

TOASTMASTER®



World Championship of Public Speaking

Meet the three winners

**Do You Feel Like
an Impostor?**

How to conquer self-doubt

Rethinking Leadership

Why the world needs *doers*

Sustaining Our Organization

We, the members, are the cornerstone of success for our organization. We, the members, are at the apex of our organizational structure. The next level in the Toastmasters organizational chart is the club and then the area, division and district. Districts within a specific geographic area form a region, and our 14 regions around the world make up our international organization.

To operate each of these entities (clubs, areas, divisions, districts, regions and international), our members hold leadership positions. Each club has seven officer roles and each district has six. These district leaders form teams within their positions to accomplish their goals. Region advisors support the districts in their regions.

The strategic direction of our international organization is determined by a Board of Directors comprising 20 members, which consists of six executive committee members and an international director from each of our 14 regions. And, to support this global organization, we have a World Headquarters staff of approximately 150 people in Englewood, Colorado. This is *our* global organization.

“You have shown me that we can achieve our mission if each member receives a quality club experience that helps them reach their goals.”

We are member-driven and leadership-sustained. What does this mean? We have more than 360,000 members worldwide with around 115,000 of these members filling leadership roles. These leaders are elected and appointed to achieve our organization’s mission. We should hold one another accountable for fulfilling the club, district and international missions.

I have the privilege of meeting leaders from around the world at all levels of our organization. You have shown me that we can achieve our mission if each member receives a quality club experience that helps them reach their goals.

We are responsible for the success of every member, club, area, division, district and region—for the success of our global organization. World Headquarters is here to support us, but it is up to us to guarantee that every member receives the full value of their membership payments through quality clubs and our new education program, the Pathways learning experience.

What will we personally do to achieve our goals in Toastmasters? What will we personally do to support our clubs, areas, divisions, districts, regions and OUR international organization in achieving our mission?

The success and sustainability of our organization is up to us! Are we up to the challenge? I believe that we are. I know we are!

Lark Doley, DTM
International President



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Toastmasters International Mission:

We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

www.toastmasters.org

The *Toastmaster* magazine (ISSN 00408263) is published monthly by Toastmasters International, Inc., 9127 S. Jamaica St. #400, Englewood, Colorado, United States 80112. Periodicals postage paid at Englewood, Colorado. POSTMASTER: Send address change to the *Toastmaster* magazine, 9127 S. Jamaica St. #400, Englewood, Colorado, United States 80112.

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

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

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“Thank you, Immediate Past International President Balraj Arunasalam, DTM, for the fabulous year just gone. What you were to Dananjaya Hettiarachchi’s transformation is what Toastmasters International is to all of its members across the globe.”

—George Spartalis, ACB, CL
Raconteurs Toastmasters club
West Lakes, Australia

A Dream Come True

I have an update since my member profile was published in May 2017, and how much has happened since that amazing opportunity to be featured.

I gave my first TEDx Talk in March; it was uploaded to the TED site a few months ago and I still can’t believe how many people have seen it already. It’s a dream come true and one of the reasons I first joined Toastmasters. I plan to apply this year to become an Accredited Speaker.

I have been offered several well-paid keynotes all over the country and have

spoken in seven new states. Two were major annual conferences and one an all-Spanish presentation.

I was recently cast in a major national commercial as myself giving advice on financial literacy. I was also featured in the *LA Business Journal* and on Univision.

I am so thankful for my club, Compton Elite Toastmasters, for all their continued support. My professional speaking career has changed so much. Once again, I am thankful for this organization!

Natalie Torres
Compton Elite Communicators
Compton, California

Research for the Reader

Let me first congratulate you on the [July 2018] issue of the *Toastmaster*. To my taste it was above the usual high standard level, mainly due to the nice selection of subjects. The very last article, “The List,” triggered a professional comment (see below). I am a heavy user of lists and I can confirm from my experience several points made by author John Cadley. For instance, the comforting feeling of control and the fact that some items on the list will never get done in the end.

But I am also a statistician and I wonder about the percentages cited as based on research. It is not obvious to me how you can establish the percentage of items that never get done (41 percent). It is even more difficult to imagine a method to detect by what percentage (33 percent) the likelihood rises that the item gets done just by putting it on the list. You would need some kind of comparison to a similar item not put on the list. But where to find the list of items not on the list? And already the decision to put the one item on the list and the other item not shows that a difference is perceived.

The research source was not cited. It could be good practice to give full credit and allow the reader to assess the strength of the argument.

Wim Kloek
Have Your Say
Luxembourg

I See Something Too!

Thank you, Immediate Past International President Balraj Arunasalam, DTM, for the fabulous year just gone. What a touching article you wrote in the August 2018 issue of the *Toastmaster*! What you were to Dananjaya Hettiarachchi’s transformation is what Toastmasters International is to all of its members across the globe. Toastmasters International sees something in everyone! Dananjaya even visited little old Adelaide, which is way down under in South Australia. Why? Perhaps he sees something in us, too!

George Spartalis, ACB, CL
Raconteurs Toastmasters club
West Lakes, South Australia

Organize Your Future

What a coincidence to read “Decluttering Homes—and Lives” by Missy Sheehan (August) and listen to Star Hansen’s TEDx Tucson talk “Listen to the Monster in the Closet” while I’m having my study and bedroom thoroughly organized after years of hesitation. Star encourages us to “listen to what our clutter is saying to us, make peace with our clutter and even get rid of the clutter to become masters of our time and space.” It’s inspirational. However, frankly speaking, it’s easier said than done. Fortunately, thanks to lessons learned in Toastmasters, I finally let go of my ego and part of my past for a more organized future. I’m sure most members worldwide, to some extent, have clutter in their homes or offices. Believe it or not, you may even find inspiration to organize your next speech during this soul-searching journey.

Bruce Yang, DTM
Taichung Toastmasters club
Taichung, Taiwan

DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

Write it in 200 words or fewer. State your name, member number and home club, and send it to 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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Toastmaster Magazine Online

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

November Online Extras:

- **Highlights From the 2018 International Convention**—Watch videos and view additional photos from the 87th Annual Convention in Chicago. ▶
- **Different Cultures, Shared Values**—Witness the camaraderie of members in Central Asia by viewing photos of their multi-cultural event in Kazakhstan. 📷
- **A Recipe for the Evaluation Sandwich**—Listen to an exclusive recording for examples of effective feedback for your next evaluation. 🎧



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Leaving War-Torn Syria With Dreams of Leadership

While growing up in Damascus, Syria, Ahmad Almallah dreamed of being a leader or a politician—someone who could influence positive change in the world. Life changed dramatically for him, however, in 2011, when the “Arab Spring” protests rocked the Middle East, sparking a brutal civil war in Syria between government forces led by president Bashar al-Assad and factions of militant revolutionaries opposing his regime.

Almallah was a college student when the conflict first erupted. As the violence spread to Damascus, his family insisted he leave the city—and Syria altogether—to continue his education. Anguished about having to leave his family and homeland, Almallah ended up in Malaysia and earned his bachelor’s degree in civil engineering. In 2016 he moved to Nova Scotia, Canada, to work on a post-graduate degree at Dalhousie University in Halifax.

Almallah joined the school’s Dal Toastmasters club and began honing both his English and public speaking skills. He has won two speech contests and now feels as though he’s keeping his dream of leadership alive.

Tell us about leaving Damascus in November 2012.

It was obvious that the Syrian crisis was getting worse every day, and my parents decided that I must go. I did not want to leave the city of my childhood, my parents; I did not want to start all over again in a foreign country. I was so sad about leaving a country that it seemed like I was not going to see again.

Have you been able to see your family since you left?

Even though people can go in and out of Syria, I am always so worried about my family. [His father, mother and 15-year-old brother are still in Syria.] My father has had the chance to visit me several times since I left, but I always hope that it will not be the last time. I have only seen my mother, sister and little brother once in the past five and a half years. I contact them almost every day through the internet, which is luckily available in Damascus.

How has Toastmasters helped you?

Toastmasters has offered me the best platform to develop my skills in communication and public speaking. It gave me the confidence to take the lead in different roles and the courage to be self-motivated when it comes to speaking in public. I have also had the opportunity of meeting awesome people who shared the same interests with me and walked with me step by step through their encouragement and mentoring. Toastmasters offered me a practice space without being judged, which is what I like most about it. It is a safe room for making mistakes and learning from them.



Ahmad Almallah

How did it feel to win a speech contest for the first time?

Winning first place at the Table Topics Division Contest meant a lot for me as a non-native English speaker. One of the contestants was a Distinguished Toastmaster from Canada. I do not consider myself fluent in public speaking in English, but Toastmasters gave me the confidence to just try and be myself on the stage.

Why have you chosen to speak about the Syrian conflict in many of your speeches?

As a Syrian, I believe that we could learn lessons from the Syrian conflict. Appreciating how life is more difficult for some people is important, as well as understanding what life means for us. Keeping the peace and the harmony in any country is an important factor to preventing conflict. The last thing is focusing on education to keep society aware of harmful ideologies or bigotry so people can speak up against it.

How do you think you’re inspiring other refugees and immigrants?

Some newcomers are afraid of speaking in public in a new language; leading by example is something I am always doing, and perhaps my small journey with Toastmasters is proof that newcomers can tackle language barriers by stepping up and moving forward.

What is next?

As a member of the Dal Toastmasters club’s executive committee, I will keep working with my peers to ensure our success. My dream is to become a successful leader, and I will keep working hard to achieve it.

Ian Gassman is editorial assistant of the *Toastmaster magazine*.



