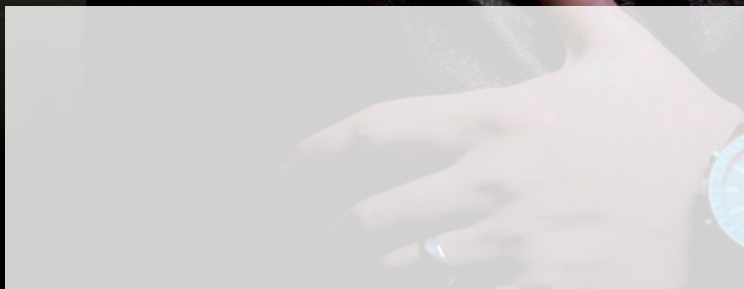


THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | JANUARY 2019

# TOASTMASTER®

## *Aiming Sky High*

Magician and future  
military pilot chases  
lifelong dream



**What's the Culture  
of Your Club?**

**Meet the Six New  
Accredited Speakers**

# Reflect and Renew

**A**s we begin the second half of our Toastmasters program year, it's a good time to reflect on the first six months. Consider whether you're progressing in your personal and professional goals. Think of the things you have accomplished so far this year.

Think, too, about your club. How is it progressing? Do club guests experience a quality meeting and a positive, supportive learning environment? Do they become members?

I have had the privilege of participating in club meetings in South Korea, China, Australia, England, France, Denmark, Sweden and several states in the United States. I have attended meetings of corporate clubs, association clubs, government-affiliated clubs, university clubs, community clubs and prison clubs. Every club and every meeting is unique. But the quality and standard of excellence demonstrated at each are directly related to whether club members and officers view their participation as valuable.

## “What are the standards of excellence that your club demonstrates to the world?”

I attended the 50th anniversary celebration of Lone Star Toastmasters in Killeen, Texas, and the 60th anniversary celebration of Randolph Air Force Base (AFB) Toastmasters in San Antonio, Texas. These clubs have a legacy of excellence. They have served thousands of members. A longtime member and leader at Lone Star Toastmasters is Tim Manson. Tim continues to serve this club and to be an inspiration to all guests and members. At Randolph AFB Toastmasters, Amy Espinoza, Deb Arrington, Don Brooks and George Houtman continue to serve and lead. The dedication of these members and leaders is a shining example to all of us.

Think about the value you personally contribute to your club. What is the value you are gaining from your Toastmasters experience? What value are other members gaining? Consider how your personal lives and professional lives benefit from participation in Toastmasters. Is every club meeting a positive experience for everyone—one you want to share with guests?

As we begin the second half of the Toastmasters year, it is time for us to renew our commitment to the club mission and to the Toastmaster's Promise. Make every club meeting a golden experience for members and guests. Ask your mentor to hold you accountable for the goals you have set for yourself.

Reflect on what you have achieved and renew your commitment to progress toward your next personal goal. What are the standards of excellence that your club demonstrates to the world? In 2019, let's positively impact the lives of more and more people.

**Lark Doley, DTM**  
International President



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“A glimpse into Pete’s and John’s challenges and how they overcame them is truly inspiring! I started Toastmasters nine months ago—one of the best decisions in my life.”

—Bop Moore

Grand Junction Toastmasters  
Grand Junction, Colorado

### There’s More to Speechwriting

While the “Speechwriting 101” article in the October magazine is loaded with good information, it misses an important issue. Not because it is erroneous, rather that excellent speakers are performing artists who are creating and delivering original material.

Yes, many speakers write their speeches, but the pros I know may or may not. I have been a serious speaker since 1957 and have never written a speech, but I do follow Bill Gove’s admonition to “know what comes next.”

My point is not to dismiss writing material as good practice, but to encourage speakers to begin with a program premise, “In this program my speaking goal is to ...” in as few words as possible; then create a program sequence of points to be made that leads to writing a speech manuscript—if that fits the speaker’s speaking DNA. The disadvantage of writing one’s speech is that, once it’s written, there is a reluctance to change it.

**Gordon Hill**

Los Chismosos club  
Las Cruces, New Mexico



Members and guests of Zhongshan Toastmasters celebrate the club’s 200th meeting.

### Promoting Pathways

Zhongshan Toastmasters club (ZSTMC) in Guangdong, China, held our 200th meeting, which ended up being exceptionally successful! Not only were we able to invite several distinguished guests, we also creatively promoted Pathways and gathered more than 90 participants. This was not an easy feat, considering English is not commonly spoken here.

By sharing our joy and achievements with the Toastmasters community, we encourage other clubs and raise awareness of the strong Toastmasters presence in this part of the world.

**William Niu, ACB, ALB**

Zhongshan Toastmasters club  
Zhongshan, Guangdong, China

### Valuable Advice

I read the article, “Accelerate Your Toastmasters Experience” [September 2018] by Jennifer L. Blanck with interest and found it constructive and eye-opening, focusing on the main drawbacks experienced in clubs worldwide.

A properly introduced speaker will enjoy a comfortable and reassured stage to deliver the speech. The importance of such an introduction is often ignored or overlooked. Likewise, the need for special attention when providing feedback for new members is well described, since they are sensitive and vulnerable.

Also, success of any operation largely depends on the preparation, and a Toastmasters meeting is no exception. Well-prepared meeting role participants will

not only feel comfortable in performing their tasks but also enjoy a well-conducted meeting. I congratulate the author for providing these valuable guides.

**M. Y. Zainudeen, DTM**

Wayamba Toastmasters club  
Kurunegala, Sri Lanka

### A True Inspiration

Peter Dhu’s story [June 2018] and John Cadley’s letter [September 2018] truly captured the mental and social isolation that I have been experiencing in the past decade. I did not stutter, however, I struggled to express my thoughts because I was too concerned about my grammar and pronunciation. With my confidence shattered, I was stuck in a world where the only decent conversation I could carry on (that passed my standards) was in my head, and the only other set of eyes that I looked at when talking was my husband’s. It was debilitating!

A glimpse into Pete’s and John’s challenges and how they overcame them is truly inspiring! I started Toastmasters nine months ago—one of the best decisions in my life. I am gaining confidence bit by bit, and I am happier and more optimistic!

**Bop Moore**

Grand Junction Toastmasters  
Grand Junction, Colorado

### 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](mailto:letters@toastmasters.org). Please note: Letters are subject to editing for length and clarity, and may be published in both the print and electronic editions.

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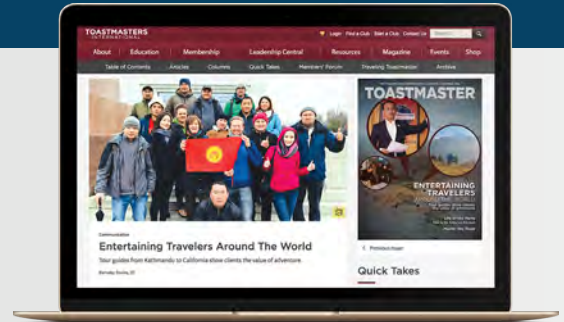


# Toastmaster Magazine Online

See more photos, videos and links online at [www.toastmasters.org/Magazine](http://www.toastmasters.org/Magazine)

## January Online Extras:

- **Aiming Sky High**—Discover how Reed Barrett aced his Air Force interviews thanks to Table Topics. ▶
- **Meet the Six New Accredited Speakers**—Watch a video to learn more about the expert speakers who earned the coveted AS designation. ▶
- **Create a Quality Video**—Learn new techniques for promoting your club or district by watching “9 Tips to a Better Video,” created by Toastmasters International’s staff videographer. ▶



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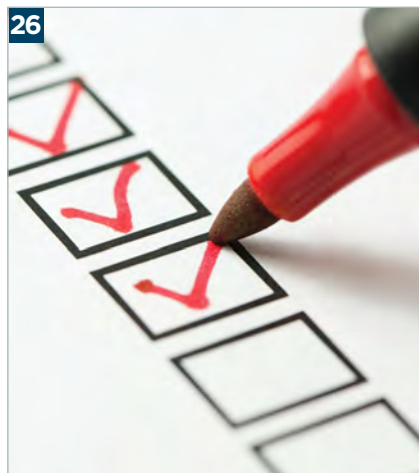
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## ▶ MEMBER MOMENT



## Fulbright Scholar Electrifies Audiences

Since he was 10 years old, Kalyan Sen has been fascinated with electricity and how it flows. A native of West Bengal, India, Sen's curiosity about electrical engineering eventually brought him to America, where he continued his education and career for the past three decades.

After years of extensive schooling at Jadavpur University in India and Tuskegee University, Worcester Polytechnic Institute and Robert Morris University in the United States, Sen, now 59, received a bachelor's, master's and Ph.D. in electrical engineering, as well as an MBA.

Sen, DTM, whose native languages are Bengali and Hindi, joined the Monroeville Club in Monroeville, Pennsylvania, in 1997 to improve his spoken English. His wife, Mey Ling, ACS, ALS, is also an electrical engineer and member of the Monroeville Club. The couple started their own company, Sen Engineering Solutions, Inc., which specializes in developing cost-effective power-flow controllers—devices that improve electric power transmission systems. They are also co-inventors of the Sen Transformer, a technology that transmits power efficiently.

Sen, a past district governor for District 13, is a 2017 recipient of the prestigious Fulbright Scholarship, and has traveled to 15 countries and presented more than 150 times on complex engineering topics. He incorporates storytelling into his lectures to help audiences understand the technical aspects of his presentations.

### Describe your public speaking experience since joining Toastmasters.

In 2002, I was selected to be a Distinguished Lecturer for the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Power & Energy Society. The audiences I present to include students, professors, researchers and employees from electric power companies. I always make a comparison of complex electrical engineering subjects to real-life situations so people can easily relate, such as comparing the flow of electricity in an electrical conductor to the water flow in a river, as both move from higher potential to lower potential energy.

### What have you learned while speaking internationally?

Touring the world as an IEEE Distinguished Lecturer is an eye-opening experience. One example is when I traveled to Islamabad in 2007. My host was late picking me up at the airport; later, I found him passing by me hastily and I pointed out that my name was written on the placard that he was holding upside down. He said, "I thought IEEE Distinguished Lecturers are old people." I told him that, in my experience with American culture, one did not need to be old to be "distinguished."



