical devices. Learn them. Master them. And use them—often. ■

**Bill Brown, DTM**, is a speech delivery coach from Las Vegas and a member of *Jackpot Speakers*, which specializes in speech evaluation. Learn more at [www.billbrownsspeechcoach.com](http://www.billbrownsspeechcoach.com).



# Highlights

## from the **2017 Inter**

The 86th Annual Toastmasters International Convention drew a crowd of nearly 2,400 people from 51 countries to learn, network and celebrate during the four-day program held August 23-26 at the Vancouver Convention Centre in British Columbia, Canada. Close to 350 attendees experienced the convention for the first time.

At the colorful Opening Ceremonies, keynote speaker Delatoro McNeal II gave an energetic presentation titled "Toastmasters to Top Speaker," revealing his goal strategies and motivating the audience to achieve their own aspirations. Another distinguished keynote speaker was this year's Golden Gavel award recipient, Erin Gruwell, who was honored for her commitment to helping struggling students through the art of communication. She captured her high school students' collective journey in the best-selling book *The Freedom Writers Diary*, which also became a critically acclaimed movie, *Freedom Writers*. Gruwell's moving story about transforming the lives of her former students left many audience members in tears as they gave her a standing ovation.

### Highlights

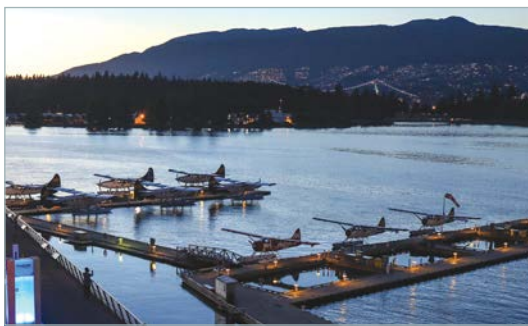
Six members earned the title of Accredited Speaker. Congratulations to Clare Crowther, ACS, ALB, from Brough, England;

Donny Crandell, ACS, ALB, from Reno, Nevada; Robert Cravalho, DTM, from Honolulu, Hawaii; Joseph Grondin, ATMG, ALB, from Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada; Angela Louie, DTM, from Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada, and Freddi Dogterom, DTM, from Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, for their achievements. Accredited Speaker is an elite title reserved for those who combine expert knowledge in a particular subject with a mastery of public speaking. (Applications for 2018 will be accepted from January 1 to February 1.)

During the Hall of Fame ceremony, 14 Toastmasters districts were recognized as President's Distinguished. In total, 30 districts earned Distinguished recognition for their efforts to help build and support clubs. Of those 30 districts, 10 earned Excellence in Leadership for achieving Distinguished District for three or more consecutive years.







# national Convention

BY SHANNON DEWEY

Toastmasters from around the world had fun in scenic Vancouver.

During the Annual Business Meeting, delegates voted in favor of Proposals A-G, which include amendments to the Bylaws of Toastmasters International and Club Constitution for clubs of Toastmasters International. Proposal A (Dues Payments: Methods); Proposal B (Dues Payments: Timing); Proposal C (International Leadership Committee Service Timeline); Proposal D (Floor Candidacy Prerequisites); Proposal E (International Director Qualifications); Proposal F (Minimum Vote Percentage); Proposal G (Honorary Club Membership) were passed. The minutes of the Board of Directors meeting is available on [www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org).

The Smedley Fund 5K Run/Walk was a highlight for 252 attendees. The convention resulted in more than \$30,000 being raised for the Ralph C. Smedley Memorial Fund\*.

## New Executive Committee

Balraj Arunasalam, DTM, of Colombo, Western Province, Sri Lanka, was installed as the new International President during the President's Inauguration. A businessman and philanthropist, he joined Toastmasters 28 years ago and played a major role in the growth of Toastmasters in Sri Lanka. Lark Doley, DTM, of

### TOP LEFT TO RIGHT:

- ▶ Golden Gavel Award recipient Erin Gruwell.
- ▶ Delegates voting at the Annual Business Meeting.
- ▶ First-time attendee with a friend from Taipei, Taiwan.
- ▶ Host District Chair and Past International President Pat Johnson, DTM, holds Canadian flag during the Opening Ceremonies.
- ▶ A scenic photo of Vancouver.
- ▶ Keynote speaker Delatorro McNeal II.

### BOTTOM LEFT TO RIGHT:

- ▶ District 41 leaders are recognized for being President's Distinguished during the Hall of Fame ceremony.
- ▶ The many volunteers serving as Helping Hands pose for a moment.
- ▶ The top three winners in the World Championship of Public Speaking: (from left) Simon Bucknall, Manoj Vasudevan and Kevin Stamper.
- ▶ International President Balraj Arunasalam, DTM, with his wife, Saru.





**LEFT TO RIGHT:**

- ▶ *The six new Accredited Speakers: Clare Crowther, Donny Crandell, Joseph Grondin, Angela Louie, Robert Cravalho and Freddi Dogterom.*
- ▶ *Gregg Thompson, DTM, from Chicago, wins the inaugural Smedley 5K Run/Walk.*
- ▶ *Members shake loose at the President's Dinner Dance.*

Jonestown, Texas, became the new International President-Elect. The 2017–2018 Executive Committee also includes First Vice President Deepak Menon, DTM, of New Delhi, India, and Second Vice President Richard Peck, DTM, of Seymour, Connecticut. Seven new members of Toastmasters International's Board of Directors were elected for the 2017–2019 two-year term.

**Education Sessions**

Seven education sessions were held by motivational speakers and leadership experts. Here's a brief overview of the speakers and their sessions:

Mark Hunter, DTM, 2009 World Champion of Public Speaking, held a leadership workshop on President Elect Training Sessions (PETS), a six-hour program designed by leaders in District 69 to complement club officer training. He also led an education session titled "The Voice of the Bonsai—A Conversation in Leadership."