Celebrating Tradition

Members of Cranberry High Noon Toastmasters, of Cranberry Township, Pennsylvania, dress in colorful traditional clothing for a themed meeting titled “An Asian-American Tradition.”

▶ **DID YOU KNOW?**

Get the Word Out With Good PR

Public relations is defined as “a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and the public.” Good PR will help build Toastmasters membership and gain public recognition. Is your club using effective communication channels to keep internal and external audiences informed about your club or district activities?

The club public relations manager (PRM) and vice president public relations (VPPR) are responsible for generating awareness of the Toastmasters brand to attract and retain members. The following public relations and marketing tools can be found by clicking on the Public Relations

page on the Toastmasters website under Leadership Central:

- ▶ **“Let the World Know”** – This downloadable PDF handbook provides everything you need to know about conducting PR in Toastmasters.
- ▶ **Sample News Releases** – Use these news releases to tell the local community about events, programs and achievements at your club.
- ▶ **Logos, Images and Templates** – Implement Toastmasters-branded marketing materials to increase brand recognition.
- ▶ **Brand Photo Contest** – Enter the monthly brand photo contest for a

chance to win a branded banner, a lectern or marketing materials.

- ▶ **PR Calendar** – Review your PR plan, assess past results and set new goals for coming months.
- ▶ **Toastmasters Media Center** – News, company info and media resources for you to view and share at mediacenter.toastmasters.org.

For additional public relations and marketing tips, visit www.toastmasters.org/Leadership-Central.



QUICK TAKES

▶ MEET MY MENTOR



Karen Saelens

Karen Saelens, ACB, is the chief operating officer for UnitedHealthcare Community Plan. She's worked as the executive director of the organization's long-term health care plan and its Medicare product since 2012, and has been a member of Arizona's UHC Phoenix Toastmasters club since 2014. She began her Toastmasters journey in 2007.

Alexandra Quijada works as a compliance analyst for the same company. She learned about Toastmasters from her co-workers. She wanted to overcome her fear of speaking to large groups, so she joined Saelens' club where she serves as secretary.

Why do you want to recognize Karen as your mentor?

Karen is an incredibly busy woman, yet she enjoys volunteering. She takes the time to review my speeches and helps me make sure they flow. I am grateful for her editing skills, constructive criticism and encouragement. She is a great cheerleader and an all-around positive person. She helped me become more confident.

What was it like to give your first speech?

At first, I was nervous, and probably even more so because Karen was evaluating me. You could say I was starstruck, because Karen is like a celebrity in our club. I felt that I messed up my speech and was reluctant to hear her feedback. I prepared for the worst, but after hearing Karen's feedback I left the meeting feeling encouraged, positive and happy.

What do you appreciate most about Karen being your mentor?

The best part about Karen's mentoring style is that she is real, she is positive, and she doesn't butter anything up. She gives it to me straight, and I really do appreciate that. I always look forward to hearing her constructive criticism on what I can do better. She



Alexandra Quijada, left, and Karen Saelens

has a way of giving feedback in such a positive and encouraging manner! She helps me let go of any negative feelings I have about myself after my speeches.

What have you accomplished with Karen's help?

She stresses the importance of tying things together in a story. Because of that, I've delivered more interesting speeches and have become a better writer. She makes sure I'm thinking about keeping my audience interested and engaged.

Tess Iandiorio is associate editor of the Toastmaster magazine.

Looking for a mentor in your club? Ask your vice president education who is available to mentor you. To start a mentor program in your club, order the Club Mentor Program Kit (Item 1163) at www.toastmasters.org/Shop.

WANT TO NOMINATE AN EXCEPTIONAL MENTOR?

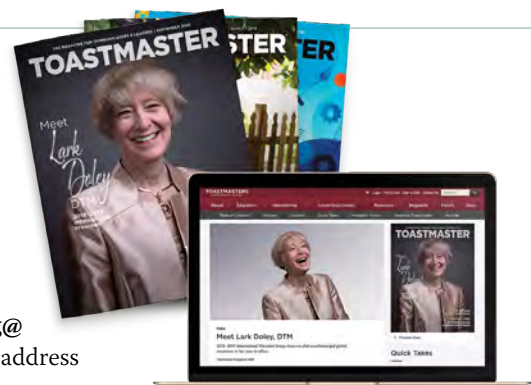
Send a 200-word description and photo (1 MB or larger) of you and your mentor to MentorMoment@toastmasters.org.

▶ NEWS FROM TI

Manage Your Magazine Subscription

Have you recently moved? Are you receiving multiple magazines as a dual member? Do you prefer to read the *Toastmaster* magazine online? Managing your magazine subscription is now easier than ever. To opt out of the print edition, or to update your address or preferences, go to www.toastmasters.org/Subscriptions and log in with your credentials.

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Toastmaster online at www.toastmasters.org/Magazine. Log in to enjoy the current issue or go to the archive to read past issues online or as PDFs.

▶ MEMBER CONNECTIONS

Convention Moments

Members submitted pictures to the Toastmasters Gallery to showcase their experiences at the 87th Annual International Convention in Chicago, Illinois.



▶ NEWS FROM TI

Submit a #MyWhy Video

Every member has a unique motivation for joining Toastmasters. What's yours? Follow these steps to submit a video about why you joined.

Step 1: Go to www.toastmasters.org/MyWhy to download and print the #MyWhy poster.

Step 2: Record a one-minute video explaining why you joined Toastmasters. At the end hold up the poster as you say, "This is my why!"

Step 3: Post your video on your personal social media pages and include the hashtag #MyWhy, and don't forget to tag Toastmasters International. Your video may be shared on Toastmasters' social media pages!



For full instructions and example videos, visit www.toastmasters.org/MyWhy.

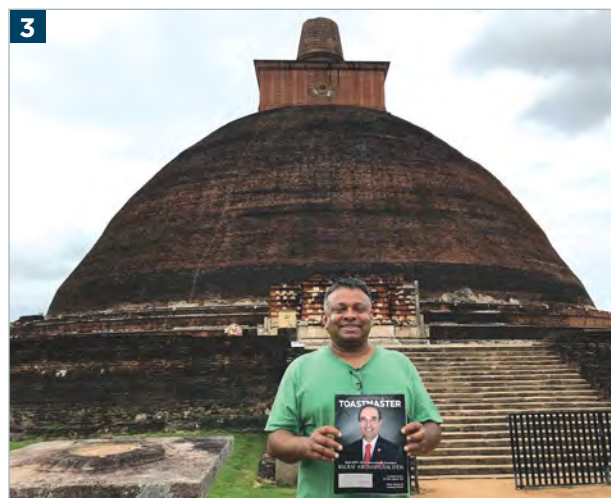



1 | SIVAPRAKASH VAITHEESVARAN, CC, CL, of Doha, Qatar, visits Whistler ski resort in Whistler, British Columbia, Canada.


2 | MARYLEE MIMS, DTM, of Colleyville, Texas, playfully poses by the Leaning Tower of Pisa in Italy.

3 | MANUJA RANASINGHE, ACB, ALB, of Roswell, Georgia, visits the Jetavanaramaya stupa shrine, in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka.

4 | MICHELLE BROWN, DTM, of Albany, New York, enjoys horseback riding near the Grand Teton Mountain Range in Jackson, Wyoming.



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

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

Semifinalist Inspired by Champions

I rejoiced as my fellow female speakers made contest history.

BY LINDY MACLAINE

Where are all the women? Like a cartoon thought bubble, the question bloomed as I clustered with 105 other semifinalists for the contestant briefing. It looked to me that we females made up only 25 to 30 percent of the group.

My secret goal as a 2018 International Speech Contest semifinalist, besides wanting to do well, was to widen the footprint of women in the contest finals—the Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking. When I first learned that women had only gained entrance into Toastmasters International in 1973, I was shocked. Knowing that, as of 2017, only four women had won the World Championship further surprised me.

As it does for every contestant, my journey began at the club contest level. After each win, I sought out more opportunities to deliver my speech. I think a winning speech is created not through the genius of an individual, but through the combined feedback of many Toastmasters. It takes openness and humility to absorb constructive criticism and try it on for size while simultaneously growing your natural strengths.

I cannot say enough about the generous support I received from my fellow district members—men and women alike. They were eager to support my journey with their time, insightful feedback, heartfelt encouragement and positive words.

Jackie Bailey, DTM, a District 2 semifinalist in the 2015 International Speech Contest, shared her contestant experience with me. She'd been the only woman in her semifinalist group at the Toastmasters International Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada. She went in expecting to feel competitive with her fellow semifinalists, but instead, they all bonded and are still in touch today. That story laid the foundation for my superb semifinalist experience.

Since I was armed with the expectation of becoming fast friends with my



fellow contestants, the best thing in the contest briefing auditorium was meeting the 10 other talented souls in Semifinal 4: Kenny Ray Morgan, Paul Artale, Stuart Pink, Donny Crandell, Al Talamantez, Ben MacEllen, Arfath Saleem, Hongbo “Bobo” Lu, Kageni Njeru and Melita D’Souza.

And the stats were improving—I was one of three women!

“For the first time in Toastmasters history, first, second and third place had all been awarded to women.”

The connection and mutual appreciation among the 11 contestants showed during our semifinal, when our speeches included references to each other’s messages and stories. While not winning disappointed me, it didn’t crush me. I couldn’t have been happier for Kenny Ray, Kageni and Paul when the first-, second- and third-place winners were announced.

The immediate payoff for not winning my semifinal: enjoying a full night’s sleep for the first time in months! Another plus: getting to relax while taking in content-rich education sessions at the International Convention in Chicago.