*Electrical engineers Mey Ling and Kalyan Sen have been married 30 years.*

Later that day, I started my presentation with this story. It helped me take control of the stage. It was easy from that point on, since I knew my engineering material very well. One good story broke the ice between me and my audience.

### What was your task as a Fulbright Scholar?

The Fulbright Scholarship offers competitive merit-based grants for international educational exchange for students, scholars, teachers, professionals, scientists and artists. After my wife and I had an engineering textbook published in 2009, universities began to use it in their curriculum. In order to study our book in-depth, the Indian Institute of Technology at Bhubaneswar applied for funding from the Fulbright Foundation, and my task was to develop a semester-long graduate class, using our book as the textbook. I prepared the lecture slides and homework to make the subject easier to teach.

### What's it like working with your wife?

We feel fortunate that we are both electrical engineers. When the time came to write our engineering book, we had no hesitation about being co-authors. Recently we celebrated our 30th wedding anniversary and plan to stay married until the end of our lives.

We also like being able to evaluate our Toastmasters speeches before giving them to others, and we interchange our roles as speaker and evaluator. If they pass this level of marital scrutiny, they are usually good speeches.

### What advice do you have for giving technical presentations?

When I bring an engineering concept to non-engineers in the great laboratory called Toastmasters, I receive valuable feedback and then deliver the same speech to the world. My advice is that if you are not comfortable speaking in front of people, then get up and start speaking. Learn from falling on your face. Depending on your level of effort, you will master the art eventually.

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



Members of V.I.C. Toastmasters club pose outside the United Nations Headquarters in Vienna, Austria. Many members are employees of Vienna-based UN organizations, including the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and United Nations Office Vienna. The club has also had members from diplomatic missions, family members of employees and interns.

“The club plays a vital role in bringing people together in a friendly, celebratory and educative manner,” says Vice President Public Relations Maria Chepurina. “Multi-culturalism is a way of life at our club, and we inevitably represent the variety of cultures at the Vienna-based United Nations organizations.”

## ▶ **QUICK TIPS**

### Create a Quality Video



Video can be a great way to promote your club or district in your community. A poorly executed video, however, can deter prospective members from visiting a club meeting. Toastmasters International’s staff videographer Blake Carver created a video sharing his top nine tips for creating great film footage.

Here are five techniques to get you started.

**1 Use a tripod.** Shaky footage makes a video hard to watch. To avoid this, mount the camera on a tripod. If you don’t have access to a tripod, try to be as still as possible while holding the camera.

**2 Record in a well-lit environment.** If your camera has an auto-adjustment feature, which most cameras do, it will automatically control how dark or bright your video will be. But in order for it to work, you need ample lighting.

**3 Keep the subject in frame.** Whatever goes beyond the edges of your frame will not be captured. Make sure your subject’s head is a safe distance away from the edges of the frame, so if they move while speaking, they will remain in frame.

**4 Get the microphone close to the subject.** Even if your video looks

amazing, bad audio makes a video unwatchable. Always try and get the mic as close to the subject as possible, without it being too loud or ruining the shot.

**5 Choose a quiet environment.** Make sure there is no excessive noise—traffic sounds, wind, ringing phones, loud air conditioners, people talking, etc.—that will distract from the subject.

To watch “9 Tips to a Better Video” in its entirety and learn all nine techniques, visit the Toastmasters International YouTube channel or <https://bit.ly/2ASw3Mc>.



▶ MEET MY MENTOR



## Jacylyn Wee

Sue Tiong says her mentor, Jacylyn Wee, ACL, ALB, taught her to speak from a place of love, rather than fear, and to jump right into speech competitions. “She saw the competitive streak in me and gently pushed me toward the contest path. So I gave it a shot, despite being new,” says Sue. Since joining the TC Segambut Toastmasters club in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in September 2017, she has won second place at the area-level International Speech and Table Topics contests. She wants to recognize Jacylyn for her guidance and encouragement, and for her role in reviving their struggling club.

Jacylyn is a longtime member who has held many leadership roles at the club and district levels. Professionally, she is the executive director of Globe Success Learning, an organization that teaches wealth-building principles. Sue works as a senior manager of corporate communication, marketing and business development at Low Yat Group in Kuala Lumpur.

### What have you learned from Jacylyn?

She has been with me every step of the way through my competitions and in completing my first path in Pathways. Thanks to her help, I am now on Level 5 of Leadership Development, and I have completed Level 1 in Presentation Mastery. She advised me to pull the brake and not rush through my speeches just for the sake of completing them.

### How did Jacylyn help resuscitate your club?

When club membership dwindled to six members, Jacylyn, together with three past presidents, combined efforts to revive it. They realized that all members should feel a strong sense of belonging and ownership of the club, and not just allow the club officers to do all the work. Using the Club Success Plan and the *Moments of Truth*, Jacylyn and the past presidents learned why



Jacylyn Wee, left, and Sue Tiong

members join and why they stay. They focused on creating a club experience that was fun and fulfilling (and included more food!). They also recruited support to deal with meeting arrangements and room setup, so those duties wouldn’t fall to one person. Sharing responsibility helped develop more leaders among members and contributed to the club’s success.

### How have communication skills helped you at work?

The evaluation aspect of Toastmasters made me realize the importance of not only pointing out what needs to be improved, but also highlighting the empowering parts. I learned to see the good and acknowledge what works, which is very important when leading a team. I now make it a point to include positive points when I provide feedback and give suggestions for further improvements.

*Tess Iandiorio is senior editor for the Toastmaster magazine.*

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

### WANT TO NOMINATE AN EXCEPTIONAL MENTOR?

Nominate your mentor by emailing your story and a photo (1MB or larger) to [MentorMoment@toastmasters.org](mailto:MentorMoment@toastmasters.org).

▶ PATHWAYS

## Answers to Your Pathways Questions

As members continue to work in Toastmasters’ new education program, World Headquarters staff will provide answers to common questions that arise. Here is one.

**Q. Where do I find the evaluation materials in the Pathways learning experience?**

**A.** Evaluation resources for every project can be found on the **Speech Evaluations** page in Base Camp. Select the Speech

Evaluations button on your homepage and it will take you directly there. Evaluation resources for your projects will always be available on the page titled **Your Evaluation**. You can access this page by first launching the project you are working on and either using the right arrow to move through each page of the project or the drop-down menu located at the bottom of the page titled **Select to Move to Another Section**.

Evaluation resources are available for different kinds of projects. You will need to download these PDF documents in order to either print or modify them.

*For more information about the Pathways learning experience, visit [www.toastmasters.org/Pathways](http://www.toastmasters.org/Pathways).*



## ▶ ADVICE FROM MEMBERS

# Kick Clichés Out of Your Speech

You just know them when you hear them.

There's a sudden break in the flow of a speech, a tightening of the atmosphere as if air has been sucked out of the room. What are these ructions in the speech-time continuum? The insidious reliance on overused words or phrases.

The urge to reach for a linguistic crutch can be overwhelming, particularly when—as in Toastmasters meetings—discussing common themes: overcoming adversity, a willingness to try the new, challenging yourself, and so on. But if we are to excel as communicators, it behooves us to be fresh through authenticity, seek originality and maintain a deadly aversion to clichés.

So, what are these words and phrases? A few of the worst offenders include the following.

### “Think outside the box”

The irony of this phrase, of course, is that by using it, people are doing anything but thinking outside the box. Looking at things in an unorthodox way is often a great asset, so why use a hackneyed

phrase to convey that idea? Instead of urging action with a cliché, why not show your audience exactly what it means to be an original thinker and find a new phrase?

### “Inspirational”

The problem with this, as with all clichés, is that if it applies to everything, then it applies to nothing. Something that's genuinely inspirational should move you to jump out of your seat, tingle with possibilities, and perhaps even change your own life. Avoid this woodworm-riddled old crutch and tell us how something really made you feel.

### “Journey”

A journey usually denotes an actual physical move from A to B, but the word has been seized on to imbue any of life's processes with a profound meaning that often isn't fitting. If you've been through a process and your life has changed, say so. If you've learned new skills and developed personally, say that too. But let's not, every time we do anything new



or make a mildly important life decision, say we've been on a “journey.”

There are many more such phrases, but if we are to become and produce great communicators and leaders, we have to recognize and address words whose excessive use has made them grating and near meaningless. Let's do better!

**Niels Footman, CC**, is the president of *Early Bird Speakers in London, England*.

## ▶ MEMBER CONNECTIONS



# Slovaks Take Team-building to New Heights


From left: Marcel Zumerling, Lukas Bicus and Jozef Takac of Toastmasters Kosice in the Slovak Republic proudly hold their club banner next to the summit cross, a marker at the top of Gerlach Peak (2,655 meters/8,711 feet) in Slovakia. The trio of club officers set a goal to climb the highest peak of the High Tatra Mountains on August 29, 2018, to observe The Slovak National Uprising, which took place during World War II in 1944. The commemorative climb also served as a team-building opportunity, allowing the members to push their boundaries and reach the top together.






- 1 | **DIAN HALLEYUISARI**, of Bali, Indonesia, travels to the Raja Ampat Islands, an archipelago located off the northwest tip of Bird's Head Peninsula in West Papua, Indonesia.
- 2 | **ADRIAN JEFFERSON CHOFOR**, of Antioch, California, at the Eiffel Tower on the Champ de Mars in Paris, France.
- 3 | **CALEB THIBODEAUX and BRANDON KILLIAN**, of San Diego, California, stop during a four-day, 48.85-mile (79-kilometer) backpacking trip with the Sierra Club through Yosemite National Park in California.
- 4 | **VINAY DARUNAM**, of Englewood, Colorado, explores the architecture at the Sanctuary of Truth in Pattaya, Thailand.



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

 **PICTURE YOURSELF HERE!** Pose with the *Toastmaster* magazine during your travels and submit your photos for a chance to be featured in print or online. Send images 1MB or larger to [photos@toastmasters.org](mailto:photos@toastmasters.org). Bon voyage!