Award-winning columnist, author and national champion storyteller Kindra Hall shared her take on the power of strategic storytelling. In her session, Hall taught audience members how to access the unlimited supply of stories within, discover storytelling mistakes and how to leverage the power of strategically crafted stories.

Shailee Basnet, a professional speaker and freelance trekking guide, inspired the attendees of her session as she told her story of climbing Mount Everest, and taught them how impossible feats can be accomplished through tiny, yet persistent steps.

Corporate trainer and speaker Mohamed Ali Shukri gave a presentation titled "Life in Your Speech," where he shared tips on finding topics that bring life to you and your speech.

David Dye, an internationally recognized expert in leadership and employee engagement, inspired his audience with motivating, yet practical tools, tactics and techniques to use to win well as a leader.

Diane Ciotta's informative session revealed a key philosophy in sales, which is to sell from your heart—not your head. Ciotta, a professional keynote speaker and entrepreneur, taught audience members ways to initiate productive activity with confidence,

why focusing on meeting the needs of others fulfills personal desires and more.

Sandra McDowell, MA, CEC, PCC, a sought-after speaker and facilitator, spoke on the subject of neuroleadership, and attendees learned about the conditions which support and derail leadership intentions, along with strategies to support effective leadership.

**Speech Contests**

More than a hundred contestants participated in the International Speech Contest with 10 finalists emerging for the World Championship of Public Speaking: Katina Hunter, Yolanda Bynum, John Andrews, Tristan deMontebello, Saveen Hegde, Aditya Maheswaran, Godfrey McAllister. The winner was Manoj Vasudevan from Singapore (see opposite side.) Second- and third-place winners were Simon Bucknall, ACB, CL, an entrepreneur from London, England, with his speech "What James Bull-ock Taught Me," and Kevin Stamper, a pastor from Palm Harbor, Florida, with his speech "Speak Up."

Winners of the 2017 Taped Speech Contest (a category for members of undistricted clubs) were also announced. First place: Harry Karanja, ACS, ALS, from Nairobi, Kenya. Second place: Mathew George, from Nairobi, Kenya. Third place: Lorraine Taylor, DTM, from Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

If you missed this year's convention, you can start planning for Toastmasters International's 87th Annual Convention in Chicago, Illinois, in 2018. **T**

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

**A SONG FOR TOASTMASTERS**

The 2016 Toastmasters International Convention is still a fond memory for those who attended. If you weren't able to make it to Washington, D.C., last year to watch the opening act, *The Water Coolers*, here is your chance to enjoy the exclusive song they wrote, arranged and performed just for Toastmasters. You can listen to "Toastmasters Champions," based on the famous song "We Are the Champions" by Queen, at [bit.ly/2eLCzIB](http://bit.ly/2eLCzIB). Feel free to share with fellow members and guests.



# Meet the 2017 World Champion of Public Speaking

Manoj Vasudevan from Singapore rises above 30,000 participants to win world's largest speech contest.

**W**ith a speech titled "Pull Less, Bend More," Manoj Vasudevan won the Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking® on Friday, August 25, during the International Convention in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. It was his third time reaching the speech contest finals; he placed third with a similar speech in 2015.

"This feels surreal; a dream come true," said Vasudevan, a leadership coach and management consultant from Kerala, India, who now lives in Singapore.

He claimed his World Champion of Public Speaking title with a humorous tale about the value of flexibility in relationships, illustrated with a story of his own marriage. He cited his mother's sage advice: "You fall in love because of Cupid's arrow. But what keeps you in love is Cupid's bow. You see, the bow and its string have a great partnership; the more the string pulls back, the more the bow bends. ... When she pulls, you bend. When you pull, she bends. If you pull too hard, your relationship will break."

Balancing humor and sincerity in his speech, Vasudevan said unity in relationships comes from compromise. "No matter what our differences are, when choosing to pull less and bend more, we can stay together."

This year's contest was held at night for the first time, and in a subsequent interview Vasudevan said he had to be



flexible in his anticipation of how the audience would react. While giving his speech, he adjusted his delivery to what he felt was a lower energy level in the audience than when the contest was held in the morning. He told *Business Insider* that he toned down his delivery to "avoid coming across as abrasive" and lowered his expectation that the audience would laugh at his jokes.

As a consultant and CEO of his company, Thought Expressions, Vasudevan has more than two decades experience working with multinational companies and coaching executives, diplomats and entrepreneurs in Asia, North America and Europe. The author of a book called *Leadership Lessons from the Mousetrap*, Vasudevan was among the top 25 stand-up comedians at the 2012 International Comedy Festival in Hong Kong.

Like most Toastmasters, he wasn't always a polished speaker. He started his professional life as an electrical engineer and eventually hit a ceiling in his career

where he was told by a superior that he "had reached his potential" and "didn't have what it takes to get to the next level." He has since invested years in training to build five core skills, public speaking being one of them. He joined Toastmasters in 2008 but says he was so "petrified" of public speaking that it took him nine months to give his first speech. Now an Advanced Communicator Silver and Competent Leader, he is a member of Toastmasters Club of Singapore and has been honing his skills in speech contests for many years.

As a professional speaker, he admits to still getting nervous on occasion, but the key to overcoming it is to think about the audience's needs and not be focused on himself. "Public speaking is not about impressing the audience," he says, "it's about sharing knowledge." 📺



**ONLINE EXTRAS:** Watch the top three WCPS winners and view even more photos of convention.

# Let's Get Digital

How District 73's digital efforts increased public awareness and member engagement.