I cannot imagine how stressed those 10 finalists must have been between Thursday’s semifinal win and Saturday’s finals competition. Reading the program while waiting for the championship to start, I was thrilled to see four women in the finals. The numbers were still improving! After the announcement of Ramona Smith’s first-place win, I jumped to my feet, cheering and crying along with many others in the auditorium. For the first time in Toastmasters history, first, second and third place had all been awarded to women.

This all-female win impacted me in a profound way. For the past few days, I’d watched semifinalists perform and repeatedly thought how difficult it is for women to compete with men’s resonant, multi-octave voices and larger physical frames—great advantages in vocal variety, gestures and use of space.

Thanks to Ramona J. Smith, Sherrie Su and Anita Fain Taylor, my thoughts about what makes a winning speaker shifted. Speakers win when they can be themselves on stage. When they can physically maximize who they are through movement and dress, then vocally express who they are and craft a story that brings their message to life with power and humor, they win—whether male or female.

Thank you, ladies, for paving the way for even more of us to become champions of public speaking! 📌

Lindy MacLaine, CC, ALB, is a member of SKWIM Toastmasters club in Sequim, Washington. Lindy is the author of the female-hero fantasy adventure series Piper Pan and Her Merry Band, available on Amazon.

How to Have a **Better Conversation**

Engage, stay present and listen.

BY CELESTE HEADLEE

Talking well and conversing well are not the same thing. We often make the mistake of thinking someone is a good conversationalist because they're funny, witty or tell good stories. But that's what a stand-up comedian does well, and you'd hardly describe an evening at a comedy show as a conversation.

It's best to remember what a true conversation is and what it is not. If one person is dominating the conversation—talking about what they're doing, what they believe or what they know—that's similar to a lecture. One person is supplying information, and the other person is mostly absorbing that information or tuning out.

A conversation is also not a debate. A debate is an adversarial exchange, even when it's civil, in which two people are putting forth arguments for opposing sides. While a debate can be productive and informative, it's not a conversation.

Many so-called "conversations" really consist of two people saying what they know or think. Neither is really listening to the other; they're often repeating things they've said before, and the exchange is focused on each individual's thoughts, ideas and needs.

Engaged Listening

A conversation is a mutual exchange of ideas. To have a real conversation, you must hear what the other person is saying, think about it and then respond. Sadly, this kind of exchange is not common. We often don't hear everything someone says. Instead, we listen to the first 5–10 seconds and then stop listening

and simply wait for them to stop talking so we can say what we want to say. As notable author and keynote speaker Stephen Covey said, "Most of us don't listen with the intent to understand. We listen with the intent to reply."

The most essential component of a good conversation is engaged listening, but it doesn't come easily. Ralph Nichols, known as the "father of listening," wrote a piece for the *Harvard Business Review* with Leonard Stevens in 1957 after years of studying human listening skills and said, "People in general do not know how to listen. They have ears that hear very well, but seldom have they acquired the necessary aural skills that would allow those ears to be used effectively for what is called *listening*."

"Imagine conversation as a game of tennis in which you are constantly hitting the ball back to the other side."

Listening is hard because it requires that you be focused and present. In an era of smartphones and other distractions, it's difficult to practice mindfulness. But even if your phone never makes a sound, you may be less focused when it's near because your brain is *prepared* for it to make noise. Because your brain knows you might receive a text, email or other notification at any time, it may remain on constant alert.

Research shows that typical daily stress can cause your IQ to drop about 10 points because your brain is in fight-or-flight mode most of the day. But the cognitive cost you pay is higher than that. Since that phone causes your mind to be in a constant state of stress, the prefrontal cortex is too busy to help you listen or respond to what you hear during a conversation. The prefrontal cortex is involved with executive decisions, planning, impulse control and complex thought.

So while your phone is visible and keeping your prefrontal cortex busy dealing with stress, you are not making good decisions, planning for the future or controlling your impulses. There's a good chance your conversation could go awry under those circumstances.

The 'Liking Gap'

Another obstacle to engaged listening is our own fear. For some time, social scientists have struggled to understand why we avoid in-person contact and face-to-face conversations. As a social species, conversation is beneficial for us. Regular in-person socialization can extend your lifespan, strengthen your immune system and stave off depression and heart disease. So why would people stare at their phones on the subway and avoid making eye contact with others?

When researchers forced people to start conversations with strangers on trains, in waiting rooms and at coffee shops, the participants ended up enjoying themselves. They also reported they were no less productive than if they'd kept to themselves. And yet, when these

subjects were asked if they would start more conversations in the future, most answered no. Why?

As it turns out, we get in the way of our own enjoyment and well-being. A recent study showed that oftentimes, we are so caught up worrying about saying the right thing or being witty, we don't notice that the other person is enjoying our company. This is called the "liking gap" and it means we tend to significantly underestimate how much other people like us. We're stuck in our own heads, afraid we will say the wrong thing.

While we obsess about what we're saying and how we're coming off, we don't have time to really pay attention to what another person is saying. Sadly, this is also what prevents us from engaging in conversation in many circumstances: our fear that we'll say the wrong thing or be judged negatively by the other person. That means the first step to listening well and enjoying a good conversation is to let go of your fear. Rest assured that the vast majority of conversations you have, whether they be with a loved one or an acquaintance, will lift your mood, engage your mind productively and improve your health.

Finding Balance

The next step is to allow the other person to speak as often as you do. Keep in mind that you can't control other people's behavior. That means you can't prevent them from talking too much, interrupting you or rambling on about irrelevant subjects. Therefore, it's best not to expend mental energy worrying about someone else's conversational etiquette and instead



focus on what you can control—namely, your own habits.

Pay attention to how often you allow the other person a chance to respond. The best conversations resemble a friendly game of catch, in that there's a perfect balance between throwing and catching. Attention spans have been shrinking for at least the past two decades, so if you

“Most of us don't listen with the intent to understand. We listen with the intent to reply.”

—STEPHEN COVEY

talk for more than 30 seconds at a time, it's likely you've lost the other person's focus. Help them stay engaged and remain focused by keeping it brief. An easy way to do that and to ensure what you've said will be understood and remembered is to talk about one thing at a time. Many of us are in the habit of telling everything we know on a subject or telling too many stories.

If someone asks what you did over the weekend, don't start with Friday afternoon

and give them all the details you can remember. Instead, give the bullet points and then allow them to respond. Alternatively, you could focus on one aspect: “We went paddling on Saturday. We were on the water for about four hours, and it was really fun. There were four of us, and we each had our own kayak. Brandon forgot sunscreen and got burned, but it was a great day.” That story takes about 20 seconds to tell and, if you stop there, it's likely the other person will have some questions.

Imagine conversation as a game of tennis in which you are constantly hitting the ball back to the other side. Remember that you already know everything you're going to say and, if you're going to learn something new, you're going to have to listen to someone else. **T**

Celeste Headlee is an award-winning journalist, public radio host, speaker and expert in communication. Through her work, she has interviewed hundreds of people from all walks of life, learning the power of conversation. Celeste authored the book *We Need to Talk: How to Have Conversations That Matter*. Learn more at www.celesteheadlee.com.

Challenges of the Virtual World

How can we connect emotionally online?

BY NICK MORGAN

The virtual world was sold to us based on some irresistible benefits: We could communicate faster, with less friction, on our own time and reach a much wider audience with the click of a mouse. Only those with a touch of gray in their hair now remember carbon copies, multiple envelopes and stamps and endless trips to the post office.

But what we didn't realize, as we went about creating our new online lives, was that this huge social experiment has some downsides too. There were a few warning signs. Some opined that the internet was making us stupid. Many started worrying about our apparently shortening attention spans. And nearly everyone experiences information overload with varying states of desperation.

But the real downside has remained largely invisible to us because it touches on the workings of our unconscious minds. We haven't fully woken up to the emotional emptiness of all forms of virtual communication. How does this work?

The first big problem comes about from the lack of human sensory feedback. The rest of the issues with the virtual world stem from this basic void. In the face-to-face world, our unconscious minds are hard at work, 24/7, absorbing data about the environment around us, evaluating it for danger in order to keep us alive. The five basic senses, and a few more besides, keep filling our brains with information about potential threats to our safety, food sources and other essential stuff.

The virtual world, in contrast, is like a sensory deprivation chamber. We simply don't get the smells, the touch, the sounds, the sights and the tastes, for the most

part. Now, the brain is a multi-channel analysis machine. And it doesn't like to be deprived of any of those channels of information. So it responds by making up data to keep the information flowing, using memories, hints and anxiety. Given that our brain's job is to keep us alive, it responds to a lack of information, quite logically, by assuming the worst.

“In business, this lack of connection leads to real opportunities lost, unintended offenses created and high levels of disengagement.”

Email messages sound hostile when no hostility is intended. The silence on the other end of the audio conference seems to us to imply indifference or outright anger. When someone doesn't respond within minutes to our messages, we assume they've died or hate us. Our mental threat-assessment procedures go into blinking-red mode.

All of this assumed danger makes us tense. But worse, it leads to a lack of empathy—the second problem of the virtual world. We don't receive the body-language clues, and so we don't learn how other people are feeling. This lack of information, and the resulting misinformation filling the pipeline, lead us to poor or incorrect analyses of other people's emotional states. Our normal high levels of empathy are reduced or rendered inaccurate.

And then the virtual world turns around and bites us back. The machines remember everything. Including—as many job applicants have discovered to their dismay—those embarrassing Facebook pictures from your wild college parties. It seemed like a good idea at the time, right? And that's the third problem of the virtual world. You leave endless digital footprints wherever you go.