# Cool, Not Frozen

Software consultant stays calm when technology fails—at a tech conference.

BY GANT LABORDE

**T**he video is not playing! The video is not playing!”

Panic had spread quickly among the event organizers. The introductory video, the one that had been in development for a month, the one that was meant to set the tone of the entire technology conference, was—as you might have guessed—not playing.

I looked out at a silent audience of tech-savvy entrepreneurs, project managers and sponsors who had come to the conference to learn about a new technology released by Facebook; they stared hopefully at the giant, blank screen above the stage. As the silence continued second after uncomfortable second, I watched brows furrow in worry—or was it aggravation? I felt for the organizers who were surely in agony during this nerve-wracking quiet.

I knew firsthand how awful situations like this could be. Once, in college, I froze in front of 20 students in my psychology class. Back then, every class that required public speaking gave me hot flashes and cold hands.

Since that embarrassing day in my psychology class, I knew I was afraid of public speaking, and I was convinced there was no way to fix it. For years, I tried everything I could to overcome anxiety. I even tried improv; as long as the crowds were small, and I wasn't being myself, I could somewhat manage my shaking hands.

Then one day I went to see a friend speak at Toastmasters, but what I really saw was a way out of my own public speaking anxiety. I was inspired by a Toastmaster who'd been a member for 20 years and the skills he and all the other club members possessed. I joined in July 2014.

My fear of speaking was under control in three months, my creativity skyrocketed and my need to connect to audiences was born. Four years later, I faced my biggest public speaking challenge.



Gant Laborde



The auditorium was quiet, and the stage was bare. The 500-plus attendees stared at the screen they had been told to watch, and nothing happened. In exasperation, a tech worker moved the mouse to see if the computer had frozen, and the audience laughed uncomfortably. Thanks to Toastmasters, it didn't matter. As emcee of this conference, I was ready to improvise and connect with my audience. It was clear the video would not play, but something had to be done. I grabbed my handheld mic and ran onto the stage.

“Look at me! Look at me! I'm a 3D video! Wow, what a budget they must have!” I shouted. The audience laughed. I opened my arms wide and, with confident body language, welcomed everyone to the conference. “Since this is a tech conference,” I improvised, “it's only fitting that we have technical difficulties, for irony's sake.” I was completely relaxed, so the audience relaxed too.

By the end of my introduction, I was getting laughs and applause as I brought out our keynote speaker. I was able to open the conference sans video, and afterward, no one outside of the organizers even mentioned the failed video. In time, I wonder if they will even recall it.

In the four years since I joined Toastmasters, I've grown personally and professionally. And I'm more hooked on it than ever before, because I know the secret. The Toastmasters secret that propelled me onto that stage is one every member learns: I wasn't a speaker *against* 500 people, I was a speaker *with* them. They needed me to reset the tone. And they wanted me to succeed. That knowledge had helped assuage my fear of public speaking years earlier. But I stay in Toastmasters because I keep learning how to be more connected, more inspiring and a better leader.

Anyone who took the stage that day with the audience in their heart would have succeeded; I'm just lucky that it got to be me. Thank you, Toastmasters. This member saved a conference in 2018, and in July 2014, when I walked into my first meeting, you saved me. 📺

**GANT LABORDE, ACS, ALB**, is a member of New Orleans Toastmasters and Golden Crescent Toastmasters in New Orleans, Louisiana. He is a software consultant, adjunct professor, published author and award-winning speaker. For more information, visit [www.gantlaborde.com](http://www.gantlaborde.com).

# Who Are You Targeting?

Focus on your audience above all else.

BY DAN STRUM

If you've ever talked to a real estate agent, you've probably heard the saying, *What are the three most important factors in real estate? Location, location, location!*

That is to say, aside from location, nothing else really matters. In the same vein, I'd like to suggest a new way of thinking about public speaking: *What are the three most important elements of a speech? Audience, audience, audience.*

Why focus on audience? It is our audience we seek to touch, to compel, to spur into action. If we don't connect with our audience, the other elements of our speech—organization, message, tone, gesture, even our very purpose—all fall by the wayside. On the other hand, when we *do* connect, our audience will strive to understand us and will forgive our every fault. Audience is the “location” of public speaking.

Consider this scenario: If I were to give a speech extolling the benefits of joining Toastmasters, how would I approach it?

- ▶ If the audience was a group of students, I might talk about how developing skills and gaining confidence would help them in their presentations and group projects.
- ▶ If I was addressing a group of professionals, I might focus on how

Toastmasters improves their effectiveness and careers.

- ▶ And if the audience was a group of my peers, I might stress all the fun I have at Toastmasters meetings while steadily moving toward my goals.

Although the fundamental benefits of Toastmasters are the same, identifying your audience determines the angle you take when conveying your message. If your message doesn't resonate with your audience, they won't care and will tune out. You might think this is common sense—that we instinctively give people appropriate information. But as instinctive as it may be to give appropriate information in conversation, it is not the same when we sit alone preparing a speech.

Who hasn't heard a speech by someone who had valuable information to share but hadn't given any thought to their listeners? These speeches are “brain dumps.” They are streams of consciousness. They are boring.

We can only engage our audiences if we relate to their interests. And we can only relate to their interests when we explicitly consider who they are.

## What do you want from your audience?

Once you've identified your audience, you have to decide what you want them

to do; you have to define a *purpose*. It's amazing how often people gloss over this, but articulating a strong purpose is essential if you want to deliver a strong speech.

As a teacher, I regularly work with students on papers and presentations. When I work with someone new, I always ask “What's your purpose?” Students often respond by saying they want to *explain* something. Or *tell* something, or *report* something.

Well, I can *tell* my presentation to a wall. I can *show* it to my dog. To be effective, your purpose has to be about your audience. What do you want your audience to think? What do you want them to *believe*? What action do you want them to take?

Defining a purpose is like aiming at the bull's-eye of a target. You may not hit the bull's-eye, but if you aim carefully, you'll probably at least hit the target. I'd rather narrowly miss the bull's-eye of “getting my audience to *act*” than narrowly miss the vague notion of just *telling* them something.

## Develop the conversation.

Now we get to the fun part—developing our actual speech. It's fun because it is conversation—we get to talk with our audience. The key is to get inside the heads of your audience members and consider what they are likely to be thinking.

Let's stay with our example of introducing people to Toastmasters. For a hypothetical audience, let's choose a group of professionals, and for a purpose, let's convince them that Toastmasters produces tangible results that will help them advance their careers.





“We can only engage our audience if we relate to their interests. And we can only relate to their interests when we explicitly consider who they are.”

With that in mind, I might start my presentation with a blunt statement that I think would resonate with this group:

*I used to be scared silly when I had to talk in front of groups.*

I know the impact such a statement can make, and the audience in my head prods me: “Tell me what you mean.” In response to that, I would continue:

*Although I knew what I wanted to talk about, I didn't know how to use my voice, I didn't know how to pace myself, I had no idea how I was coming across, and I couldn't remember my script ... I was a disaster!*

I suppose this might pique their interest and lead them to wonder, “what happened?” By responding to this and following up with more questions—and more responses—I'd step through my presentation in a logical, organized and conversational way. As I go, I could sense my audience's need for examples to illustrate key points, notice important points that I might have missed, and recognize instances in which more (or fewer) details would help me get my point across.

This conversational approach is especially useful for overcoming “objections”—the doubts our audience has in mind and may otherwise cause them to reject everything we say. Such doubts, when discussing the benefits of Toastmasters, might include:

- ▶ Improving my public speaking would be nice, but it's more important for me to develop my technical skills.



- ▶ I am so weary by the end of the day, I don't have the energy to study public speaking.
- ▶ I'm too afraid.

Anticipating hard questions pulls you out of your own head and challenges you to embrace your audience's point of view. If you properly “channel” your audience as you prepare your speech, you can predict such objections and take them in stride.

### **Become your audience.**

There are pros and cons to actually writing out a speech. Normally I'll write out a solid draft—not because I'll stick to the script, but the act of writing helps me explore and work out my ideas. But writing a speech introduces problems of its own—it's easy to get lost in a tangle of words and ideas, and the more we write and stare at our screens, the less perspective we have. Alas, I have a great solution for this: become your audience.

I have a program on my computer that reads things out loud. I have it read everything I write back to me. It isn't only that my ear is more sensitive than my eyes at picking out grammatical mistakes and awkward

wording. That is almost a side benefit. The real value of this is that it enables me to actually become my audience. As I sit listening to my words being spoken to me, I ask myself:

- ▶ Do I understand?
- ▶ Do I care?
- ▶ Do I believe?
- ▶ Are my concerns and objections being addressed?
- ▶ Am I convinced?

I listen, and I edit. And I listen and edit again, until I'm sure that my message is complete, robust and convincing.

As Toastmasters, we study all aspects of public speaking: organization, tone, gesture, vocabulary, purpose and so on. All are important, but they are all subordinate to—and driven by—our aim to connect with our audiences. For this reason, being clear about our audience is absolutely essential to delivering an effective speech. **T**

**Dan Strum, ACB, CL**, is director of *NY Smarts*, a language school in New York City that aims to help international professionals advance their careers through mastery of the English language.

# A Total Turnaround

Struggling Shanghai club recovers with the help of coaches.

BY K.T. LYNN

Two years ago, the WeSharing Toastmasters club was in trouble. Membership in the Shanghai corporate club was dwindling and the club struggled to recruit new members. The same core members took on the meeting roles each week.

In addition, “the location of our club was an issue,” says Serena Mei, CL. “It was more than 50 kilometers [about 37 miles] from the city center,” where many members worked.

Despite these challenges, the club showed promise. Mei joined the club at the height of its difficulties but says she still felt positive about her experience and growing confidence. “I never had the chance to join this type of group before,” she says. “I used to be a little bit shy, and I had trouble saying things clearly and concisely.”

But Mei, a former vice president membership for the club, also knew the club could be better and help more people if it overcame its challenges. The WeSharing leaders were committed to building a successful club, so they tapped into the Toastmasters Club Coach program for support.

