

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | MARCH 2019

TOASTMASTER®

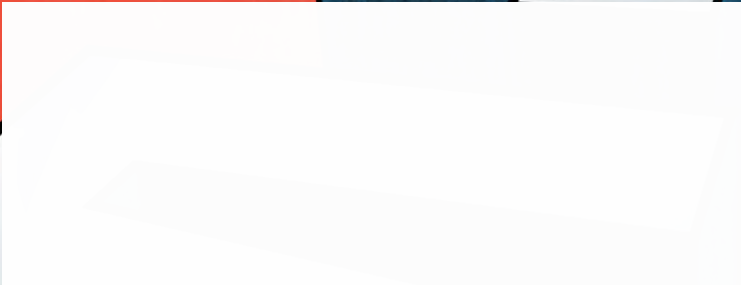


Reframe Your Life in 5 Seconds

Leap into action with
powerful and practical
productivity hacks

Yoga and
Public Speaking
They may have more in
common than you think

The Power of
Risk-Taking



Talk Up Toastmasters With an Open House



We are a global organization spanning 143 countries, with a clear mission of empowering people to become more effective communicators and leaders.

Since 1924, more than 4 million people have joined our organization. With 7 billion people populating our planet, I think we can share the benefits of Toastmasters with more people, don't you? We can't expect them to join, however, until we invite them.

Membership building begins with each individual member. We can share our personal enthusiasm by talking up Toastmasters at every opportunity. We can reach out to friends, family, business associates, even people we don't know. I do it all the time—in restaurants, on elevators, on flights or standing in lines.

At the club level, one of the most successful ways to “show and tell” the value of Toastmasters to potential new members is to host a community open house. A well-planned event, widely promoted, is a dependable recipe for success. An open house event offers potential members a welcoming and informative experience. It is fun for members and guests alike, allowing visitors to ask questions, meet members and get a feel for the unique Toastmasters culture.

Take advantage of tools, such as the Open House Flier and new marketing materials available at www.toastmasters.org, to recruit new members and invite your community to your meetings. Share the benefits of Toastmasters with friends and co-workers. Toastmasters members and guests have a right to expect a consistent, quality club experience anywhere around the world. Let's raise the bar of every club across the globe to be more uniform and top-performing. Let's make this our gold standard!

“One of the most successful ways to ‘show and tell’ the value of Toastmasters to potential new members is to host a community open house.”

I firmly believe that Toastmasters offers the highest-quality, most cost-effective professional development programs that individuals or companies can “buy.” Show-and-tell efforts like open house meetings or corporate demonstration presentations are persuasive ways to highlight this.

So use Toastmasters tools, proactively interact with your communities, reach out to businesses and earn buy-in for corporate clubs. Share all you know about the golden benefits of Toastmasters wherever you go. There's no better feeling than when a visitor says, “Here's my application. I can't wait to get started!”

Lark Doley, DTM
International President

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We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE
www.toastmasters.org

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An open platform for your tips, tactics, comments and encouragement.

A Recipe for the Workplace

"A Recipe for the Evaluation Sandwich" [November 2018] by Bill Brown, DTM, is also a recipe for success in the workplace, especially for those tasked with providing feedback to others. Recognition, encouragement and constructive feedback are exactly what employees, regardless of cultural backgrounds, are looking for from their managers.

For more than 20 years as a leadership development consultant and Toastmaster, I have worked with hundreds of managers in different countries and attended countless Toastmasters meetings in different places. My observation is that Toastmasters who are conversant with providing feedback that motivates and promotes growth in others are more effective leaders at work.

As more and more employers come to realize this strong connection, Toastmasters is well positioned to be their partner of choice in personal development.

Philip Lai

Port Credit Toastmasters
Mississauga, Ontario, Canada

Learning in the Dark

In October 2018, our club (pictured above, with the lights on) tried something new: We held a "Dialogue in the Dark" meeting. The room's lights were turned off, and we conducted the meeting in darkness. Our club organized this endeavor to practice our vocal variety techniques, because in the dark, a speaker's body language and facial expressions are not as important as their speaking pitch, pace, volume and vocal pauses.



Members of the ALE HK Toastmasters club in Hong Kong, China

The experience was awesome! It stimulated our creativity to think outside the box. For instance, how would you give timing signals in the dark? Our timer, Tony, prepared a flashlight and covered the light bulb with transparent color lids, so we could see the green, yellow and red lights during the respective time limits.