In the face-to-face world, people can forget and forgive. In the virtual world, character assassination, justified or not, is a mouse click away.

From the paucity of emotional clues comes the fourth virtual world problem. Take away the emotional subtext and an odd thing happens: We have a hard time making decisions. Most of us believe we make decisions as Mr. Spock of *Star Trek* did—with our logical brains. But neuroscientific research has clearly established that we make decisions in our unconscious minds, from our emotional memories of what hurts, what feels good and what will help or hurt us. Without the emotional data, we struggle to care, to make decisions and even in the end to pay attention at all.

With very few emotional clues in the virtual game, we don't feel much connection with others in the virtual world. That's the last big problem—with weak connections, we don't commit, and we experience loneliness and fail to bond. The irony of the virtual world is that we're more connected than ever and yet we feel more alone. Worse, trust is fragile. Trolling is rampant. And tragically, depression and suicide are on the rise in many vulnerable populations globally.



How do these problems play out in the various forms of virtual technology? Let's look at email for a moment. You send an email to your team, making a comment about their work that you intend as a joke. But the team, for some reason, takes the remark to be serious and then you have to spend hours assuaging everyone's hurt feelings. And of course, the stories of hitting "reply all" when only one person was intended are legion.

What about those weekly team check-in calls? They're essential for keeping the team working together remotely, but they seem to create as many problems as they solve. You put your phone on mute, and catch up on email, or put the dishes away or go to the bathroom. Once again, the stories of mistakes, misunderstandings and general alienation are endless.

“The irony of the virtual world is that we're more connected than ever and yet we feel more alone.”

And then there's social media, as it's used for both business and personal lives. Social media would seem to promote social connection, but it ends up creating more envy than love, more FOMO (fear of missing out) than fellowship, and more feelings of inferiority than belonging. The "likes" and "retweets" create their own hunger for more likes and retweets, so you're sucked into needing something that never existed before and that can never be satiated.

In sum, our virtual lives are more fragile and easily upended than our face-to-face ones because they lack authentic emotional connections.

In business, this lack of connection leads to real opportunities lost, unintended offenses created and high levels of disengagement. And remember that our

ability to make decisions is compromised. Our business and organizational acumen is lessened.

In our personal lives, the issues are the same and the results predictably miserable. We may be raising a generation of people who are unhappy communicating virtually and incompetent communicating face to face. Those of us with one foot in the face-to-face world and one foot in the virtual world don't stand on solid ground. We are off-balance and clumsy in both terrains.

What's to be done? We need to learn a new language of emotion for the virtual world. We can't, after all, live without our gadgets. Neither businesses nor personal lives could work today without them. Parents keep tabs on their kids with mobile phones, and workers create petaflops of data. Both depend on computing power to make their lives possible.

But we need to start asking people consciously and deliberately how they

feel, how they're responding, and how what we say to them and send to them affects them emotionally. We need to put the emotions back in that virtual technology has removed. We need to learn to convey our body-language messages consciously. If we can't get better at this conscious emotional dialogue, our future could be very bleak indeed. **T**

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Editor's note: This article was based on Nick Morgan's new book, *Can You Hear Me?: How to Connect with People in a Virtual World* (Harvard Business Review Press, October 2018).

2018 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

Three women take top honors and make Toastmasters history.

On August 25, 2018, Ramona J. Smith, CC, became the first woman in 10 years to win the title of Toastmasters World Champion of Public Speaking. Smith, a high school teacher from Houston, Texas, delivered a knockout speech titled “Still Standing” to win over the panel of judges and a crowd of 2,000.

Smith is only the fifth woman to become the World Champion of Public Speaking. She is also the second African-American woman to win the title. The first was LaShunda Rundles, the 2008 World Champion. During Smith’s acceptance speech she thanked Rundles (who died in 2012) and said, “She was my inspiration this whole time ... and the whole reason I wanted to be here.”

Together with Zifang “Sherrie” Su, the second-place winner, and Anita Fain Taylor, the third-place winner, the trio made Toastmasters history as the first all-female top three winners of the World Championship of Public Speaking.

Smith, who joined Toastmasters in 2010, said she was never afraid of public speaking but wanted to improve her storytelling and presentation skills. She had previously competed in the International Speech Contest in 2015, winning at the club, area and division levels, only to lose at the district competition. “I was crushed,” Smith said about the loss.

But she dusted herself off to fight another round. In a style both polished and playful, Smith shared the story of her life,



drawing on a boxing analogy to describe several blows that life had dealt her. The 31-year-old described how she struggled to complete college, the pain caused by the dissolution of her brief marriage and the disappointment of losing in the International Speech Contest after a series of promising wins in 2015.

What stood out during her six-minute speech was the message of finding strength during adversity. “When you are in the ring of life, you will face some challenges,” she said during her speech. “You are going to get hit, you will be punched, you will be bruised. Even though you fall down and stumble, all you have to do is find whatever strength lies within you or outside you from family, friends, faith, your mentors and coaches to help pull you back up.”

Her speech resonated with the capacity crowd in attendance. “Pain and difficulty and adversity, those are things that everybody everywhere can deal with, whether you’re in America or Australia or Africa,” Smith told *Business Insider*. “We all experience times when we feel like life has knocked us down.”

Crafting a Championship Speech

As much as she prepared and practiced her speech the night before the final phase of the competition, when it came down to the wire, Smith trusted her instincts. “When I got on the stage, I said: ‘You know what? I’m just going to do whatever feels good. I’m going to do whatever feels right. I’m not going to care about what happens,’” she told *Business Insider*. “So I got up there, and I was shimmying my feet and acting like a boxer—in high heels, to boot. Just that free body language and not being afraid to look silly and just kind of let loose, I think that helped, because it’s like, ‘Oh, well, she’s this professional speaker on this stage, but she still has this human side.’”

Smith knew she wanted to engage the audience with thoughtfully and precisely posed rhetorical questions, followed by well-timed pauses. “Can you think of a time that life tried to knock you down?” Smith asked the audience, pausing just long enough for attendees to silently formulate their answers. “Who was your toughest opponent?” she followed. “Those pregnant pauses are so important,” Smith told *Business Insider*. “I really look at them like I’m waiting for an answer.”

As she concluded her speech by singing a few bars of the Elton John song “I’m Still Standing,” the audience was clearly in sync with her. With no prompting from Smith, a chorus of Toastmaster voices sang the next line of the popular song, “Yeah, yeah, yeah!” She thanked the audience for the surprising participation during her acceptance speech, saying, “Wow ... I did not expect that!”

Looking back at the other two women who finished in second and third place, Smith was clearly proud of their historic feat. “Girl power!” she said.

Second Place: Zifang “Sherrie” Su

Sherrie Su, ACS, ALB, a teacher from Tianjin, China, delivered a reflective speech titled “Turn Around.” In it she described her strained relationship with her parents as a child and hesitation to get close to a fellow Toastmaster who would later become her husband. “People ... relationships? They’re scary. But when I turn my back on them, my dark, lonely shadow scared me even more.”



Her speech was about overcoming fear by facing frightening things rather than turning away from them. Su pressed the audience to be brave: “Are you turning your back on your fear? Our life is like this stage. What scares you now may bring you the most beautiful thing. Give it a chance.” Su said she entered the contest to “let the world hear the voice from China and prove that Chinese speakers can be world class.”

Third Place: Anita Fain Taylor

Anita Fain Taylor, ACB, ALB, a consultant from Pembroke Pines, Florida, gave a speech titled “It Is What It Is, It Ain’t What It Ain’t.” Fain Taylor told the story of her father’s unchanging advice to her during trying times—advice that finally helped her see that she was not defined by her failures, but by her ability to overcome them.

Fain Taylor described running to her father for wisdom after a series of “emotional scars”: the pain of her divorce and the shock and embarrassment of being fired from her job as a city manager. She realized that his confusing advice, “It is what it is; it ain’t what it ain’t,” meant that she was not defined by these perceived failures but that they were opportunities to begin anew.

She believes her speech was a success because she spoke from the heart. “People who approached me afterward said they felt that I was speaking directly to them,” Fain Taylor said.

“I could not have shared the stage with two more fabulous women, Ramona and Sherrie,” she adds. “It feels great to be a part of history. I hope that this motivates women everywhere.” **T**



Tess Iandiorio is the associate editor of the *Toastmaster magazine*.



ONLINE EXTRAS: Watch videos and view additional photos from the 87th Annual Convention in Chicago.

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:

- ▶ 2018 World Champion of Public Speaking Ramona J. Smith.
- ▶ Second-place winner Sherrie Su.
- ▶ The top three winners: Fain Taylor, Smith and Su.
- ▶ Third-place winner Anita Fain Taylor.



Highlights From the 2018 Inte

Toastmasters from around the world gathered in Chicago for an unforgettable experience.

The 87th Annual Toastmasters International Convention was held August 22–25 in Chicago, Illinois, United States. More than 2,100 members gathered at the Marriott Marquis and McCormick Place Convention Center to learn from educational presentations, vote for their favorite candidates, cheer for 106 semifinalists in the International Speech Contest and watch 10 finalists vie for the World Champion of Public Speaking title.

Members traveled to Chicago from 76 nations, with 641 Toastmasters attending the International Convention for the first time. In addition to educational presentations and speech contests, attendees enjoyed optional activities, such as a river boat tour of Chicago's famed architecture and the Smedley Step Challenge, which raised more than \$5,000 for the Ralph C. Smedley Memorial Fund*.