## Coaches to the Rescue

Toastmasters International developed this program to help struggling clubs benefit from the guidance of coaches and mentors. A club coach is an experienced Toastmaster who helps a club rebuild membership, instill enthusiasm and restore a quality environment.

Clubs are eligible to request coaches if they have at least one but no more than 12 members. In addition, the club must not be suspended or closed. A club cannot have more than two coaches at one time. To request a club coach, a club should contact its district director (DD) or club growth director (CGD). If the club is eligible, then

the DD or CGD can appoint a coach by sending a Club Coach Appointment Form to [clubcoach@toastmasters.org](mailto:clubcoach@toastmasters.org).

Michael Cheng, CC, ALB, and Helen He, ACS, ALS, served as WeSharing’s coaches for three months, from March to June in 2017. After that, Vince Fulco, CC, CL, coached the club for the next six months. “To maximize your use of the Club Coach program, think of [a coach] as both a contributor of best practices as well as an extra member to lean on for ordinary tasks,” says Fulco, a member of the Shanghai Imagine Toastmasters.

“To maximize your use of the Club Coach program, think of [a coach] as both a contributor of best practices as well as an extra member to lean on for ordinary tasks.”

—VINCE FULCO

WeSharing was founded in 2009. It is sponsored by Micron Technology, Inc., an international semiconductor company headquartered in Boise, Idaho. WeSharing president Daisy Liu says the group’s club vision is: “Communication enriches our engineers’ life.”

When the club was struggling, it tried new tactics. Peter Sun, WeSharing president from 2015 to 2017, said the first thing he and the coaches did was interview all club members to learn their individual goals. “Most people were divided into

two groups: those who wanted to practice their language skills, and those who were interested in the topics presented, or the theme of the day,” he says.

Based on member feedback, the coaches and club leaders worked to provide more learning opportunities. For example, the club’s weekly meeting was too brief for members hoping to practice their English, so the group added an additional meeting to the schedule.

“We also added a WeChat (a group-messaging application) group centered on Toastmasters-themed language practice,” says Sun. “We set daily goals and encouraged each other every day. The club coaches had set that up at other clubs in Shanghai, and it was very effective.”

The next step was to improve the quality of the meetings. WeSharing brought in members from other clubs to take on meeting roles and deliver high-quality prepared speeches. WeSharing members also visited Distinguished clubs to see how they conducted their meetings.

“In addition to increasing the number of attendees, we needed to stimulate interest in meeting participation,” says coach Michael Cheng, a seven-year member who belongs to Toastmasters Club FedEx@Shanghai. “I served as a General Evaluator to highlight areas of improvement. Once people began to realize how important each and every role was to the success of the meeting, the flow of meetings improved dramatically.”

## Lessons Learned

The strategies WeSharing used are ones all clubs can benefit from. For example, it’s important to take members’ motivation into consideration. Clubs should examine the members’ individual goals. Ask yourself:





- ▶ What are our members looking for when they attend?
- ▶ How can Toastmasters help each member achieve their goals?
- ▶ Can we offer more of what they need?

Another key is creating a strong club environment. The first stage in creating that is to cover the essentials. A club, no matter how interesting it might be, will not retain members if its meetings are disorganized or incomplete.

Fill meeting roles far in advance, make sure everyone knows how to perform their roles correctly and always have a backup plan. Members should associate meetings with positive emotions. If meetings run smoothly, this will cultivate a stronger community.

Once your regular club meeting routine is established, then it's time to mix it up! Incorporate themed meetings, special events outside the regular club environment and club parties to keep things fresh.

Every club has a unique mix of members, talents and perspectives. Once you've discovered your club's special qualities, don't be afraid to lean in. "Every time we found topics relating to the lives of our members, we incorporated them into our meetings," says Sun, the former WeSharing president. "Since the potential members of our club

were limited in our corporate setting, we focused on new hires during their orientation. We even developed training programs targeting workplace-specific skills."

Because WeSharing members worked in a technology park, within a fast-paced, technologically advanced city, it influenced how they conduct their meetings. Sun reflects on how they solved one of their club's major barriers. "We had a problem of one company split into two locations. Each office didn't have enough members to support a club, so we combined them both. Since they were far away, we started running the meetings via video conferencing. WeChat is also very popular in China, so our messaging groups took on a life of their own. Our members received daily encouragement and ways to practice their skills."


### A Success Story

The club coaches worked with the club leaders to solve problems in ways that suited the group's personality. WeSharing transformed from a struggling club of just five members into an energetic group of 15 members. The club attained Distinguished status for the 2016–2017 Toastmasters program year, and members felt good about the improvement in their skills. "Now I am able to communicate in any situation," says Serena Mei.

"Our club really benefited from the coaching program," adds Sun. "The club coaches, Vince, Michael and Helen, really pulled a lot of resources together to help us. Their fresh and innovative ideas brought our club back to life."

Club coaches themselves also benefit from such an experience. For one thing, coaches who help clubs achieve Distinguished status or higher in the Distinguished Club Program receive credit in the Toastmasters education program and a certificate of accomplishment.

But coaches say the benefits extend far beyond recognition or credit. Vince Fulco, who has coached several clubs, says he finds it deeply gratifying to help a club succeed. He adds that he always learns from the experience and is inspired by it.

"I develop more drive and motivation to grow and to help others as I see the club's [leaders] giving their very best even in the face of uncertain and difficult conditions." 

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# Aiming S

Magician and future military pilot chases lifelong dream.

BY KEITH LORIA

**M**aking the impossible possible is a talent shared by many top magicians in the world, and it's a trait that has helped Reed Barrett carve out a career as a magician, mentalist and keynote speaker.

A Toastmaster for three years, 26-year-old Barrett, CC, of Colorado, U.S., has spent more than a dozen years perfecting his act, including performing jaw-dropping tricks with a deck of cards. One of his customer favorites involves having an audience member shuffle a deck of cards, a second volunteer shout out any card and a third volunteer choose a number between 1 and 52. Reed then explains how this exercise relates to life and the impossibilities people face every day.

"We talk about probability, as there are more ways to shuffle a deck of cards than there are atoms on earth," Barrett says. Then he asks the all-important question: "What is it in your life that seems impossible?"

After the cards are dealt to the number between 1 and 52 selected by the third volunteer, Barrett reveals the



# ky High

“I want [audiences] to say, ‘Just because it may seem impossible initially doesn’t mean it always is—it just takes time to work through.’”

—REED BARRETT

card—which inevitably is the one that was suggested by the second volunteer. In Barrett’s eyes, magic serves as a metaphor. “Something is impossible until someone else does it,” he says. “[Magic] adds that punch and ‘wow’ factor that every speaker wants. I want it to be more than a trick; I want [audiences] to say, ‘Just because it may seem impossible initially doesn’t mean it always is—it just takes time to work through.’”

Or put another way: Even when your goals in life seem too daunting to achieve, you can succeed if you persevere. It’s a lesson Barrett knows well. Told that a heart defect would prevent him from fulfilling his lifelong dream of becoming a United States Air Force fighter pilot, he refused to give up.

And now Barrett is on the brink of achieving what once seemed impossible: Last month he was scheduled to start the U.S. Air Force’s Undergraduate Pilot Training program.

## A Magical Journey

Barrett grew up in Cheyenne, Wyoming, in a family that was political and outspoken, which always kept him at the dinner table wanting to talk and share his opinion. And while this helped him develop a love for public speaking at a young age, two other interests drew his attention: magic and aviation.

“My dad introduced magic to me when I was 8 years old, and from that point forward, I kept working at it because I felt it was very inspiring and delivered a belief in the impossible,” says Barrett, a member of two Toastmasters clubs in Colorado.

When his father died unexpectedly a few days after his 50th birthday—Reed was just 12 at the time—the youngster knew he wanted to continue practicing magic to honor his dad.

Soon after his father’s death, Barrett met Chris Austin, a former F-16 fighter pilot and a U.S. Air Force Thunderbird (aviators who perform aerobatic feats in the sky) at the time. Barrett’s father, along with his grandfather, used to take him to the local air show to meet the Thunderbird pilots each summer.

“Our commander asked who wanted to spend some time with a young man who had lost his father yet was obsessed with aviation and the Thunderbirds,” recalls Austin. “I volunteered and realized immediately that there was far more to this young man than his love for aviation. Reed was kind, smart, charismatic and truly a wise person. I think we bonded immediately.”

As he got older, Barrett continued to hone his magic act and began getting paid performances, booking shows at the Bellagio Hotel in Las Vegas as well as private corporate events. He eventually became a member of the Academy of Magical Arts in Hollywood, California, and frequents the world-famous Magic Castle when he’s in Los Angeles.

The sleight-of-hand skills of this young magician have impressed many. This past April he performed for legendary boxer Floyd Mayweather in Las Vegas, who commented, “You’re quicker with your hands than me!”

Barrett, who has a college degree in psychology, also bills himself as a “mentalizer.” He incorporates psychological suggestions into his act, focusing on the power of the mind. When asked how he seems to read people’s thoughts, Reed says, “I want people to think they’re making decisions of their own free will, but really, it’s far from it.”

## A Crushing Blow

As a student at the University of Wyoming, Barrett was commissioned into the U.S. Air Force through the Reserve Officers’ Training Corp (ROTC). In 2013 he was selected to be a pilot;

## PROFILE

however, his plan was soon derailed. “Just a few days before pilot training started, I found out I had a heart condition that was imaged incorrectly at a previous medical appointment, and it ultimately removed me from the Air Force, which was a huge blow to someone who wanted to be a fighter pilot since childhood.”

But he wasn't about to let the setback keep him down, and he used the devastating experience to his advantage. Over the next three years, Barrett beefed up his professional magic gigs and, using magic as a vehicle, began speaking to schools and companies about how people can step out of their comfort zones and achieve their dreams no matter the obstacles.

“They wanted me to share my story of defeat and what it's like to lose a dream, but the message behind [my presentation] was ‘Sometimes things don't work out in life, whether that's losing someone very close to you or the loss of the dream, and you need to be the one who steps up and takes full responsibility for the outcomes thereafter.’”