BY MICHAEL SLOAN, CC

From listening to iTunes to tracking our fitness levels on Fitbits or communicating on Skype, we take advantage of digital technology to be more efficient. With technology moving so quickly, how can members or clubs benefit and capitalize on digital innovation?

As the 2015-2016 Public Relations Manager of District 73, in Australia, I experienced firsthand our district's digital transformation. We relaunched our website, moved our newsletter and district communications to an email marketing service and revitalized our social media platforms. While going digital was challenging at first, it helped modernize the member experience and led to a significant upturn in member engagement and online awareness of Toastmasters within our district.

## Digital Innovation Is Exciting

"The best aspect of technology availability is that it challenges clubs to be more creative," says Viranga Ratnaik, ACB, ALB, District 73 newsletter editor. Does your club or district website, newsletter or social media create energy and enthusiasm among members and visibility for potential guests?

By improving our offerings, District 73 generated excitement and helped attract more members and guests. The new website produced a 30 percent increase in website traffic alone and underlined the importance of having a dynamic 24/7 advertisement. Andrew Cox of The Hope Factory, a full-service digital agency based in Melbourne, reinforces this view: "A simple, clean and stylish website design can make an enormous difference to how people perceive your brand and the services you offer. More important, however, are clear calls to action that encourage visitors to take action."

By archiving old information, refreshing the format and adding extra features

such as a blog and events listings, we made our district website more engaging and easier to use. Darrell Pitt, DTM, president of Fitzroy Toastmasters and vice president public relations at Carlton Toastmasters in Melbourne, believes an attractive website is one of the most important marketing tools of the modern age. The domain name, embedded in your website's URL, is a "24-hour-a-day advertisement for your club and can be used on every piece of marketing material that goes out for the club: pamphlets, posters, business cards, newspaper advertisements, on other websites, emails ... the list goes on."

We also became active on social media, posting pictures and links to articles and encouraging members to share their club news. Refreshing our website and going digital with our communications produced a huge injection of energy for existing members to re-engage with the district and each other.

To generate maximum exposure for our digital launch, we also ran some traditional advertising campaigns on trains, buses and trams, and ran promotions asking members to take photos or selfies with our advertisements.

## Consistency In Your Communications

Going digital also allows you to streamline your processes. By moving our district newsletter and email communications to MailChimp, an email marketing platform that offers a free entry-level service suitable for club mailings, we could be more consistent and professional in our messaging and more creative in our approach. By having a hook or catchy blurb in our messages, we encouraged people to click on the hyperlink for more information, which would feed back to our new website. MailChimp allows us to automate our emails, including tracking, segmenting and scheduling.

With applications such as Google Docs, WordPress or MailChimp, administrators have greater usability and access whenever and wherever they like via a tablet, mobile or laptop/desktop. It reduces the need to be at home or work to update and share important information.

## Understand and Connect with Members

Moving to digital platforms allows you to collect data to better understand your members and tailor your planning to their needs. MailChimp, Google Analytics, Buffer and Survey Monkey allowed us to collect data to make better and faster decisions. The platforms assisted us in measuring performance and delivering experiences and information that members want.

Using MailChimp and Google Analytics features, we can track email openings and visitors to our website, measure the success of advertising campaigns and uncover the specific pain points that users are experiencing when they visit our website. We also found Buffer a valuable time saver in managing social media accounts (e.g., Twitter and Facebook), and Survey Monkey let us survey existing members. Using the feedback from Survey Monkey, we could schedule, publish and analyze all our posts in Buffer in one place, which influenced the types of posts we did in the future.

With so many digital tools available, we believe that the available technology presents an exciting opportunity to breathe life into your Toastmasters club and increase member engagement. The possibilities are endless. **T**

*Michael Sloan, CC, CL, is a member of Talking Point at Docklands club in Victoria, Australia, and was District 73's public relations manager for the 2015-2016 year.*



## 3 Social Media Platforms Every Club Needs

Use Meetup, Facebook and Twitter to promote meetings and connect members.

BY ALLISON LIPS, CC

**N**ow that Toastmasters is rolling out the Pathways learning experience, which modernizes its education program, it should give all of us even greater incentive to bring our clubs into the 21st century through social media.

You may think that maintaining an active social media presence is easier said than done. With a new platform popping up every other day claiming to be the next big thing, it is tempting to give up rather than navigate the tangled web of the internet.

The good news is that it is not necessary, nor even appropriate, to be on every social media site in existence. Snapchat may be big with the kids, but posting a photo with cartoon dog ears added to the image does not exactly say “professional organization.” And it certainly does not exude the air of respectability that Toastmasters deserves. Instead of tracking down every social media site, focus on cultivating an audience for your club on Meetup, Facebook and Twitter.

**Meetup** is a great starting point because it is the easiest and most effective way to find new members for your club. The site is the digital equivalent of a library’s community events board. My club, Freehold Phrasers, finds it indispensable. Our Meetup group has a captive audience of about 300 members who are reminded of every club meeting and can let other members know they are attending. Many members who never thought they would join an organization dedicated to public speaking checked out Toastmasters because they noticed others participating.

**Facebook** works best when used to show potential members your club’s personality and keep members informed of upcoming and past events by posting photos, videos and status updates, or tagging them in relevant posts. Keep in mind, unless your club pays to advertise on Facebook, your page’s reach will be limited and your visitors will most likely be people who know the title of your club or the extended network of your active followers (those who react, comment, share or otherwise interact with your posts). The good news: advertising can work with a variety of budgets and you can decide how often you want to run an ad campaign and for how long. Facebook should be used in conjunction with Meetup.

**Twitter** has a thriving Toastmasters community. It gives your club the opportunity to reach out to other members all over the world and seek inspiration from them. Through active participation, club members can make friends from Nebraska to New Zealand to Ireland and beyond. Who knows? Members may even get the chance to meet some of their new friends at the Toastmasters International Speech Contest, or they may come to your town and visit your club.