The Opening Ceremonies included the traditional flag parade with members dressed in national costumes carrying the flags of more than 100 nations in which Toastmasters has a presence, demonstrating the global reach of the organization.

Past International President Jana Barnhill, DTM, gave a brief and moving presentation on the topic of hope, encouraging Toastmasters to take in all the positivity and joy experienced during the convention “and take it home with you and sing that song and share the light of hope for all the world to see.” Barnhill spoke, in part, to honor her late husband, Past International President Robert “Bob” E. Barnhill III, who passed away in May of this year.

During his opening statements, Immediate Past International President Balraj Arunasalam, DTM, highlighted the changes and accomplishments during his year in office, including the relocation of World Headquarters from California to Colorado and the wide adoption of the Pathways education program.

In his presentation, “Follow Me,” keynote speaker Steve Gilliland asked the audience to consider whether they were “driven by purpose,” and encouraged Toastmasters to inspire everyone they meet to make a difference. Because Toastmasters are leaders, he argued, they should do their best to spread joy and hope to others.

Annual Business Meeting

During the Annual Business Meeting, Proposal A was approved. Proposal A amended the Bylaws of Toastmasters International to enable the Board of Directors to provide an alternative process for the Advisory Committee of Past Presidents (ACPP) to conduct business when a quorum is not present. As the amendment passed, Policy 11.4: Board of Directors Committees was automatically amended.

Accredited Speakers

This year, a record number of 24 applicants sought the Accredited Speaker designation at Level 1. From that group, nine applicants advanced to Level 2 during the convention, where they gave their final qualifying presentations to a large convention audience. The following six candidates earned the title of Accredited Speaker: Edwin W. Ettinghausen, ACB, from Murrieta, California; Greg Wood, ACS, ALS, from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada; Maurice DiMino, ACB, from Canoga Park, California; Tamara Smiley Hamilton, ACG, CL, from Reston, Virginia; Terry Watson, DTM, from Chicago, Illinois; and Valda Ford, DTM, from High Point, North Carolina. They are all professional speakers who combine expert knowledge in a particular subject with mastery of the spoken word. Speakers who meet the necessary criteria are invited to apply for the Accredited Speaker designation between January 1 and February 1, 2019.

Golden Gavel: Keith Ferrazzi

The Golden Gavel award was presented to Keith Ferrazzi for his leadership in the field of networking and relationship-building. His two books, *Never Eat Alone* and *Who's Got Your Back*, were both *New York Times* best-sellers. Ferrazzi gave a presentation explaining his philosophy of “leading without authority” and the positive impacts of cultivating more meaningful relationships. Toastmasters' most prestigious award has been given annually since 1959 to an individual distinguished in the fields of communication and leadership.



International Convention

BY TESS IANDIORIO

Hall of Fame

During the Hall of Fame ceremony, 10 Toastmasters districts were recognized as President's Distinguished, five were recognized as Select Distinguished and five as Distinguished. The Board also announced a new district designation, Smedley Distinguished, with details to follow in the coming year.

New Executive Committee

Lark Doley, DTM, of Jonestown, Texas, United States, was installed as the new International President during the President's Inauguration. She brings 25 years of Toastmasters experience along with a business background in technology and entrepreneurship. Deepak Menon, DTM, of New Delhi, India, is the new International President-Elect. Richard E. Peck, DTM, of Seymour, Connecticut, is the new First Vice President. Margaret Page, DTM, of Delta, British Columbia, Canada, is the new Second Vice President. Balraj Arunasalam, DTM, is now the Immediate Past International President.

Education Sessions

Seven education sessions were led by professional speakers and communication and leadership experts, who each spoke for about one hour, sharing insight into their specific areas of expertise. These education sessions are available to view anytime at www.toastmastersondemand.com. Session presenters were:


- ▶ Johnny Campbell – Embracing the Winds of Change: Adjust Your Sails
- ▶ Pat Johnson – Building and Sustaining Vibrant Corporate Clubs
- ▶ Sarah Khan – #BeginWithin
- ▶ Eldonna Lewis Fernandez – Think Like a Negotiator: Ways to Create Win-Win Results
- ▶ Mohammed Murad – Is Leadership for Me?

- ▶ Lars Sudmann – The Innovative Toastmaster
- ▶ Michelle Tillis Lederman – How to Get What You Want: Influencing Others Into Action

Speech Contests

Of the 106 semifinalists in the International Speech Contest, 10 finalists emerged to compete for the World Championship of Public Speaking: Wiwiek Najihah Binte Hairudin, J.A. Gamache, Kenny Ray Morgan, Eric Feinendegen, Al Frederick Lacorte, Kwong Yue Yang and Kevin Matthew Johnson. The first-place winner was Ramona J. Smith, and second- and third-place winners were Zifang “Sherrie” Su and Anita Fain Taylor (See pg. 16 for more details on the top three.)

The 2018 Video Speech Contest (a category for members of undistricted clubs) had 11 competitors from all over the world. First place went to Bethany Boring, ACS, ALB, from Palm Bay, Florida with her speech “Hold My Right Hand.” Second place went to Ankur from Istanbul, Turkey, and the third-place winner was Job Mogire, ACB, CL, from Nairobi, Kenya, East Africa.

If you missed this year's convention, you can start planning to attend Toastmasters International's 88th Annual Convention in Denver, Colorado, in 2019. For more information on the event, please visit www.toastmasters.org/Events. 

TOP LEFT TO RIGHT:

- ▶ *International President Lark Doley at the Annual Business Meeting.*
- ▶ *The six new Accredited Speakers.*
- ▶ *Golden Gavel Award recipient Keith Ferrazzi.*
- ▶ *District 82 leaders from India and Sri Lanka are recognized for being President's Distinguished.*
- ▶ *The new Toastmasters International Executive Committee.*
- ▶ *Michelle Tillis Lederman speaks at her education session.*

Leading by Doing

4 strategies for becoming a better doer.

BY MEGAN PRESTON MEYER

One of my favorite quotes on leadership comes from French writer Antoine de Saint-Exupéry: “If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea.”

Now, I yearn for the sea, but I don’t know how to build a boat. No matter how much I buy into the overall strategy, no matter how much I believe in the vision, I’m not going to be able to get my boss across the Atlantic.

“Execution without leadership won’t get you far, but leadership without execution will get you nowhere. To be successful, you need to have both.”

To get results, you need more than just leaders. You need people who translate vision into reality. You need people who roll up their sleeves and get to work. You need *doers*.

Getting Things Done

Doers are efficient, detail-oriented and highly skilled. They get things done and don’t let anything stand in their way. They show high levels of intrinsic motivation and take pride in a job well done. They have a record of success a mile long and, although they might not always be in the spotlight, are highly sought after in their fields.

Sound like you? Great. You can stop reading now and get back to work. If not, it’s understandable. We aren’t all natural doers—just like we aren’t all natural leaders. The good news is, just as we can hone our leadership skills, we can hone our “doership” skills.

The bad news is, while there’s an entire industry devoted to helping you become a better leader, the same model doesn’t work for becoming a better doer. A leadership seminar can offer universal tips (*Be authentic! Communicate effectively!*) that the surgeon, the stonemason, the

business analyst and the blogger in the audience will all find useful. But no single seminar, no article (including this one—the irony is not lost on me), no coach, no course is going to be able to teach that diverse group of professionals how to excel in their chosen trades. Execution is not context-free.

Execution without leadership won’t get you far, but leadership without execution will get you nowhere. To be successful, you need to have both. Focus on the following four areas to become a better doer.

1 Productivity

The first step to improving your execution is to increase your productivity (and this is as close as you’ll come to context-free, universal advice). To be effective at what you’re doing, you need to be efficient at it. There are plenty of resources out there with tips to make you more productive. Whether it’s the Pomodoro time management method (working on a specific task for a series of 25-minute intervals) or single-tasking (the opposite of multi-tasking), find something that



works for you and make it a habit. Remember, though, that increasing your productivity is just laying the foundation. It will give you the time, energy and focus to do what you need to do, but it won’t make you good at it. For that, you need practice.

2

Practice

To be good at anything, whether it's shipbuilding or surgery, public speaking or programming, you need to practice. There's no way around it. I'm not saying you need to spend an hour each evening doing timed drills, but to be a better doer, you need to do more. The more experience you have with a task, the more variants of the base case you encounter, the greater your understanding will be of the entire system. This increased understanding not only helps you better execute the current task but also helps you solve the *next* problem you encounter.

Toastmasters allows you to practice public speaking, and you can use this experience to hone other skills too. Work on your coding skills by revamping your club's website or perfect your event-planning prowess by organizing the next Area Speech Contest. Practice your public relations skills by writing an exciting press release about something awesome your club just did, or shoot a promotional video at a meeting so you can showcase your members on social media and work on your cinematography skills at the same time. Seek out every opportunity to hone your skills; "practice makes perfect" may be cliché, but that doesn't mean it isn't true.



3

Learning

While learning-by-doing is 100 percent necessary, you can also grow your knowledge base in other ways.

Read trade journals, internet forums and academic papers. Earn a certification or enroll in a course. Find an expert in your field and then invite her to lead a workshop for your club. Encourage members from other clubs or members of the public to attend as well.

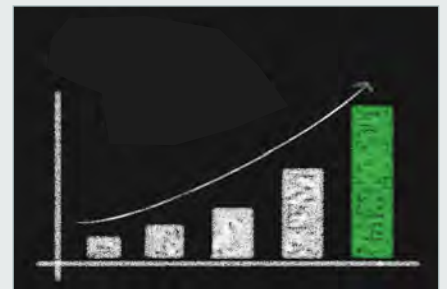
Within your club, find an experienced member to mentor you—or learn as much or more by becoming a mentor yourself. Take full advantage of the Pathways learning experience and the other resources provided by Toastmasters International; from how-to guides for creating podcasts to specific team-building and training activities, there is certainly something related to what you want to do. Make sure, though, that you aren't just learning for learning's sake; actively look for ways you can apply your new knowledge.