It's an important lesson, he notes, because often people give up too easily on their goals when they face a roadblock. He tells audience members “to start moving one step forward toward that goal, no matter how hard it seems or how many no's you get.”

### An Eloquent Speaker

Barrett understood early that it's the storytelling—rather than the magic tricks—that grips an audience and keeps them invested. When he decided to improve his skills in that area, his stepdad directed him to Toastmasters. Today, he is a member of the Eloquent Entrepreneurs club in Centennial, Colorado, and the Professional Presenters in Denver.

“I invested in the program, met speakers across Wyoming and Colorado and started competing in Toastmasters speech contests,” Barrett says. In his first year as a member, he won a district-level Table Topics Contest.

“Magic adds that punch and ‘wow’ factor that every speaker wants.”

—REED BARRETT

The skills he polished at Toastmasters meetings helped him book more performances across the country. “I was learning something from everyone,” he says. “[Toastmasters] became a big family to me, and the program has taken me all over the U.S. to speak to people about not giving up.”

Dana Morgan-Barnes, DTM, served as Barrett's first mentor in Toastmasters, coaching him in his keynotes and helping him grow as a speaker. She says he has a natural connection with audiences. “Could be his boyish good looks, sense of fun and the confidence he oozes when he's in front of an audience,” says Morgan-Barnes, a member of two clubs in Cheyenne, Wyoming. “He weaves magic into a lot of his presentations ... that's a sure winner! Overall, though, he is passionate about his message and knows how to deliver.”

Austin, the former aviator who has also mentored Barrett, praises his speaking skills as well, adding that “Reed has a



*Reed Barrett has performed his magic act at private corporate events and hotels like the Bellagio in Las Vegas.*

compelling and inspiring story that resonates with people, and he is the real deal—what he projects is who he is.”

### Living a Dream

A few years ago, a friend of Barrett's who flies for the New Jersey Air National Guard suggested that Barrett again consider applying to be a pilot. Remembering his dad's advice to never give up, he decided to follow his buddy's advice. He soon learned there were waivers that existed for pilots with the same heart condition he had.

After being tested extensively to ensure he'd be able to fly a high-performance aircraft with his heart condition, Barrett was granted the waiver. Last year, he was selected by the Washington, D.C., Air National Guard 121st Fighter Squadron to attend the Air Force's Undergraduate Pilot Training program in Oklahoma.

“I am now medically cleared on all fronts to pursue a career as an F-16 fighter pilot,” he says. “I'll have routine visits with a local cardiologist to keep a close eye on my heart, which will keep the waiver current and ensure the safety of myself and those around me.”

Barrett's 54-week training was scheduled to start last month, and if he does well and graduates, he will then go through Introduction to Fighter Fundamentals school, then training for the F-16 aircraft. If that is successful, he will become an official F-16 fighter pilot at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland.

“I can't count the amount of times someone told me I would never be a fighter pilot,” says Barrett, who keeps a folder of denied applications and rejection letters he shows to people at his presentations. “There is one person out there willing to take a chance on you—you just need to keep pushing to find that person.” **T**

**Keith Loria** is an award-winning journalist. Learn more at [keithloria.contently.com](http://keithloria.contently.com).



**ONLINE EXTRAS:** Discover how Reed Barrett aced his Air Force interviews thanks to Table Topics.



# Consider Questions: A Speaker's Best Tool

Think of questions as the Swiss Army knife of presenting.

BY MATT ABRAHAMS

**W**hat communication tool can you use to make your next presentation more effective and engaging? The answer is ... a question. Questions are incredibly versatile tools. Think of questions as the Swiss Army knife of presenting. A well-timed question can accomplish myriad communication tasks, such as building intrigue, inviting audience engagement, helping you remember what to say and even calming your anxiety.

Leverage questions and you can become a more compelling and confident presenter. Here's how:

## Connect With Your Audience

Audience connection is the key characteristic distinguishing a memorable presenter from an average one. Are audience members actively collaborating with the speaker or passively listening to the speaker?

Questions provide a great way to foster engagement because they are, by their very nature, dialogic—they're two-way. You ask, and your audience responds. I recommend using three types of questions throughout your presentation to connect with your audience.

## Rhetorical questions build intrigue.

Example: "Would you believe that companies are making robotic honeybees to pollinate crops in locales where bees are dying off?" Asking your audience a question for effect—rather than one you expect them to actually answer—prompts them to think about the issue.

## Polling questions make the audience part of your point.

Example: "How many of you have ever been stung by a honeybee?" When asking your audience to respond to your query, be sure to signal how you want them to do so. For example, you might model raising your hand as

you ask your question or explain how the online poll works if you are presenting virtually. Then comment briefly on the response you get: "Just as I expected, about 50 percent of you ..."

**"What if" questions root your presentation in time.** Example: "What would it be like if all crops were pollinated by robo-honeybees?" Or, "Remember when modern science made it possible for genetically modified vegetables to yield more crops?" Inquire about a possible future or the historical past, and as with rhetorical questions, you may not expect a literal response, but you focus your audience's attention on the period you're describing.

## Build Your Confidence

Along with engaging your audience, questions build your confidence when preparing and delivering a speech. Many speakers are anxious because they feel they are under the harsh spotlight of an audience who is constantly evaluating them. But, interestingly, incorporating questions from the moment you start planning can help you feel more confident about every aspect of presenting. Here are three ways to use questions to improve your speech:

## Ask yourself, "What does my audience need to hear from me?"

Instead of viewing speaking as a performance, think of it as being in service of your audience's needs. This not only helps you tailor your message to your audience, but it also reminds you that they are the ones in the spotlight—shifting the attention away from you and onto your audience. Make this question your mantra as you prepare and practice your presentations.

**Outline your talk using questions.** When writing your next outline, create a list of



rhetorical questions to serve as prompts for what you intend to say. Example: "Why is science important to our society? Well, let's focus on three reasons ..." The benefits of this type of question-based outline are twofold: First, it allows you to feel more confident because you know the answers to your questions; you won't worry that you might not know what to say. Second, you will be more conversational, since you are simply answering your audience's unasked questions. And conversational delivery is often better remembered by audiences.

## Ask a "back pocket" question to give yourself a break.

If you forget what you want to say or simply need a minute to catch your breath, make use of a pre-planned question to occupy your audience while you re-center yourself. For example, when I teach, I sometimes need to regroup and adjust my lecture midway through. I will simply pause and ask my students the following question: "What is one idea or tool we have discussed so far that you can apply to your life?" While they reflect on this question, I check my notes, take a deep breath, etc.

The next time you are preparing and delivering a presentation, consider using the do-it-all communication tool: the question. This multifunctional device will tighten your connection to your audience, steady your nerves and create a more compelling speech. **T**

**Matt Abrahams** teaches communication at Stanford University's Graduate School of Business. He is co-founder and principal of Bold Echo LLC, a presentation and communication coaching firm, and author of the book, *Speaking Up without Freaking Out: 50 Techniques for Confident and Compelling Presenting*.

# Meet the Six New Accredited Speakers

Expert speakers seek to advance their careers after earning the coveted AS designation.

BY IAN GASSMAN

All Toastmasters are above average, but it takes a special type of person to become an Accredited Speaker (AS). Experienced speakers and consummate professionals all, the six newest Accredited Speakers have spent years crafting, rehearsing and delivering great speeches—dedicating years to achieving their goal of earning the coveted AS designation.

The Toastmasters Accredited Speaker Program provides an avenue for professional speakers to enhance their credentials through Toastmasters. Edwin W. Ettinghausen, Greg Wood, Maurice DiMino, Tamara Smiley Hamilton, Terry Watson and Valda Ford were awarded this prestigious title on August 25 during the 2018 International Convention in Chicago, Illinois, U.S.

Established in 1981, the program requires applicants to be a Toastmaster in good standing—and have an education award of Able Toastmaster, Advanced Toastmaster Bronze or Advanced Communicator Bronze—who has given a minimum of 25 speeches to non-Toastmasters audiences within the past three years. Applicants must then submit a video of their best speech, filmed before a live audience, which is subsequently reviewed by a panel of judges.

The program is not a contest, however. If a majority of the judges agree that an applicant demonstrates excellent skills, that speaker will pass to Level 2 and present in front of a live audience and panel of judges (many of whom are Accredited Speakers themselves) at the Toastmasters International Convention. If judges can't agree on a worthwhile applicant, none will be selected. Aiming for the Accredited

Speaker designation is a rewarding but rigorous process that can take several years. Currently a total of 81 speakers have obtained the AS title. That's less than 20 percent of all applicants.

## Tamara Smiley Hamilton

When Tamara Smiley Hamilton was just 13 years old, she witnessed the Watts Rebellion—six days of riots, looting and violence in August 1965 that tore apart the African-American community of Watts, a suburb of Los Angeles, California. This civil unrest sparked Hamilton's interest in being “a voice for the voiceless” as an inclusion coach and conflict resolution facilitator.

Hamilton now lives in Reston, Virginia, and through her organization, Audacious Coaching, she helps organizations deal with sensitive issues related to gender diversity and race and “reshape their culture by having difficult conversations and creating a dialogue.” She joined Toastmasters 10 years ago and says she has been dreaming of becoming an Accredited Speaker ever since. She felt compelled to try for the award last year after developing “a message of peace-building through courage, hope and confidence” she deems worthy of the world stage.

Hamilton says her next goal is to return to her roots and speak with inner-city college hopefuls in Watts and conduct teleseminars on how to apply for college and financial aid. She says she will continue working to heal and mend broken



relationships in communities, giving people a voice one speech at a time.

## Greg Wood

Greg Wood knows that the shortest distance to success starts with leadership. After running his own land-surveying company in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, for 20 years, plotting space for new roads and buildings, Wood made a drastic shift and started a different venture called The Magic of Leadership. He now lectures on problem-solving techniques for businesses.

In 2015, he first applied for the Accredited Speaker designation. After three years of persisting in this pursuit, he made it to the International Convention and, to his surprise, was awarded the title.