Once you establish your club’s Meetup, Facebook and Twitter accounts, it is important to keep your sites updated with useful information. Doing this doesn’t have to be time-consuming.

Meetup allows you to schedule a standing appointment, so you do not have to enter each meeting one at a time from

now to eternity. As for Facebook and Twitter, both sites allow you to use Hootsuite or Buffer, which are websites in which you can “set it and forget it.” The free versions of Hootsuite and Buffer limit the number of posts that you can schedule at one time. For Buffer, the limit is 10, so save the \$10 a month charge and take a half hour each week to schedule the next week’s posts. And be creative with your posts; they can include articles and videos. And be sure to log in to your club’s pages a few times a week (especially Twitter), to keep up with the latest news in the Toastmasters world.

But remember, Hootsuite and Buffer are tools. They will make your life easier, but they are not a substitute for conversation and should not be abused. Scheduling posts ahead of time is easy, but so is mindlessly sharing or retweeting someone else’s posts. Your followers will not appreciate excessive sharing that adds no value. Even if your club does not post frequently, someone is bound to stumble upon your social media pages. However, inactivity does not make your club look attractive to potential members. Old posts may even cause people to turn away because they think the club has disbanded.

Meetup, Facebook and Twitter are platforms with the biggest Toastmasters presence, but regardless of how you approach social media, experiment to find out which networks work for you and what types of posts are right for your club. **T**

**ALLISON LIPS, CC**, is a member of the Freehold Phrasers and Talk of Monmouth Toastmasters clubs in New Jersey.

## JOHN MABRY:

Turning

*Trauma*  
into

*river*

How a director at a substance abuse treatment center beat distress and addiction.

BY DAVE ZIELINSKI

The traumatic events that led John Mabry to seek refuge in opioids and alcohol might have kept many people buried under their oppressive weight for a lifetime. But instead, Mabry, who gained notoriety as an actor and stuntman in Hollywood, overcame those addictions to become a powerful voice in helping to combat the



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opioid epidemic, which was recently declared a national emergency in the United States.

Mabry's experience in Toastmasters also is characterized by similar amounts of perseverance and courage, as he transcended a daunting fear of public speaking and two failed attempts to join Toastmasters clubs to become the accomplished and sought-after speaker that he is today.

"There was a time I couldn't even stand in front of a mirror and speak to myself in a confident way," says the 40-year-old. "Now I speak to groups of thousands with little trepidation."

Mabry was a senior at Baylor University in Texas and starting a promising career in the performance arts when he experienced what he calls "seven seconds that changed my life." While he was traveling on a highway near Houston, a tire blowout sent his car rolling more than 10 times, killing one of Mabry's close friends and crushing both of Mabry's legs. His right leg was eventually amputated below the knee as a result of the injuries and fitted with a prosthesis.

**"Moving past the shame of addiction and talking more openly about it is essential to saving lives."**

— JOHN MABRY

Mabry struggled with addiction, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) for more than a decade following the accident. During that period he moved to San Diego to work on a master's degree but found himself isolated from friends and family. "I was taking painkillers and drinking alcohol to handle the lingering terror of the situation," Mabry says. "It was traumatic to constantly replay the sounds of the

*TOP: John Mabry and wife Sarah with their children (from left) Sawyer, 3; Larson, 9; and Austin, 6.*

*BOTTOM: Mabry, whose right leg was amputated below the knee after a horrific automobile accident, is director of public outreach for Addiction Campuses in Tennessee.*

PHOTOS BY ERIN DINEEN



crashing and flipping and glass shattering from the accident. I never grieved the situation the way I should have and turned to substance abuse to cope instead.”

Mabry moved on to find success in Hollywood, working as an actor and stuntman. He appeared in popular American TV series like *NCIS*, *ER* and *Cold Case*, as well as in a number of movies, including *Superbad* and *Sublime*. Sometimes he portrayed characters who were amputees, other times he worked as an amputee body and stunt double for actors. He also served as a technical advisor for shows that involved amputee characters.

“I believe that the stigma associated with addiction kills more people than the drugs themselves.”

—JOHN MABRY

However, his situation worsened when he found his brother dead from an accidental overdose in his Beverly Hills home. Despondent in the aftermath of that tragedy, Mabry had difficulty keeping work and was fired from a job with noted radio and TV personal-finance guru Dave Ramsey as a result of his addictions.

“I went from attending parties at the Playboy Mansion to living in a dilapidated trailer on the side of a river in Tennessee,” Mabry says.

### The Journey Back

Approaching bottom, Mabry finally received the help he needed. He spent the next several years in seven different rehabilitation programs and eventually tamed his powerful addictions. Mabry now works as director of public outreach for Addiction Campuses in Nashville, Tennessee, an organization that provides comprehensive drug and alcohol addiction treatment programs throughout the U.S. Along the way Mabry also joined the Franklin Toastmasters club near Nashville, confronting his fear of speaking publicly about his personal struggles with addiction and emerging as a respected spokesperson in the fight against the opioid epidemic in America.

U.S. President Donald Trump declared that epidemic a national emergency in August of this year, a status that allows the executive branch to increase funding for expanding treatment facilities and to take other significant steps to fight the epidemic. Opioid overdoses now kill 91 people a day in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and nearly 35,000 people across America died of opioid or heroin overdoses in 2015, according to data from the National Institute on Drug Abuse. The World Health Organization estimates that 13.5 million people around the world take opioids, including 9.2 million who use heroin.

With his highly personal speech on the subject, titled “The Hero-In Solution,” Mabry won his division’s International Speech Contest this year. In it he stresses that moving addiction issues out



*Mabry (far right) participates in a roundtable discussion of the opioid crisis that was broadcast on American TV.*

of the shadows and into the light is a key to resolving the crisis. Addiction is a disease and it should be viewed that way, he says.