4

Improvement

The best way to apply new knowledge is to improve the way you do things. When you take

the solid base of experience you've formed through practice and add to it the additional knowledge you've acquired, you have all the ingredients necessary for improvement. That's not to say it will happen automatically; in fact, this is where you need to put in the most effort. This is where you go from being a good doer to a great doer—by actively working to *get better* at what you're doing. Pathways encourages you to repeat the same speech after incorporating feedback; record yourself giving both speeches, and then watch the before and after while marveling at your improvement!



And don't stop there. Once you've improved, you've set yourself a new status quo. Keep practicing. Keep learning. And most importantly, keep improving. And while you're at it, don't forget to help others improve. Giving objective and thoughtful feedback to others not only benefits them, but can help you spot areas that you want to work on—or emulate—as well. Evaluation is a cornerstone of the Toastmasters model for a reason; it's a key component of both great leadership *and* great doership.

Good Leaders Are Great Doers

To be a good leader, you need to be a great doer. We have all known leaders who are great at giving orders but couldn't execute to save their lives. We've also all known leaders who clearly understand what they are talking about, and even if they aren't in the trenches with you on this particular project, they could be. Which type do you prefer working under? Which type do you want to be?

Whether you are hoping to climb the corporate ladder or are content being an independent contributor, whether you

aim for startup-founder glory or are happy with your one-man/one-woman show, you need to be able to execute. Decide what it is you want to do, and then practice, learn, improve and repeat—so the next time you yearn for the vast and endless sea, you can build your ship and set sail. **T**

Megan Preston Meyer, CC, CL, is the immediate past president of TM International Club Zug in Zug, Switzerland. She holds an MBA in operations management, works as a senior business analyst and is an avid collector of jargon.

Do You Devalue Your Success Because of Self-Doubt?

You May Have

IMPOSTOR SYNDROME

How high performers overcome insecurity.

BY MAUREEN ZAPPALA, DTM

“**W**hat were they thinking when they hired me? They must have made a mistake.” That’s what I thought at my first post-college job, as a project engineer at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in Cleveland, Ohio. Surrounded by engineers, rocket scientists and researchers, I thought I didn’t belong. “I’m not as smart as they are. They’re going to figure out I’m a phony.”

I was experiencing impostor syndrome. It’s a form of self-doubt that plagues smart, accomplished and well-qualified people, causing them to devalue their skills and dismiss their success. They feel like frauds, as if they somehow tricked the world into thinking they’re smarter than they really are.

The phrase “impostor syndrome” was first coined in 1978 by Drs. Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes, two clinical psychologists who identified a pattern among high-performing, successful women. Despite external evidence of great accomplishments,

these women could not internally accept their own success. They dismissed it, attributing it to luck or people overestimating their intelligence. They felt like frauds. Initially, the experience was thought to be limited to only women, but research since then indicates otherwise. In 2012, Amy Cuddy, author of the best-seller *Presence: Bringing Your Boldest Self to Your Biggest Challenges*, gave a TED Talk during which she described her own experience of feeling like an impostor. She was inundated with letters from men saying they felt the same way.



“Don’t confuse being *the* expert with being *an* expert.”

At the core of the impostor syndrome is an inability to confess to your success. It’s difficult for you to embrace your expertise and acknowledge your abilities. The result is twofold: You either refrain from taking on challenges, or you take on a challenge but are too worried about failing to enjoy it, even when you do it well.

“Our thoughts affect our feelings, which influence our actions, which create habits that set the direction and tone of our lives.”

Many Toastmasters can experience the impostor syndrome, which is often triggered by stepping into a new, unfamiliar assignment. Their confidence doesn’t match their competence. A Distinguished Toastmaster from Connecticut who owns her own marketing consulting firm confessed, “I took a leadership role in the Pathways rollout, and I didn’t feel qualified. I had the training, but I still felt like I needed to know more.” Another member, a pet-care-industry professional, reflected on her involvement in a Toastmasters speech contest: “I volunteered to be club contest chair. I was a one-year member and had never seen a contest. I visited another club first to observe its contest and studied some on YouTube. I figured I would be replaced at any moment for failing. Thankfully, I did not fail.”

Imagine being free from this chronic self-doubt, and able to enjoy the challenge of a new assignment or the success of a job well done. Imagine not constantly wondering if failure is just around the corner. It’s possible. You can match your confidence to your competence to unleash more influence. These four strategies can help.

1 Get the information.

Overcoming impostor syndrome begins with learning about it, and how it can affect people in all fields, including technology, engineering, art/design, education, entertainment, sports, law and business. It affects executives, career changers and entrepreneurs. American actress Sally Field, poet Maya Angelou and Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg have all confessed to it. Tennis champion Serena Williams and famed author John Steinbeck also struggled with impostor syndrome. Speaking on what it’s like to ascend to the highest position in most organizations—chief executive officer—Starbucks’ longtime CEO Howard Schultz told *The New York Times*, “Very few people, whether you’ve been in

that job before or not, get into the seat and believe today that they are now qualified to be the CEO. They’re not going to tell you that, but it’s true.”

If you identify as a self-doubter, you probably share these symptoms. Typically, when facing a new assignment, you either over-prepare or procrastinate as long as possible and then burst into action. Either way, you do an outstanding job. People praise you, but you can’t enjoy it because you’re thinking “Oh no ... I need to do it again!” The cycle repeats when you are faced with the next challenge. You probably also strive for uniqueness or perfection, because being ordinary or mediocre is unacceptable. You often don’t delegate because you think it shows weakness. You’re charming and funny, but it’s meant to deflect attention from the fact that you don’t think you’re smart enough. You do everything you can to either eliminate failure, or completely avoid it. Oddly, you fear success because you don’t think you can repeat it. Finally, you dismiss compliments by attributing success to something random like luck or timing.

Toastmasters around the world provided input for this article. A successful sales manager said, “After being elected as our club president, I still feel incompetent. I am only a CL! I feel that there are many far more qualified Toastmasters who would be a better leader for our club.” Another member, a well-respected and experienced physician, revealed, “When people praise me for a speech, I feel they’re just saying it to be nice.” Yet another member, a highly educated IT consultant, confessed, “I was averse to giving my first speech evaluation. I felt unqualified, and that my evaluation would not do justice to the speaker.” A business analyst implied he’d rather not volunteer for a role than face failure.

2 Examine the accusation.

The self-doubter battles a relentless internal dialogue of incompetence accusations. Our thoughts affect our feelings, which influence our actions, which create habits that set the direction and tone of our lives. Gaining control of our thoughts is essential. Cognitive behavioral therapy explains the link between thoughts and feelings and helps people think differently so they behave differently. It’s a complex process, but a modified condensed three-step approach can be quite helpful.

Step 1: Capture the thought.

When you recognize a symptom, immediately capture your thought. For example, the instant you think “I’m not entering the speech contest because if I fail, I’m a fool,” hold on to that thought.

There's plenty of room for many experts on the same topic."

Step 2: Cross-examine the thought.

Next, evaluate what evidence supports this thought to establish if it's true or false. "I don't think poorly of other contestants who don't win. Why would they think that of me? And what if I win? It would be fun. Plus, rehearsing will help grow my skills."

Step 3: Counter the thought.

After you've captured and cross-examined the thought, then you counter the thought with decisive action. "OK! Sign me up! I'm in!"

3 Cultivate conversation.

Cultivating the conversation means making connections and building community. When you realize you are not alone in this experience its detrimental power is defused. Chances are there are others in your club who feel like you do.

It's beneficial to be honest, even vulnerable, without losing your dignity. For example, if you're a first-time contest chair, say, "I want to do a good job. Can you teach me?" Maybe you are evaluating an experienced speaker and you don't feel qualified. Ask the speaker ahead of time, "What specifically would you like feedback about? I'd like to help you." If you are a leader, engage others by asking for their help. Your team will have greater respect for you. It will create an opportunity for more people to be involved in the problem, which could lead to a better solution. Most significantly, cultivating conversations like this gives others permission to do the same thing. Transparency is contagious.

4 Collect your documentation.

In 1997, shortly before I left NASA, I wrote a 14-page "job manual" describing every aspect of my job ... the policies, the procedures and the people involved. I wrote it to ease the transition for my successor, and it helped immensely. In 2015, I rediscovered the document in a closet. I read it and thought, "Wow. I was good!" I forgot how complex the job was. Putting it on paper forced me to be objective about it.

Try it. Pretend you are training your successor, and create your own "job manual." Include every detail even if you think it's mundane or trivial. Then, put the document aside, and revisit it at another time. Then, read it as if it were someone else's job description. Be as objective as you can; observe the details and complexities. As you read, be impressed with what's there—because you are impressive.

Need more confirmation? Collect your good press. Keep thank-you notes, letters of appreciation and any type of recognition. Keep your trophies, certificates, special emails, texts, photos, gifts, newspaper clippings, magazine articles, plaques, performance appraisals, promotion letters, even old pay stubs (which validated that what you did warranted cash compensation!). This is all evidence of your competence. Review them, believe them and enjoy them—frequently. You earned them. It's not egotistical; it's essential to overcoming your self-doubt. Resist the temptation to discount them or explain them away as luck or some other random factor, because you did your part to earn the recognition. Don't discount an award if it wasn't as high as you wanted, because *giving* your best beats *being* the best.