“To be judged by other Accredited Speakers, who found someone they would hire and share a stage with, is quite humbling,” says Wood. “The journey has served to make me a better speaker.” Wood is planning a TEDx Talk and has been invited to speak in Brazil, where he has previously hosted leadership training workshops.



## Maurice DiMino

Long before Maurice DiMino gained his Accredited Speaker title, he was known as “the Million Dollar Man.” Using his self-devised “W.I.N.” mentality (Who you are, Integrity, Network), DiMino says he generated \$1 million in sales per month as





“Be the best version of yourself and, most importantly, have fun—if you’re having fun then the audience is having fun!”

a salesman of film and video post-production software in Canoga Park, California.

This work ethic caught the eye of DiMino’s financial advisor, who invited him to a Toastmasters meeting. There, DiMino delivered a shaky Ice Breaker and realized he needed to refine his speaking skills.

“I could have quit, but I know that communicating my thoughts and ideas in a clear and coherent way is a vital skill to have,” says DiMino. In 2006 he became a professional speaker, keynoting events from Los Angeles to Dubai. Fellow Accredited Speaker Sheryl Roush finally encouraged him to apply for the AS Program in December 2017.

DiMino’s best advice to hesitant speakers? “Don’t let that little voice in your head hold you back.”

### Edwin W. Ettinghausen

Edwin W. Ettinghausen has made his living off saving lives through teaching Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).



More than 30 years ago, Ettinghausen and his wife started their own business, Life-Saver CPR, in Murrieta, California. He was inspired to do so after leading a CPR course in college. He loved incorporating humor and wit into his classes. Since then, Ettinghausen says he has hosted more than 7,700 seminars and issued more than 100,000 CPR certificates.

Ettinghausen’s hobby is endurance racing, meaning he runs distances ranging from marathons to 100-mile races. He has completed many of them often dressed in costume and has won many awards. But all the accolades didn’t compare to gaining Accredited Speaker designation, he says; for two years, Ettinghausen wanted to earn the title. For months he toiled to give 25 presentations, in between his seminars and running.

Now he looks forward to having “additional credibility and confidence” as he transitions from his CPR training into the arena of motivational speaking.

### Terry Watson

As a consumer-behavior expert, Terry Watson knows how to craft a great customer experience. One of the last things he would ever do, he says, is to put a client—let alone a renowned speaker—through the Accredited Speaker Program without preparation.



For Watson, a native of Chicago, Illinois, earning the Accredited Speaker title was “like giving birth sideways,” he says with a laugh. It’s a surprising sentiment from someone who has spoken in front of 80,000 people at just one event and is no stranger to performing in front of audiences around the globe.

To achieve his goal, he studied the AS program’s Judge’s Guide and Ballot, which lists speaking criteria, and sought advice from Accredited Speaker mentors Johnny Campbell and Conor Cunneen. Before heading to the International Convention in Chicago last August, Watson gained important advice from the duo: “Be the best version of yourself and, most importantly, have fun—if you’re having fun then the audience is having fun!”

### Valda Ford


Valda Ford became a nurse to save others—sometimes even to save them from their own healthcare professionals, she says. Years ago, Ford took her 2-year-old son to various physicians, trying to determine what was wrong with him. Despite Ford’s insistence, many doctors and nurses didn’t believe the boy had a medical problem; his symptoms just were not obvious. Ford says dismissiveness by medical professionals resulted in the death of her youngest child. She was devastated.



“I will never know if being more demanding would have made a

difference, but I spend my life counseling, teaching and training—showing others how to be their own best advocates,” she explains.

Since devoting her life to improving healthcare, Ford left her hometown of High Point, North Carolina, to work in different countries under her own nonprofit, the Center for Human Diversity, Inc., as well as Unite for Sight and the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

“I worked the longest in Saudi Arabia, and the hardest in Ghana, with 75,000 refugees,” she says. Even after all this work and 20 years of speaking, Ford thinks she became a professional speaker by accident. To her, becoming an Accredited Speaker makes her career feel new again. “I believe that steel sharpens steel,” says Ford. 

**Ian Gassman** is a former editorial assistant for the *Toastmaster* magazine.



**ONLINE EXTRAS:** Watch a video to learn more about the expert speakers who earned the coveted AS designation.

Are you currently a paid, professional speaker? Toastmasters invites you to apply for the esteemed Accredited Speaker designation. If you want to build status and increase your visibility as a speaker, this designation can help you with that goal.

To apply, submit your application to World Headquarters between January 1 and February 1. More information is available on the Toastmasters website at [www.toastmasters.org/Membership/Accredited-Speaker](http://www.toastmasters.org/Membership/Accredited-Speaker).



# What's the Scoop on Yo

Friendliness and fun build a quality club culture.

BY CRAIG HARRISON, DTM

**M**any factors influence a club's success: membership numbers, renewal rates and education achievements, for example. But an intangible and often overlooked factor may be the most essential contributor to a club's long-term success—its culture!

Culture, in this case, refers to the club's environment—that blend of location, members, values, customs and practices. The easiest way to describe it is to say, "It is the way we do things around here." Culture can be easier felt than measured, yet it's what causes members to remain active in their clubs. It's the magnet that attracts guests to come back and join. Isn't it time to take the pulse of your club's culture?

## The Fun Factor

People do business with those they know, like and trust. Popular clubs rely on a similar formula. Friendly and inviting clubs that provide an enjoyable experience and generate positive energy attract new members. Long ago, Toastmasters founder Ralph C. Smedley asserted that people "learn in moments of enjoyment." How fun is your club? Just because members have a good time doesn't mean they aren't serious about improving their communication and leadership skills. Plan creative Table Topics sessions and entertaining themes. When learning is fun, achievement soars. Club meetings and member experiences should be both fun *and* fruitful.

James Ware, an adult-learning expert and managing editor of the international journal *Work&Place*, says, "Learning can be exhilarating, eye-opening and empowering." But he adds that learning can also be stressful and even threatening because it can require changing long-held beliefs, mastering new skills, doing new things and facing the possibility of failing. "Making [learning] fun along the way increases the possibility that members





“Long ago, Toastmasters founder Ralph C. Smedley asserted that people ‘learn in moments of enjoyment.’ How fun is your club?”

# ur Group?



will value it, enjoy it and feel good about themselves,” says Ware, author of the book *Making Meetings Matter*. “And if they experience those feelings, they will only want more.”

### A Helping of Hospitality

First impressions count at Toastmasters meetings. How you greet guests speaks volumes about your club and its culture. Do you shake hands, invite visitors to sign your guest register, issue them a name tag and introduce them to club leaders and other members?

Friendly and inviting clubs seat guests next to veteran members who then explain meeting procedures. Introductions are made early and guests are formally welcomed with applause. Former area director Gina Cefalu, ACG, of Chamber Chatters in Pleasanton, California, recalls a best practice from the nearby Danville Toastmasters: “At the beginning of meetings, we engage in round-table introductions—everyone present, including guests, announces their name, where they live, how long they’ve been in Toastmasters. They also answer a question related to the theme of the day—for instance, a favorite vacation spot or a New Year’s resolution.”

“Toastmasters is more than ever a powerful tool to fight hatred and mistrust. Sharing the values of our organization helps us believe in a peaceful future for Europe.”

—ODILE PETILLOT, A PAST DISTRICT 59 GOVERNOR

Time should also be allotted at the meeting’s end to answer guests’ questions and hear their feedback. The hospitality doesn’t end there; be sure to follow up with your guests in the following days—perhaps with a thank-you note for attending and a friendly invitation to return. A culture of caring is critical to the success of any club.

### A Timely Principle

Starting and ending club meetings on time is also crucial. It shows respect for all attendees, members and guests alike, and helps make a positive impression. Valuing people’s time is a key part of program planning and meeting organization.

Also important for planning and organization purposes:

- ▶ Make sure members know what the meeting agenda is in advance.
- ▶ Be sure all meeting roles are filled and that those filling them know their responsibilities.

### Do Your Evaluations Elevate or Deflate?

One telltale indicator of a club’s culture is the way evaluations are handled. If speech evaluations are negative, destructive or mean-spirited, guests and members alike will feel uncomfortable.

They are less likely to take risks and try new approaches for fear of exposing themselves to criticism. When evaluations are supportive and encouraging, speakers are more inclined to experiment. This doesn’t mean telling a lie or giving only positive feedback, it means tempering the negative with positives and making sure critiques are constructive, with an eye toward helping speakers improve.

The Pathways learning experience is a great help in this regard. In Pathways, speech evaluators use standardized criteria that help increase the consistency of evaluations for all members. Evaluation guidelines are also more rigorous and expansive.

### The Role of Club Officers

Officers are the leaders of Toastmasters meetings—they set the tone and establish practices that define the club experience. Are your leaders professional? Are they personable? Do they work well together as a governing body? Teamwork bodes well for the entire club. When club officers show a genuine interest in visitors, these potential members feel valued and are more likely to join the club. Officers who model hospitality, generosity and friendliness set the best tone for a club, and all members can follow suit.

### Good Will to All

Most clubs comprise a mix of men and women of different ages, professions, backgrounds and beliefs, yet the members all come together to improve communication and leadership skills. Each club is a treasure trove—all members have stories, experiences and special skills to share. All clubs can embrace membership diversity and prosper by celebrating the different styles, backgrounds and sensibilities of their members.

Clubs that mute differences, overlook members and play favorites ultimately lose out. Odile Petillot, DTM, a past District 59 governor for Continental Europe, well understands the value of diversity. A member of several clubs in Paris, France, she views district conferences, speech contests and clubs with cultural diversity as opportunities to mingle with people from many different backgrounds, cultures and religions.

“These are laboratories where we can practice empathy and understanding,” says Petillot, a 29-year member, “and where members can open up, share their opinions, listen to other viewpoints, and discover other habits, traditions and ways of thinking and behaving.”

### Tale of Two Tongues

A vast number of clubs today are bilingual. Many divide each meeting’s time between English and another language, whether it’s French or German, Japanese or Spanish, Tamil or Afrikaans, Mandarin or Cantonese. Petillot is a founding member of the first bilingual English-French club in Paris. The club’s eclectic mix—with French residents wanting to learn “the American way,” English speakers improving their French, expatriates and immigrants—fosters an environment for learning about other cultures.