“I believe that the stigma associated with addiction kills more people than the drugs themselves,” Mabry says. “I want to help serve as a bridge from where people are now with substance abuse issues to where we need to be as a society. ... Moving past the shame of addiction and talking more openly about it is essential to saving lives.”

He believes his brother’s overdose death is a tragic example of what can happen when addiction issues aren’t dealt with openly. “He didn’t share his problem with others and we didn’t want people knowing about his addiction, so he didn’t get the help he needed,” Mabry says.

Mabry’s own experience and professional knowledge of addiction lead him to believe many substance abuse issues result from deeply rooted problems. “It took me multiple stints in rehab to realize that some of my traumas had nothing to do with substance abuse,” he says. “They had to do with earlier feelings in life about not fitting in, feeling defective in some way, partially as a result of ear-related surgeries I had as a child.

“I had a lot of fear and anxiety under the surface that no one ever truly picked up on, including me.”

### Persevering in Public Speaking

During an exit interview following the completion of his master’s degree, Mabry received what he now considers prescient advice from two of his professors: Consider joining Toastmasters. “They believed I had potential and some good things going for me, but they didn’t think I was where I needed to be as a public speaker,” Mabry says.





*Mabry enjoys a healthy lifestyle. Here he runs on a beach in Southern California.* Photo by Tim Mantonai

Mabry followed through on the suggestion but found his initial experiences with Toastmasters daunting. “I went to my first meeting and immediately quit,” he says. “I was trying to put myself out there and be naked with my emotions, but I wasn’t yet able to be present in that way in front of a crowd. I couldn’t be in my own skin comfortably in front of an audience, let alone by myself.”

Upon moving to Tennessee Mabry joined Toastmasters again; again he quit, this time after two meetings. “The fear of public speaking and exposing my thoughts and emotions was still too great.”

**“We’re all going to make mistakes but the only way to succeed is to keep at it and to not be afraid to reach out for help when you need it.”**

— JOHN MABRY

But the challenge of Toastmasters kept beckoning and Mabry’s third attempt was the charm. He says he finally realized the members were there to support him and help him improve—not pick apart his flaws and reject him.

“Once that clicked I had a different perspective,” he says. “It opened the floodgates and I’ve been able to make more progress both as a public speaker as well as in my sobriety over the past two years than I did in most of my previous 35 years combined.”

Mabry says the support he received in Toastmasters helped him feel confident and safe enough to share the details of his personal struggles with the wider world. He evolved into a polished

and in-demand speaker. In addition to his success in the International Speech Contest and local Humorous Speech contests, he is now regularly asked to share his message with audiences at Tennessee colleges, universities, high schools and businesses. Mabry also is the host of a weekly podcast where he has interviewed national personalities about substance abuse issues.

### Helping Others

Today Mabry pursues his passion of helping others overcome substance abuse issues in his work with Addiction Campuses, traveling to organizations to teach employees and supervisors how to create and maintain a drug-free working environment. He credits Toastmasters with playing a role in his recent promotion to director of outreach in the organization.

“It gave me the confidence to travel and talk about what we do as an organization and the lives we’ve been able to save,” Mabry says. “Without that I think I would have been content to work behind the scenes with little public contact. Of all the things I’ve done in my professional life, my role in this organization is the one I’m most proud of.”

Mabry says his time in Toastmasters also has helped him as a father and husband. “I had been scared to be a leader in my own home, for example, because I felt I was hiding from myself,” he says. “But I made a conscious decision to become a better leader for my family, and skills I learned in Toastmasters helped me communicate more effectively with my wife and children.”

The enduring message Mabry wants to leave with his children and his audiences is the importance of never giving up—and of the power of removing feelings of shame from opioid and other addictions increasingly afflicting people around the world.

“The key is to just keep showing up, whether that’s in everyday life or in Toastmasters,” Mabry says. “We’re all going to make mistakes but the only way to succeed is to keep at it and to not be afraid to reach out for help when you need it.”

He notes that addiction doesn’t discriminate against social or economic status. “No matter who you are or what resources you do or do not have, addiction is a disease that wants to kill you. You have to reach out for help from family, friends, your church, the HR manager at work, a counselor or treatment center.”

“We as a society also have to make it easier for people to ask for help by removing the stigma from opioid addiction and to treat it just as openly as any other disease,” he adds. “Only then will we start to see real change.”

*Watch John Mabry’s speech “The Hero-In Solution” at [bit.ly/2vz3dPJ](https://bit.ly/2vz3dPJ). His weekly podcast, “High Sobriety,” can be found on iTunes.*

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



**ONLINE EXTRAS:** Learn more about John Mabry’s journey through additional photos and videos.

# 5 Great Ways to **Begin a Speech**

Learn to hook your audience in 10 seconds.

BY ANNE BARAB, DTM

**Y**ou've got just 10 seconds to grab the audience's attention before they decide to stay with you or tune you out. Here are five (of many) tried-and-true ways to start a speech.

## 1 Tell a story

By far the most effective way to open a speech is with a compelling story.

*"I was a student returning from a study abroad course in Cairo. Shortly after take-off, five men carrying guns leapt up from their seats and began shouting at the passengers. Our plane was being hijacked."*

Are you engaged? Do you want to know more? I did. The speaker was shot in the head in the doorway of the plane (which had been forced to land) and pushed out onto the tarmac where she lay for hours while hostage negotiations continued. Her topic was brain injury and fighting back from adversity. I can remember none of her main points, but I'll never forget her story.