Similarly, don't confuse being *the* expert with being *an* expert. There's plenty of room for many experts on the same topic.

Pushing Your Envelope

In the jet-engine industry, every aircraft engine has its own "operating envelope," the range of speeds and altitudes that allow safe operation. At NASA, we would often "push the envelope," and run the engine past its normal safe conditions to test a new concept. It almost always produced a new and larger operating envelope.

"Giving your best beats *being* the best."

You have your own operating envelope. But it can be larger. Toastmasters is the ideal laboratory for pushing your own envelope. You can turn down the volume of that limiting impostor syndrome that kidnaps your confidence. These strategies can free you, so you can push the envelope of your self-imposed limitations. You can be bolder and more courageous. You can take more risks and truly enjoy your success, as other Toastmasters will confirm.

A DTM who is a project manager by profession says, "Getting feedback for my speeches helped me overcome self-doubt and increase my self-confidence. While it helps me in Toastmasters, the big benefit is at work and other organizations." A club president who works as a college instructor says, "Overcoming self-doubt can't help but spill over into your everyday life. It's as if you've put on something—confidence—and you wear it everywhere." **T**

Maureen Zappala, DTM, is a keynote speaker, author, presentation skills coach and founder of *High Altitude Strategies*. She is the 2017–18 president of the National Speakers Association, Ohio Chapter.



Different Cultures, Shared Values

Kazakhstan's Open Central Asia speech contest inspires and unites.

BY PATRICK SMITH

Attendees arrived at the Central Asia Toastmasters event in Kazakhstan not sure what to expect. Though they came from different cities, cultures and countries, they left as friends, united by the power of storytelling and the shared values of Toastmasters.

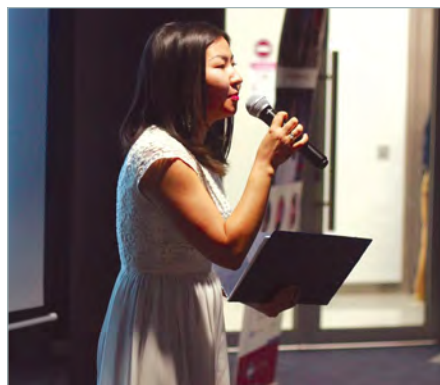
The March 2018 event was unique: an international program held in Kazakhstan, a country with only a handful of Toastmasters clubs. The program's centerpiece was a speech contest in storytelling. While it was not an official Toastmasters contest, it was modeled after Toastmasters contests, and it featured participants who traveled thousands of miles from the United Arab Emirates, Russia, Austria and Kyrgyzstan.

One hundred enthusiastic attendees—members as well as non-members—listened to six speakers tell stories focused on the theme: “Bringing History to Life.” The two-day event also included time for networking and social activities that helped members learn new skills and build camaraderie that continues to flourish. “Most of our members got to know the speakers in person and they still keep in touch,” says Toastmaster Aigerim

Akiltayeva, ACS, ALB, organizer of the program. The best part of the event, she adds, was “seeing smiles and jaw-dropping moments in the audience. It proved Toastmasters brings people together from all over the world. No matter where you're from, members are united by integrity, respect, service and excellence.”

Organizing an International Event

Akiltayeva is a member of the Astana Toastmasters in the capital of Kazakhstan.



Organizer of the Open Central Asia speech contest, Aigerim Akiltayeva

She organized the Open Central Asia speech contest as part of her High Performance Leadership project after being inspired by watching Dananjaya Hettiarachchi, the Sri Lankan who won the 2014 Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking.

Planning the event took months of hard work and persistence. “My vision was to unite Toastmasters clubs in one city, bring in speakers [from other countries] and organize a high-quality contest,” says Akiltayeva. “When you encounter obstacles, it helps to know the vision.”

To secure speakers, she wrote letters to more than 30 Toastmasters clubs. As the event got closer, problem-solving became more complex. One speaker, Rizwana Buch, of the Burj and Desert Voices clubs in Dubai, had difficulty securing her visa. She wanted to cancel the trip, but Akiltayeva persuaded her to come.

Buch is glad she did, saying the experience in Astana was well worth it. “Everyone I met was new to me. I was touched by their hospitality,” she says. “It helped me gain enough confidence to participate.” Buch placed third in the contest. Another

speaker, Valeriya Nabatova from the Atyrau club in southwestern Kazakhstan, says, “It was a great opportunity to get closer to people from other clubs and hear stories about their personalities, communities, culture and traditions.”

A Compelling Contest

The six contestants gave prepared speeches. The five judges included one member who came all the way from the Vienna Toastmasters club in Austria. Illuminated by the bright light of a computer projector, speakers took the stage looking at a capacity crowd, with some audience members watching on screens outside the main hall. One speaker talked about how love requires sacrifice, another gave a speech titled “A True Story of the Camel Lady.”

Compelling stories help people connect with each other regardless of their different cultural backgrounds, says Buch.

Vladislav Son, of the Almaty Toastmasters club in southeastern Kazakhstan, gave a speech titled “Hi, My Name Is Vlad” about the difficult history of Koreans migrating to Kazakhstan. Son won first place. “I wanted to see how far I could go with my public speaking,” Son says. “I knew I had an important message to convey.

I learned I have a talent in public speaking and will now work on it harder and more comprehensively.”



FROM LEFT: Contestants Sergey Saprykin, Vladislav Son and Nursultan Sulaimanov listen to a fellow competitor’s speech.



Attendees network and socialize with each other during the multi-cultural event.

A Welcoming Event

While the contest connected talented speakers from around the world, the atmosphere resembled a friendly Toastmasters meeting—the same helpful environment that both new members and veterans benefit from. “It didn’t feel like a competition,” says Akiltayeva. “That’s what I call Toastmasters spirit: being supportive no matter what.”

Indeed, the welcoming nature and rich content of the speeches inspired several people to join Toastmasters. As Akiltayeva recalls, “One guest told me: ‘I am so astonished by every speaker. The first-place winner made me cry. It inspired me to change my career path and not give up. I’d like to join Toastmasters; you’re such positive and inspiring people.’”

Other attendees say they learned how to be better speakers from watching the contest participants and seeing the way they handled such things as timing and expressing emotion in their deliveries. The speakers, too, say it was a learning experience. “I gained more confidence to accept bigger challenges and discovered the way people’s thoughts differed from mine,” said Buch. “Moreover, I learned how speech methods and delivery differ internationally.”

The contest solidified the similarities among all Toastmasters, regardless of location. “It reminded me there are so many things we have in common that unify us all,” says Son.

Making a Positive Impact

All the hard work and planning paid off for Akiltayeva, who also gives credit to fellow club members for helping her organize the contest: Kanat Bazaraly, Saule Temirbayeva, Alisher Tazhinov, Kuanysh Sadykov and Aigerim Seitenova. She says she hopes the event will encourage more Toastmasters growth in Central Asia.

Akiltayeva continues her leadership efforts. Besides her involvement in her own club, she is coaching the Toastmasters club at Nazarbayev University in Astana and is in the process of co-founding a club in Karaganda, another city in Kazakhstan. The event this past March gave Akiltayeva great satisfaction, she says. “I remember glancing at the audience and seeing smiles, tears, laughs and thought-provoking looks during the contest. I still hear about guests coming to Toastmasters after watching videos from the contest.

“It’s the best experience to see how much Toastmasters can affect the lives of others through a single speech.” **T**

Patrick Smith is the vice president public relations for the Sunrise Speakers club in Bloomington, Illinois. He writes stories and produces videos for a large financial services company.



ONLINE EXTRAS: Witness the camaraderie of members in Central Asia by viewing photos of their multi-cultural event in Kazakhstan.

Making a Difference as a Toastmaster

The real purpose behind public speaking.

BY STEVE GILLILAND

When the “why” is clear, the “how” is easy. People who make a difference have the ability not just to envision something in an abstract way, but they also have the drive to go out and do it. As a Toastmaster and leader, your life’s work should be to serve others and influence them to do the same.

No matter what challenges you face each day, you have to remain determined to find a way to bring joy and hope to people around you. Try to focus on maintaining a calm, compassionate, humorous and positive attitude. While you don’t know what struggles other people might be facing, you do have the power to bring others hope—if only for a moment. That hope can multiply a thousand times and manifest in unexpected ways.

Fill Your Own Cup First

As a Toastmaster, you can make someone’s day; but to be inspiring, you have to feel inspired. You must fill your own cup first. If you are happy, then you will be better able to make others happy. How you begin your day will go a long way in determining the rest of it. Making a difference is about conscious choices that do, and will, affect the lives of people you encounter. It is about being a leader whose behavior models what you expect of the people around you. Your job may give you authority. But your behavior earns you respect.

When your cup begins to fill, drip by drip, you will be able to help others around you. Whatever brings you joy, find a way to let it in. Your contentment will be worth it.

Live Your Message

The number one question I am always asked about my career is, “What is the

biggest challenge you face as a professional speaker?” My answer: living it! The saying “Actions speak louder than words” is never more accurate than when you deliver a speech and then are challenged to live it. When our actions do not fit our words, not only do we set off a negative chain reaction outside ourselves, we also set off a negative chain reaction within ourselves. We learn not to trust ourselves, and that leads to low self-esteem and uneasiness.

We cannot be dishonest to others without being dishonest to ourselves. Whenever you have someone else’s attention, your actions can convince them that the world is either a cold, frightening place, or that it’s full of love and joy. As a speaker and a leader, it is imperative that your actions match your beliefs.