*Club Pledge: When new members join the Tokyo Toastmasters in Japan, they read aloud a customized version of the Toastmaster's Promise.*

Toastmasters International's celebration of cultural diversity has never been more relevant, Petillot adds. "In times when nationalism tends to reappear in several European countries, Toastmasters is more than ever a powerful tool to fight hatred and mistrust. Sharing the values of our organization helps us believe in a peaceful future for Europe," she says.

### **Milestones, Rules and Rituals**

The Toastmasters experience is full of milestones to celebrate and rituals to observe. A number of clubs decide that each member who completes an Ice Breaker speech receives a membership pin to acknowledge their achievement. Many clubs have anniversaries of their formation. Are you celebrating yours? Reach back and invite charter members to return. Invite spouses, partners and loved ones to join in the festivities surrounding your club's anniversary or its achievement of President's Select, Select or Distinguished status each year.

While all clubs are guided by operational bylaws, clubs can also create their own rules of engagement for members and meetings. For instance, some clubs pay the attendance fee for officers who attend district conferences. Others cover the cost of a club president's breakfast at leadership events. Clubs that meet over a meal at a restaurant sometimes establish the custom of treating a first-time guest to a meal. Sharing a meal is sure to forge a bond.

When new members are inducted into the Tokyo Toastmasters club in Japan, they read a customized version of the Toastmaster's Promise aloud. They are followed by other club members, from countries such as Japan, Korea, India and Ireland, who also read the pledge out loud. This sharing of vows, not unlike a marriage, bodes well for all parties.

Winners of the Best Table Topics or Best Speaker portions of a club meeting are often awarded ribbons for their achievement. Sometimes winners are given a club trophy for the duration of

the meeting, but some clubs give them the option of bringing the trophy to work for the week—or until the next meeting—to showcase a member's success to co-workers. This practice also ensures the member's return to the next meeting, if only to return the trophy, or perhaps to defend his victory! Such forms of recognition credit members for a job well done and help the recipients feel valued.

Pathways is also great for bestowing recognition. In the new program, you can give online feedback badges to other members of your home club—badges with uplifting labels like **Collaborative**, **Innovative** and **Inspirational**.

How can you assess your club's culture? Among the best resources to guide you is a club self-evaluation checklist like the one on the following pages. It will help you identify areas for improvement in operations and efficiency, and even in friendliness—all key elements of a club's culture.

The late New York City Mayor Ed Koch famously always asked his constituents, "How am I doing?" You, too, should be asking this question about your club. Ask new as well as veteran members about their experiences. And don't underestimate the value of your guests' observations. Visitors arrive with fresh eyes, and it's essential to your club's future to appeal to these guests. Welcome them and meld your club culture with what's important to them—not just to sustain your club, but to grow it too. **T**

**Craig Harrison, DTM, PDG**, a charter member of Silicon Valley ImprovMasters, has founded a variety of specialty and advanced clubs in his 26 years of membership. Learn about his Toastmasters journey from free to fee at [www.expressionsofexcellence.com](http://www.expressionsofexcellence.com) and find free club tools on his website, [www.speakandleadwithconfidence.com](http://www.speakandleadwithconfidence.com).

# Club **Quality** Checklist

Evaluate your club with this easy tool.



**W**e all have ideas on what a perfect Toastmasters club is like. It involves enjoyable meetings, unlimited learning opportunities, friendly members ... and what else?

This checklist offers you the chance to rate your club's strengths and weaknesses against the "ideal."

Complete this questionnaire, then give it to your club president, who will discuss the answers with the club's officers.

## Club Meetings

- |  | YES                      | NO                       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Is your meeting location conveniently located, accessible and user friendly?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Are the program and agenda publicized, via email or a club website, in advance?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Do club meetings start and end on time?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Does the meeting follow an agenda?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Does every member wear a name badge?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Are all guests and members warmly greeted and welcomed?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Are all guests introduced to others?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Is the meeting atmosphere friendly, pleasant and enjoyable?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Is your meeting location easy to find, with signs posted?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. Is your club's meeting location and time listed accurately on <a href="http://www.toastmasters.org/Find-a-club">www.toastmasters.org/Find-a-club</a> ? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. Is the business meeting conducted quickly and efficiently?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. Are programs interesting and varied?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. Are speakers, evaluators and other meeting participants reminded of their responsibilities well in advance of the meeting?                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. Are speeches well-prepared and based on projects in Pathways?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. Are evaluations positive, helpful and constructive?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16. Is everyone given an opportunity to participate in the program?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- |  | YES                      | NO                       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 17. Are your officers effective in their roles as leaders?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18. Do officers report on the club's progress in the Distinguished Club Program?                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19. Are you using branded marketing materials from the Logos, Images and Templates page on the Toastmasters website? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## Suggestions for Improvement:

## Membership

- |  | YES                      | NO                       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 20. Does your club set a membership goal each year and try to maintain a minimum of 20 members?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21. Do your club officers and members demonstrate the organization's core values of integrity, respect, service and excellence?                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 22. Does your club regularly promote its meetings on social media and in the community?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 23. Are guests invited to join the club?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 24. Are new members oriented to the Toastmasters program immediately after joining?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 25. Are new members reported immediately to World Headquarters so they can receive their welcome email with instructions on how to get started in Base Camp? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 26. Are new members assigned a mentor?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 27. Are new members scheduled to speak soon after joining?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 28. Are new members assigned meeting roles soon after joining?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 29. Are new members formally inducted and given a membership certificate, pin and name badge?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



- |  | YES                      | NO                       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 30. Does a member contact those who miss more than one meeting and encourage them to attend regularly? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 31. Are all members assigned to a club committee?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 32. Is your club free of members who disrupt meetings or have a negative influence?                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 33. Are members recognized during meetings for their accomplishments and contributions?                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 34. Does your club have a presence on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn?                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 35. Do your club leaders follow Toastmasters on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn?             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Suggestions for Improvement:**

**Educational Activities**

- |  | YES                      | NO                       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 36. Are members encouraged to visit other Toastmasters clubs?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 37. Does your club enjoy occasional joint meetings with other clubs?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 38. Does your club encourage members to attend Toastmasters events beyond the club such as area, division, district, regional and international functions? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 39. Do you know the value of and requirements for the various educational awards?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Suggestions for Improvement:**



**General**

- |   | YES                      | NO                       |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 40. Do you have a club newsletter or website?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 41. Does your club take advantage of <b>freetoasthost.org</b> to host its website?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 42. Do you have a formal installation for club officers?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 43. Are you encouraged to attend your club's executive committee meetings?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 44. Does your club discuss and vote on proposals presented each year at the Toastmasters Annual Business Meeting?                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 46. Does the club treasurer begin collecting October and April dues early and give members plenty of reminders about the due dates? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 46. Do your officers thoroughly understand their responsibilities and carry them out?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 47. Are members encouraged to assume leadership roles in the club?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Suggestions for Improvement:**

*Take this tool to your club meeting and discuss suggestions for improvements to make your club even better.*

# Member Achievements

Toastmasters share stories of growth and giving back to others.

## Terry Beard

Portland Rotary Toastmasters club • Portland, Oregon



### The Greatest Gift: Helping Others Find Their Voice

Three years ago, when we formed the Portland Rotary Toastmasters club in Portland, Oregon, I suggested to my fellow charter members that we aspire to become “the greatest Toastmasters club in the universe.” The idea was met with grins and chuckles, but today, our vision is becoming our reality.

When I joined Toastmasters, someone took me by the hand. At the first meeting, I was too timid to participate in Table Topics. After the meeting, the person who introduced me to Toastmasters invited me back and encouraged me to try again. The next time, I did get up to speak at Table Topics.

Seven months later, I finally worked up the courage to give my Ice Breaker. With my fellow Toastmasters’ encouragement and support, I embarked on a journey of personal growth and development that eventually paid unbelievable dividends at work, at home and at play.

When people I meet in business and social events ask what I am up to, I humorously share my story about overcoming my fear of public speaking. People see how excited I am to have found my voice, and when I ask them to come to a Toastmasters meeting with me, they usually say yes.

I recognized years ago that I have an obligation to share what someone did for me—to pay gifts forward. The rent I owe for taking up space at Toastmasters meetings is to help others find their voices. I do not think of myself as an evangelist, but I am. I love what I do in Toastmasters, and it is contagious.



Terry Beard



Laura Gammack

## Laura Gammack, CC

Heritage Go-Getters Toastmasters club • Calgary, Ontario, Canada



### Visiting International Clubs: The Ultimate Experience

In the spring of 2018 I volunteered to teach music in the Philippines. The volunteering itself was a meaningful experience, but I also managed to attend Toastmasters events in three countries during my travels.

I visited Health Century Toastmasters club in Hong Kong, and the meeting was similar to my club meetings in Canada. What makes this Hong Kong club unique, is that it’s a trilingual club. The first speech I heard was in Mandarin, the second in Cantonese and the third in English.

I also attended the District 75 conference in Davao, Philippines. The conference kicked off with traditional Philippine dancing—I had never seen anything like it before. It was inspiring to hear so many amazing speeches, and I learned a lot about speechwriting. Division F also adopted me for the weekend, and I made a new group of friends. It was a weekend that will carry me through the rest of my life and my Toastmasters journey.

Then I visited the Saigon Toastmasters club in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. It included people from so many different ethnic groups, and to my surprise, the

meeting was conducted in English. I took on the Ah-Counter role and heard three Pathways speeches that gave me insight into the local experience in Ho Chi Minh City.

When I travel again, I will check out other Toastmasters meetings, and I highly suggest you do the same on your next international adventure!



## Mahi Sall, ACB, ALB

DB Toastmasters-Berlin • Berlin, Germany



Mahi Sall

### Making a Positive Impact

In July 2018, I participated as a judge in the 15th “Startsocial” challenge—a nationwide competition that promotes volunteer work and social good in Germany. Judges assess applications from social startups and charities in the contest, which is under the patronage of German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

At the time, I had no idea my Toastmasters skills would turn out to be extremely useful in completing my task, which was to review and evaluate applicants’ files. As soon as I read the “Startsocial” evaluation handbook, the requirements felt familiar and I became less stressed. A cornerstone of the process is to write honest and unbiased, yet also supportive, feedback to contestants. It is here where Toastmasters evaluation skills—a pillar of the organization’s learning and educational program—come into play.