## 2 Make a bold statement of your unique point of view (POV)

*"I'm here today to talk about a disturbing question, which has an equally disturbing answer. My topic is the secret of domestic violence and the question I'm going to tackle is the one everyone always asks. Why would she stay? Why would anyone stay with a man who beats her?"*

That was the opening delivered by Leslie Morgan Steiner in one of the most frequently watched TED Talks. Are you interested? Do you want to know more? Sure you do, so go to [www.TED.com](http://www.TED.com) and watch her speech.

## 3 Ask a question

If you open with a question, use body language to make it clear you actually want an answer. As you ask your question, plant

one foot forward and raise the opposite hand high in the air, leaning a little forward toward the audience. This posture invites the audience to respond. Now pause and wait for hands to go up or heads to nod.

Just throwing out a rhetorical question and plowing on without a pause for audience response has no dramatic impact whatsoever and, thus, does not invite your audience into your POV journey.

## 4 Get the audience to laugh

When I first started as a professional speaker, I asked the world-famous motivational speaker Zig Ziglar how he opened his speeches. He said, "I try to make them laugh in the first 10 seconds. If they laugh, they'll like you."

"How do you do that?" I asked.

"Well, I have three or four standard opening lines. For example, I say 'I had a joke that was so funny it would make your hair fall out'—I pause and look around the room for balding men—"but I see many of you have already heard it.' You can use that one if you want."

Well, indeed I did use it, until I realized that while the joke was great for Zig, a member of the aging-males-with-thinning-hair demographic, it sounded more like male-bashing when a woman said it.

Sadly, there is no one-size-fits-all opening joke.

## 5 Ask the audience to visualize something

*"Imagine you are driving down a two-lane country road. It's early in the morning so the air is cool, crisp, clean and fragrant with the smell of freshly mown hay. You're sipping a cup of coffee and feeling at peace with the world. Your cell phone breaks the silence and you distractedly dig for it in the bottom of your purse. Suddenly BAM! You hit an elephant."*



The magic of starting a story with the word "imagine" is that it invites the audience into your world. Using the pronoun "you" and the present tense "you are driving" (instead of "I was driving"), and describing the setting in terms of the five senses, places each listener squarely in the middle of the scene.

An interesting opening introduces your audience to your unique point of view, gives them an idea of where you're going to take them and invites them to join you on the journey. **■**

*Accredited Speaker Anne Barab, DTM, AS, is a member of the Richardson Noon Toastmasters and Park Central Toastmasters clubs in Texas. She is the author of The Sooner You Laugh the Faster You Heal: How to Challenge the Assumptions that Ruin Your Life. Visit [www.annebarab.com](http://www.annebarab.com).*



# What Should I Talk About?

Speech-topic brainstorming made easy.

BY ROSIE WOLF WILLIAMS, CC



Do you want to move on to new speeches in your manual but feel you have nothing to offer? The top-rated speakers have either gone through a harrowing experience to emerge on the sunny side, or they have a rags-to-riches story to share. They are so inspiring! But your life is normal—what on earth could you share that others don't already know? How can you create a seven-minute speech that will hook and hold the audience?

The following brainstorming techniques will help you discover ways to turn your “normal” into knockout speeches.

## Expand on your Ice Breaker

The first, and sometimes most difficult, speech in Toastmasters is the Ice Breaker. It's all about

you. You might condense decades of interesting events into this one short presentation. Personal experiences are often the backbone of a successful speech, so expand on one of your own experiences and use it to inform or inspire.

In my Ice Breaker, I recalled how my parents named me after the film they saw on their first date: *Rose Marie*—a 1954 remake of a musical my mother had loved when she was younger. They had considered going to see *Godzilla: King of the Monsters!*, but they opted for the other film. In my speech I joked that my life would have been far different had I been named after *Godzilla*.

So if I were brainstorming speech subjects, I could revisit that story and come up with a couple of topics. One possibility: What's in a name? How does your name shape your life or behavior? This topic could easily get listeners thinking about the

origins of their own names, which lends itself to audience participation. The next time I brainstorm, I might consider a speech that revolves around my name.

Another potential topic: classic films and their impact on our lives. How has the big screen affected your outlook on life? Share a film or television program that impacted you in a meaningful way.

## Take a walk

A 2014 study conducted by Stanford University suggests that a person's creative output increases by an average of 60 percent while walking. Many bosses hold “walking meetings.” Walking, or even pacing, can clear your mind. You're more receptive to ideas. It helps you look at your surroundings in a different way.

## Expand on one of your experiences and use it to inform or inspire.

For example, you may walk past children playing at a park and remember your own schoolyard friendships or adversaries. As another example, let's pretend you stop at a hot dog cart and buy a dog with everything. You may get the idea to speak about the history of the hot dog: Who invented the hot dog (or ketchup? Or mustard?) Or consider mobile food and how food carts played a part in the growth of a fast food nation.

## Use random online searches

Using your favorite online search engine, type in two or three unrelated words. (You can open a book or a magazine and randomly select a few words.) I tried “sailing” and “peanuts.” My search revealed a video of Charles Schulz' Peanuts gang singing the Styx song “Come Sail Away.” That could lead to music-related topics. Is music your passion?

Does a particular song spark a memory? Do you prefer to listen to music at work?

If your original search doesn't spark any ideas, click on a link, and then another. You may come across a different topic that intrigues you. In my case, a few clicks led to a five-minute TED Talk by a young inventor, Ashton Cofer, who helped develop a process for converting Styrofoam waste into a filter for purifying water.

You could come up with several speech topics from these two videos, including:

- ▶ Does music help you produce? How music helps or hinders productivity in the workplace.
- ▶ Trash for good: You don't have to be a scientist to make a difference in the world.