Be Driven by Purpose

You may have considered the question: What would you do if you knew you only had six months to live? Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “Even if I knew the world would end tomorrow, I would plant a tree today.” Or consider Saint Augustine: while weeding his garden one morning, he was asked, “What would you do if you knew you were going to die before the sun went down?” Without a moment’s hesitation Saint Augustine responded, “I would continue hoeing my garden.”

Martin Luther King, Jr. and Saint Augustine were two men focused on their purpose and sense of time—or lack thereof—and would not consider deviating from their paths. Would winning the lottery change your daily routine? If so, then ask yourself if you are driven by an actual purpose. Allow your passion to become your purpose, and it will become your profession.



Discover True Wealth

True wealth is discovered when you begin to realize your presence will either bring a person up or down. As a Toastmaster and leader, are you bringing people up? What specific things do you do every day to show others they are important to you? Do you celebrate their successes? People who make a difference set their self-interest aside and rejoice in the happiness of others. Sharing the wealth is about encouraging other people to go for their dreams and cheering them on to make their ambitions become reality. Don’t just give what you have, give who you are.

The real purpose behind speaking is to inspire people everywhere to *make a difference*. One person can change the world. It starts with you! **■**

Steve Gilliland was the Opening Ceremonies Keynote Speaker at the 87th Annual Toastmasters International Convention in Chicago. He is a member of the National Speakers Association’s Speaker Hall of Fame and author of the book *Enjoy the Ride*. Gilliland can be heard daily on the SiriusXM Satellite Radio stations *Laugh USA* and *Jeff & Larry’s Comedy Roundup*. Visit www.stevegilliland.com to learn more.



A Recipe for the Evaluation Sandwich

Balance the ingredients of positive and constructive feedback.

BY BILL BROWN, DTM

The real strength of the Toastmasters program is the peer review process, the core of which is the speech evaluation.

The feedback we receive on our club speeches is the most helpful tool for growth because it is the most personal, and is tailored to our own skill level. Various factors determine the quality of that feedback. However, the most important one—one that we usually don't think about—is what are we striving to achieve in our evaluations.

The sandwich approach is the model for Toastmasters evaluations. This is where you state the positives of the speech, suggest an area or two for improvement and finish with another positive comment. But in my 12 years as a member, I have all too often seen the balance between emphasizing strengths and offering suggestions tip heavily in the “strengths” direction. In the process, the learning component is lost. Why does that happen?

One reason is a club may shift its evaluation focus from being educational to being encouraging. There is nothing wrong with encouraging the speaker, of course. But if “positives only” becomes the focus, with virtually no significant suggestions for improvement, speakers can't learn.

Another reason is the focus may have shifted from the content to the structure. It is quite common to hear something like, “That was a great evaluation. You used the sandwich approach.” If the evaluator uses this method but doesn't provide useful information, then is it helpful or not?

One tool that should help is the Pathways evaluation process. In the new learning experience, evaluators use

standardized criteria that help focus their feedback and increase the consistency of the evaluation experience. When members give speeches in Pathways, their skills are scored on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest. Categories on the evaluation form include “vocal variety,” “eye contact,” “gestures” and “clarity,” and these categories are reviewed in every speech so that the speaker can see their progress.

This should not only help educate the speaker, but also challenge evaluators to ask themselves, “What is good vocal variety, what is good eye contact, what is good body language?”

“If the creativity becomes the central focus of the evaluation, it can crowd the education right out of the picture.”

Pathways evaluations should thus lead to more thorough and relevant feedback for speakers and evaluators alike. (For more information about Pathways, visit www.toastmasters.org/Pathways.)

Another trend I am seeing more and more, especially in Speech Evaluation contests, is placing style over substance. Some evaluations have become productions. The evaluators get kudos for being creative or funny. Or they might get a pat on the back for not using notes.

You might think, *Are those really problems? Isn't all of that good?* Perhaps, but what do we lose?

Evaluations are very limited in time, typically two to three minutes. If we want

our feedback to be educational, much of that time should be spent educating. If a creative structure aids in the learning experience, great. If it takes time away from it, then I would suggest it is a problem. And if the creativity becomes the evaluation's central focus, it can crowd the education right out of the picture.

I particularly disagree with a focus on memorizing your evaluation. With the limited time available to prepare an evaluation in a club meeting, and especially in a speech contest, you can't memorize detail, only generalities.

To offer details, I give the speaker an example of what they said and what they could have said. An evaluator might typically say, “You need a better opening.” I prefer, “You opened your speech by saying ‘xyz.’ What if you had said ‘abc?’”

To directly quote such examples, I need to use notes.

We must be careful that our focus is on the learning, and, as such, on the speaker, and not on the evaluation “speech.” The question that we, the evaluators, should ask is, “What is the next step in the speaker's growth?”

That, I believe, will help us provide a strong learning experience. **T**

Bill Brown, DTM, is a speech delivery coach from Las Vegas and a member of Pro Toastmasters and Ahead of the Curve Toastmasters. Learn more at www.billbrownspeechcoach.com.



ONLINE EXTRAS: Listen to an exclusive recording for examples of effective feedback for your next evaluation.



The Missing Pronoun

Observations on the eternal search for a word that includes everyone and offends no one.

BY JOHN CADLEY

It is a terrible thing when everyone agrees on the problem and no one can agree on the solution. Such is the case with the lack of a universally accepted gender-neutral third-person singular pronoun—i.e., a word that refers to both sexes without resorting to awkward neologisms like his/her, she/he or the truly pathetic s/he. No one likes using these. They break up the rhythm of a sentence, they grow monotonous with repetition and they’re just not the elegant solution that, say, “you” was when it replaced “thee,” “thou” and “ye” in one fell swoop. “You” can be singular, plural, masculine or feminine, and it stops people from sounding like characters in a Nathaniel Hawthorne novel.

“She/he” and its feeble variations don’t do that. They’re jerry-rigged, stop-gap measures at best, like holding up your pants with a safety pin. Yes they work, but ... they just don’t look right. Writers sometimes try to get around the problem by simply alternating “his” and “her” in equal numbers: *The surgeon will usually make his first incision with a No. 10 blade, although occasionally she will opt for a No. 12.* Here, the writer has achieved political correctness with a sentence requiring major surgery.

Yet another quick fix involves repetition of the non-gender-specific noun: *The student went to the student’s room to get the student’s homework.* This anodyne approach is clearly designed to offend no one, provided you don’t count professional philologists, who read a sentence like this and weep openly.

Finally, there is the use of “they” as a singular pronoun, as in *The patient should be told at the outset how much they will be*

required to pay. This is the most common solution but certainly not the best. When you have to use a word meaning “more than one person” to refer to one person, you have one big mess.

I must say, however, that if we still lack a satisfactory binary pronoun, it’s not for want of trying. As proof, we go to a master’s thesis written by Kelly Ann Sippell in 1991 entitled *Solving the Great Pronoun Problem*, in which Ms. Sippell catalogues all the attempts to create a gender-neutral pronoun over the last 150 years! They have included words like *hes, hiser, heer, he’er, herim, hesh, heesh, hir* and many more—none of which caught on (thank God).

“When you have to use a word meaning ‘more than one person’ to refer to one person, you have one big mess.”

One almost did. It was the word *thon*, a contracted form of “that one,” invented by a man named Charles Crozat Converse in 1858. Funk and Wagnalls went so far as to put it in its dictionary, along with this definition:

“A pronoun of the third person, common gender, meaning ‘that one, he she, or it’: a neoterism proposed by Charles Crozat Converse, and apparently complying with the neoteristic canons, since it supplies an antecedent blank, obeys a simple and obvious analogy, and is euphonious.” If that’s a definition, then I’m a heesh.

Thon was eventually dropped for being not so much a word as a proposed word that nobody actually used. How could you, when examples for using it were: “*Thon* went to the park” and “*Thon* threw the Frisbee to thonsel.” Shoot me now.

Not surprisingly, the British have succeeded where Americans have failed. They do have a non-gender-specific honorific that is widely used in the United Kingdom today. Who knew? The word is *Mx*, pronounced *Mixter*, *Mix* or *Mux*, used by people who prefer not to have their gender known, on everything from driver’s licenses to passports to bank accounts. The only problem with *Mx* is that these two letters can also refer to Mexican domain names, email server settings, Emacs commands, camera models, motor-bikes or graphing calculations. Hence, users must be highly specific lest their Google searches take them to websites for mariachi pants or the Minuteman-III land-based Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles.

So, what’s to be done? Well, if you follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*, nothing. The editors of that august publication have concluded that any solution is bound to offend somebody, so they simply leave you to your own devices. I get around it as best I can, using “police officer” for policeman and “mail carrier” for mailman. But if I write about a college freshman, am I obliged to call his female counterpart a freshman? Not unless I want a slap in the face. **T**

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

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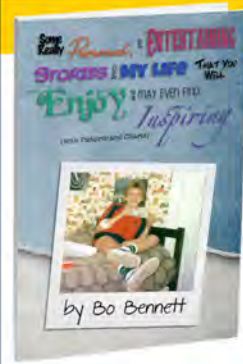
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CLIENT SPOTLIGHT - BO BENNETT, DTM



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

What is a "normal childhood?" Does it include almost being murdered by your sister with an ax? Speeding around town in the back of a station wagon because your mom is chasing an "alien spaceship"? Being busted by the police for intent to light a pond on fire? Tackling your mom to the ground and wrestling a knife out of her hand because she was trying to kill your dad? While my stories may be unique, readers will be able to relate to the broader themes that 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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