Directly addressing who you’re evaluating, using “I” statements (e.g., “I feel you could add more examples”) and employing the “sandwich technique” (opening with positive comments, suggesting areas for improvement and closing with a positive comment) make all the difference in delivering valuable feedback.

As human beings, we are generally more receptive to feedback when we feel the other party has made an effort to understand us. Stephen Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, put it best: “Seek first to understand, then to be understood.” Let’s face it: All applicants in the Startsocial challenge intend to make a positive impact, if they’re not already doing so. Supportive, uplifting and honest feedback was the least they deserved.

Engaging in that project was my way to give back to society, make an impact and inspire. Toastmasters helped me achieve that.



Kesha R. Whitaker

## Kesha R. Whitaker, DTM

Advanced Blue Nile, Memphis • Memphis, Tennessee



### Reaching My Goals

Eight years ago, an acquaintance recommended Toastmasters. I consistently shrugged off the thought of joining until I could no longer resist. Nearly five years later, the journey has been amazing! As a public relations professional, I am accustomed to working with the media, writing speeches and communications for national companies, but never for myself.

Toastmasters sparked my aspiration of becoming a motivational speaker. With every project, I was able to write speeches faster and deliver them without nervousness or anxiety. The confidence that resulted from practicing my speaking skills has helped me attain many professional and personal goals. Since joining Toastmasters, I have been a featured presenter at a national conference and webinar, a keynote speaker at a graduation and an emcee at various social events. *The Memphis Business Journal* in Tennessee selected me for its annual “Top 40 Under 40” list (honoring 40 top achievers under 40 years old). I teach countless workshops and speak before diverse groups—from corporate employees to incarcerated youth.

Serving as 2017–2018 area director took me to another level. Helping to organize area speech contests and a district conference has been invaluable. The highlight of my leadership journey has been leading my area to Distinguished and earning the Distinguished Toastmaster award in June 2018! Now I have the privilege of serving as public relations manager for District 43.

I’m grateful to my mentors who encouraged me and kept me going. I believe it is my duty to pay that forward by helping my fellow Toastmasters thrive. The journey continues! **T**

Do you have a Toastmasters success story you’d like to share about yourself or another member? Write it in fewer than 300 words and send with a high-resolution photo to [submissions@toastmasters.org](mailto:submissions@toastmasters.org).



## At the Library

Forget eBooks and Kindles. Give me labyrinthine stacks, plastic book covers, Dewey decimals and angelic librarians.

BY JOHN CADLEY

I'm sitting here in the Fayetteville Free Library in Upstate New York wondering if "free library" is redundant. I'm also wondering what I'm going to write about for my January column, and it's not going to be about New Year's resolutions, clean slates, starting fresh and all those other horrid clichés that only remind me of how miserably I failed in my intentions for 2018. Adding insult to injury, my birthday is December 30, so I still have those "funny" cards lying around that begin with "You're not getting older, you're (fill in degrading insult.)" I feel like having my wife return them with a note saying, *"Unfortunately, my beloved husband, John, died the night before his birthday and did not get a chance to read your thoughtful card. Given his present condition, however, I believe he would fail to see the humor."*

So what will I write about? Wait a minute! Wasn't I just thinking about the library? And aren't Toastmasters eager readers, always seeking to improve their language skills? That's it. I'll write about libraries.

First, a brief history (which I generally prefer to long histories). Some 5,000 years ago in Mesopotamia (now Iraq), they started archiving commercial transactions on heavy, one-inch-thick clay tablets. This was around 2600 B.C. and marked both the end of pre-history and the beginning of hernia operations. Then the Egyptians invented papyrus, which allowed for the production of codexes (the forerunners of books), so you could fit a lot more writing on the shelves. This eventually led to the

biggest library in the ancient world, the Library of Alexandria. Some believed that if you read every book in that famous building, you would know everything there was to know in the then-known world. A few did, and made history as the first human beings to be referred to as insufferable bores.

Not to be outdone, the Roman consul Asinius Pollio constructed the first public library in Rome to rival Alexandria. There were no late fees. If you failed to return a book on time, they just fed you to the lions. That's why to this day Italians are fast readers.

**"One cannot talk about libraries without mentioning librarians, who happen to be my favorite people in the whole world."**

In the Middle Ages, the monks compiled huge libraries of beautifully ornate, hand-copied tomes that were chained to the shelves. If you did manage to pilfer one, they chained you to the shelf until you repeated "Thou shalt not steal" four hundred million times.

Somewhere along the way, the Chinese blew everybody out of the water by inventing both paper *and* moveable type, which inevitably paved the way for Gutenberg and the printing press. Now the cat was out of the bag. Anybody could own a book.

America didn't have a library until 1731 when Benjamin Franklin, who invented everything the Chinese didn't, founded the Library Company of Philadelphia. This prompted U.S. President James Madison to propose the Congressional Library in 1783. A section of the executive order for the Library read: "It is no longer permissible for politicians to know **ABSOLUTELY NOTHING**. Every member of the House and Senate is now required to read at least **ONE BOOK** so he knows something. **ANYTHING**."

Of course, one cannot talk about libraries without mentioning librarians, who happen to be my favorite people in the whole world. Every one I've ever encountered has been polite, helpful, knowledgeable and soft-spoken. I even took an online test to see if I qualified for the profession. I don't. The results said I lack "soft skills," which basically means I'm not a people person. And they would not be wrong. I'm not even a person person. But some famous people have started out as librarians, including Mao Tse-tung, Pope Pius XI and—wait for it—Casanova. Soft skills, indeed.

So much for libraries. Now back to my burning question: Is "free library" redundant? It isn't, and the librarian told me why. I've never been called ignorant in such a polite, helpful, knowledgeable, soft-spoken way. **■**

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



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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.

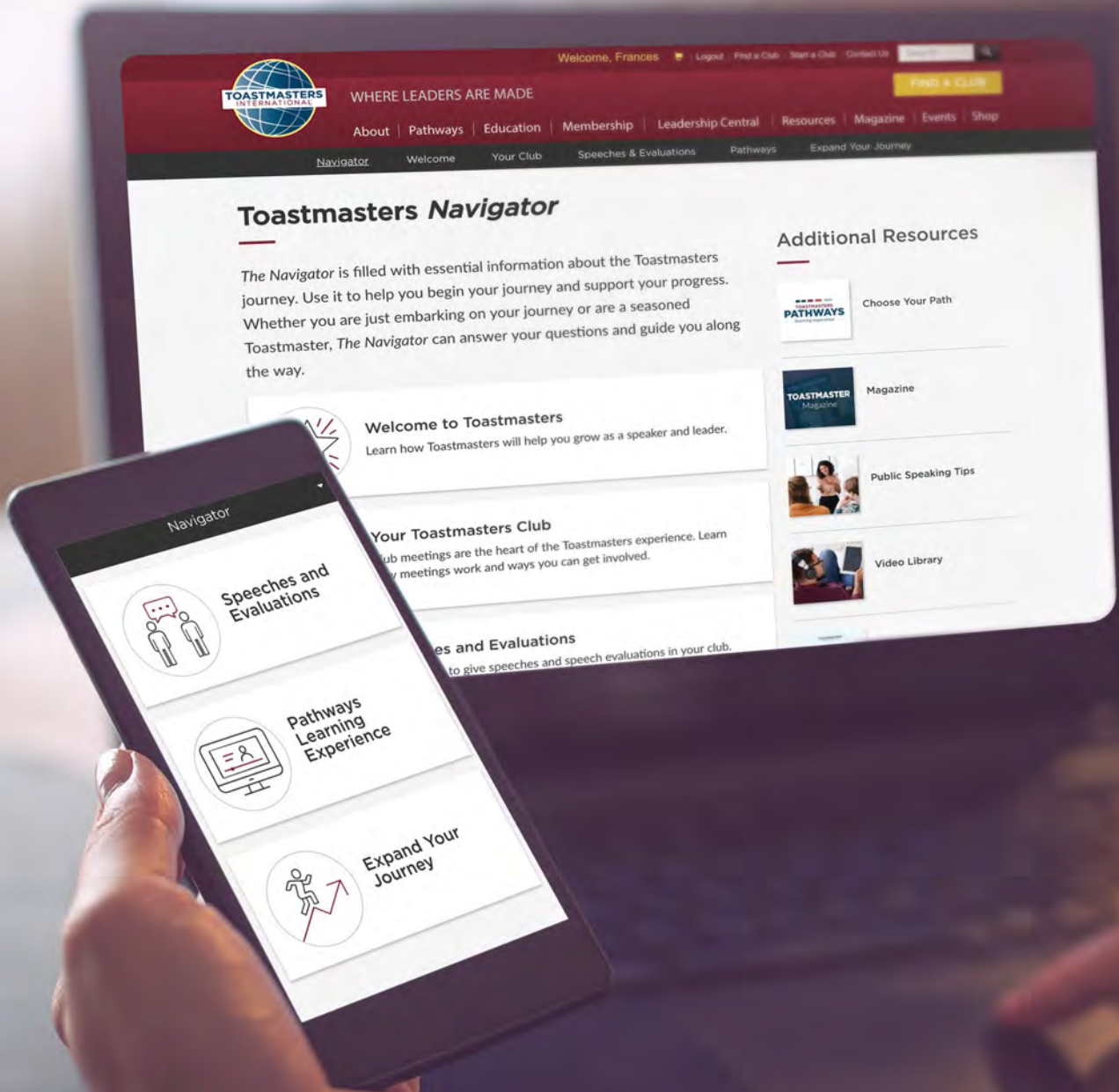
*Some Really Personal, Yet Entertaining Stories From My Life That You Will Enjoy and May Even Find Inspiring* by Bo Bennett is available in ebook, paperback, and audio, at 

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