## Start with a quote or a famous saying

Inspire others by sharing one of your favorite quotes or sayings and telling a story that reflects the message. Consider this quote from the late American baseball player Yogi Berra: “I really didn't say everything I said.” That could lead into a speech about how to avoid being misquoted.

If a good speech topic doesn't come to mind during one of your brainstorming sessions, don't feel you have failed. Topic ideas can take time to evolve—to emerge from the foggy mist of your mind. Write down all the possibilities that emerge from your brainstorming sessions—even if initially they don't resonate with you. Come back to them, reverse them or twist their original meaning into something your audience can appreciate and relate to. And have fun in the process! 📌

*Rosie Wolf Williams, CC, is a writer, voice artist and member of the Toastmasters of Greater Burlington club in South Burlington, Vermont.*

# Who Deserves Your Appreciation Today?

Why you should write letters of gratitude.

BY JOEL ZUCKERMAN, CC

**T**he essence of being a Toastmaster is the desire to improve one's communication skills. However, making speeches, providing evaluations or participating in Table Topics aren't the only ways to convey thought, emotion and opinion.

I have found tremendous satisfaction in writing letters of gratitude over the last four years. It's astounding to me that I've written more than 100 letters over this period, to friends both old and new, business colleagues, family members, loved ones and those who have done me a particular kindness or service.

The concept came from a best-selling book titled *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff* by Richard Carlson. While much of the author's advice didn't resonate deeply with me, after I read the chapter about letters of gratitude I wrote my first letter that very day, to a work colleague who has been instrumental to me in innumerable ways.

Since that time I've written to my wife and kids, sisters and brother, in-laws, other relatives, childhood pals, former teammates and those I've known for a short time. I even wrote a letter to my Toastmasters club, thanking them for their support and advice as I navigated the various stages of the International Speech Contest.

There are four main reasons this hobby is so gratifying and has such a positive effect:

## Receiving a letter of gratitude makes the recipient feel good.

Much of the mail we receive on a daily basis consists of either bills, catalogs or solicitations. To receive an out-of-the-blue,

completely unexpected letter singing your praises and expressing gratitude for your relationship is a tremendous day-brightener. (My letters are a single, complete page of type, but handwritten notes are at least as good. The advantage of using the computer is storing this ever-growing archive of letters on my hard drive.)

## Writing a letter of gratitude makes the writer feel good.

Call it the good deed of the day—but it's actually a more significant and permanent gesture, far beyond holding the elevator or helping an elderly person cross the street. There is a real sense of satisfaction in writing and mailing letters like this. It provides a glow that's hard to replicate.

## Receiving a letter of gratitude makes the recipient feel good—about you!

Part of the appeal of Toastmasters is to receive feedback—but also approval. All people, Toastmasters or not, want others to like them; it's just human nature. When an unsuspecting recipient opens and reads a letter expressing gratitude for their friendship, and reasons why they're important to you, they can't help but be moved or flattered by the gesture. Put it this way: The recipient's opinion of the letter writer might go up, or perhaps stay the same—but it would never go down!

## The pay-it-forward effect.

There's a chance the recipient, having been moved and impacted by the letter received by you, is compelled to write a



letter to someone he or she feels grateful to. Perhaps they'll write another or several more, and perhaps their recipients will do the same. The "ripple effect" will have people expressing their feelings to those in their orbit, who in turn might feel compelled to do the same thing.

It seems unlikely that more than a few readers of this article will ever approach triple figures in terms of writing letters of gratitude. To me it is a point of pride, and I take an equal amount of satisfaction in this archive as I do in the fact I've written eight books to date and contributed features, essays and profiles to well over 100 publications.

However, let me urge you to write one letter, anyway, just for starters. Not a text, not an email or emoticon, but a physical manifestation of your feelings, with a stamp and envelope. Maybe to your mom, or daughter, your deployed son or nephew, your boss or an important mentor, a dear childhood friend with whom you've long been out of contact, or perhaps your college roommate. Maybe even your spouse.

Chances are you'll feel compelled to write another one after that. **T**

**Joel Zuckerman, CC**, is a professional speaker and longtime member of Park City Toastmasters club in Park City, Utah.



# What to Do at the Interview

Do your research and don't ask obvious questions.

BY JENNIFER L. BLANCK, DTM

**A**nswering and asking questions are both key elements of job interviews and allow you to showcase what you have to offer. Here are some strategies to help you do your best and obtain valuable information:

## Answering Questions

When interviewing, the key word is relevance. You always want to respond to questions in the most relevant way. Don't tell your life story if the person asks about your background. Instead, mention only those experiences, skills and other qualifications that apply to the job or organization.

You also want to be concrete and concise when replying. Share specifics about things you have done and relate those to how you can contribute to the organization. Whenever possible, demonstrate your knowledge of the organization by noting similarities between your background and the job or employer.

Don't answer questions in a negative fashion, such as saying something bad about your current job, supervisor or organization. If you don't have experience in a specific area, don't be defensive or apologize. Remember, you're being interviewed, so you have enough of what the employer wants. Instead, talk about how you're a fast learner and give an example of how you developed a new skill or knowledge base quickly in the past. Or offer ideas of how you would tackle the challenge.

Make sure to do your research so you're prepared for any salary-related questions. "The biggest struggle with candidates is them knowing their own value," says Shanne Malilay, Director of Talent Acquisition with Jackson Family Wines in Santa Rosa, California. He notes that early salary

questions aren't meant to lock a candidate in, but rather check about realistic expectations. "I'm not going to take you down the path if we're not in the same ballpark." But save any salary negotiation for when you have an offer.

## Asking Questions

Ask questions to show serious interest and initiative. You also gain critical information about the job, organization, supervisor and colleagues by asking questions, as well as demonstrate your knowledge of the organization. "You want to ask questions that convey a targeted approach—specific to the position and the company," says Malilay. Of course, you shouldn't ask a question that's obvious or for which an answer can be found on the organization's website.

Here is an initial list of useful questions to ask:

- ▶ What are the most important characteristics someone in this position should have?
- ▶ What do you expect from your staff?
- ▶ What is your management style?
- ▶ How do you like people to disagree with you?
- ▶ How would you characterize the management philosophy of this department/organization?
- ▶ What are the current strengths and weaknesses of the staff who would report to me?
- ▶ How has this organization changed and where does it expect to go?
- ▶ What is the top priority of the person who accepts this job? How will she or he be evaluated in 6-12 months?
- ▶ Why are you hiring for this position?



- ▶ What are the next steps in this selection process?
- ▶ What is the timeline for hiring?
- ▶ When can I expect to hear from you?

## Taking Notes

Just as students do in classes, taking notes during the interview can be helpful for many reasons. It can help you remember what was said when you evaluate the opportunity more objectively later. Notes also provide specific information to incorporate into personalized thank you letters. Just make sure your notes are brief and you maintain eye contact throughout the interview.

Having a notepad with you is helpful for other reasons. You can have your questions written down so you remember them. You can also have a small list in the corner of the page of the points you want to make about your background, which will be the key relevant skills, experiences and accomplishments you want to share.

One final note: Don't forget to smile. Let your natural enthusiasm for the opportunity shine through and show you are someone people want to work with. By incorporating these strategies, you will be well prepared and give your best interview yet. ■

**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*.



## So Nice to Meet You

If you could talk to an extraterrestrial, what would you say?

BY JOHN CADLEY

**L**ike all of you, I believe in the Toastmasters mission of strong, clear, effective communication. I know how hard you work to achieve this estimable goal. That's why I feel morally compelled to warn my readers of the biggest communication challenge you will ever face: talking to an alien.

I don't mean someone like your IT person who only *looks* like an alien. I mean a real one. From a galaxy far, far away. Unthinkable as it may sound, serious scientists have been thinking about it for many years now, sending structured radio waves into deep space with the hopes that someone or something might respond. There is a great debate about this within the scientific community—i.e., what should the message say? And since any response would affect the entire human race, why leave that decision to a few scientists—especially when everyone knows scientists can't spell? Why shouldn't ordinary earthlings have a say? If it comes to that, I'm recommending Toastmasters. If anyone can figure out how to address a group with green tentacles and laser-beam eyes intent on annihilating our planet with extreme-ultra-super-mega-death rays, it's a Toastmaster. You've probably faced worse audiences already.

I'm sure you think this is absurd. Trying to communicate with something you can't even conceive of, located in a place you can never get to, hoping for a response that would take 25 trillion years to come back? Really? Really? Really.

Despite many failed attempts, hope springs eternal, and the latest group to give it a shot is called METI (Messaging Extraterrestrial Intelligence), headed by a man named Doug Vakoch, who, with his

colleagues, is planning the most ambitious series of messages ever transmitted into the solar system. And not everyone is pleased. No less a cosmic luminary than Stephen Hawking thinks it's a really bad idea. His reasoning: Why let them know we're here? It could be like when the Aztecs were "visited" by Cortés. Not a great day for the Aztecs. Another august personage, Martin Ryle, Royal Astronomer of England, argued as early as 1974 that "any creatures out there [might be] malevolent or hungry." Well, yes—after traveling 14 light years I imagine they would be hungry. Yet another skeptical scientist, John Gertz, believes that any aliens who could reach us would by definition be more advanced and could destroy Earth with, in his exact words, "a small projectile filled with a self-replicating toxin, or nano gray goo ... or weaponry beyond our imagination." Nano gray goo? I wouldn't worry about your imagination, Mr. Gertz. It's doing just fine.

**If anyone can figure out how to address a group with green tentacles and laser-beam eyes, it's a Toastmaster.**

Despite these concerns, Dr. Vakoch and his proponents remain undaunted. For one thing, our televisions and radios have been leaking radio waves into space for years, so not only do extraterrestrials already know we're here; they're probably watching a 1956 episode of *The Howdy Doody Show*

right now. Also, given the distances of trillions of miles, if aliens could travel at the speed of light, they would have been here by now. Only communication can travel that fast, so the worst they could do is send us hate mail.

What's more, METI plans to use a different form of communication than in previous attempts. The first transmission in 1974 used rhythmic pulses with a repetitive structure that its creator, astrophysicist Frank Drake, believed would strongly suggest intelligent life. There was no response, possibly because the aliens have no rhythm. My Uncle Edward can't even dance the box step. In contrast, Dr. Vakoch's method involves a series of prime numbers, which he believes might be a more effective way to communicate. But again, one has to wonder—what if the aliens stink at math? I stink at math.

So here we stand—with a group of genius minds spending huge sums of money on mind-boggling technologies to conduct an experiment based on the premise: "Hey, you never know." Talk about a shot in the dark. On the other hand, as I mentioned before, the good news is that METI may very well consult ordinary citizens—like Toastmasters!—as to what the message should be. So start thinking. If they ask me, I'm going to play it safe: *Hi, this is Earth, Solar System, Orion Spiral Arm, Milky Way Galaxy, Local Group, Virgo Supercluster, Universe. We're not home right now but leave a message and we'll get back to you.* **T**

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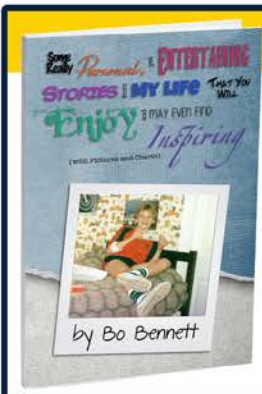
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## CLIENT SPOTLIGHT - BO BENNETT, DTM

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

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

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

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

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