We couldn't write or read in the dark, so we had to stretch our mental note-taking skills. Evaluators had to memorize their statements. Our general evaluator, Pauline, managed to address all role takers and deliver her points without using notes. Brava!

Thank you to my club for introducing this new experience. In darkness, we find that our skills are often brighter than we think.

Ho-yin Mak, CC

ALE HK Toastmasters club
Hong Kong, China

DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

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

Tips for Greeting Club Guests

At Tauranga Toastmasters, the most important part of our club is that we smile and provide an uplifting energy, with a sincere, and welcoming attitude.

Specifically, we follow these steps:

- ▶ Our Table Topicsmaster is at the door to greet guests, take their names and ask if they want to introduce themselves during the Table Topics session.
- ▶ The vice president membership (VPM) is also at the door, with executive committee members filling in if it gets busy.
- ▶ Our VPM emails the visitor-pack document to guests who attend a meeting. If the VPM is away or busy, another committee member handles this task.
- ▶ The club president and sergeant at arms ensure they have the names of all guests, so they can welcome them by name during their portion of the meeting.
- ▶ The sergeant at arms offers a personal testimony and encourages guests when delivering the mission statement.
- ▶ We tell guests they can attend three club meetings before they need to commit to joining the group. We give guests the space and time they need to make their own decision.

Anne-Marie Andrews, CC, CL • Tauranga Toastmasters club • Tauranga, New Zealand



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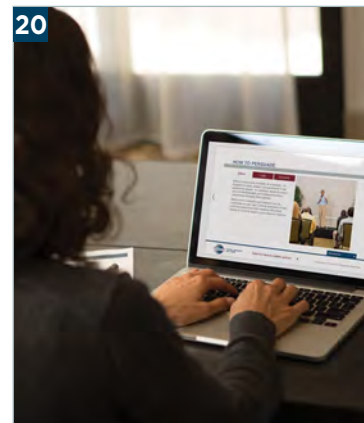
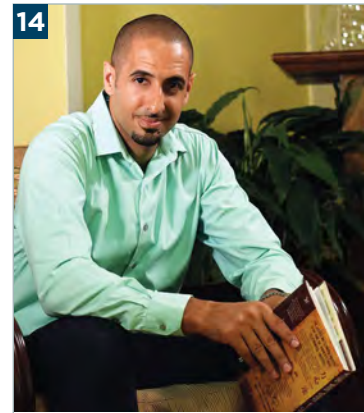
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THE PATH TO PRESENTATION MASTERY

Educational projects help you become an accomplished speaker.

By Jennifer L. Blanck, DTM

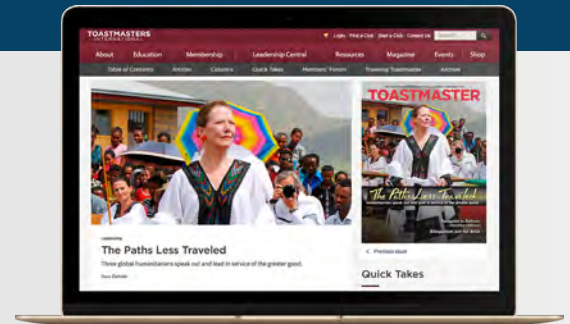


Toastmaster Magazine Online

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

March Online Extras:

- **The Path to Presentation Mastery**—Hear what members are saying about the path that's taking their professional skills to a new level. ▶
- **Talk With Your Hands**—Watch a video to learn additional tips on using gestures in your speech. ▶
- **The Care and Treatment of Guests**—Listen to an audio recording by the author for extra strategies on making a good first impression on guests. 🎧



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▶ MEMBER MOMENT



Millennial Advises Her Peers to Prioritize Speaking Skills

At age 27, Chen Rao has already been involved in Toastmasters far longer than the average member. When she was 15 years old, Rao borrowed \$10 from her mother to enroll in a Toastmasters Youth Leadership program (YLP). She had just immigrated to Canada from Chengdu, Sichuan, China, with her mother, and she was eager to get involved in community programs and perfect her English.

In 2010, she turned 18 and was able to officially join a Toastmasters club. She immediately set her sights on earning the Distinguished Toastmaster award, which she did in June 2017.

Rao now works as a treasury officer for Corporate and Institutional Banking, BNP Paribas in New York City, where she's a member and co-president of her company's corporate club, BNP Paribas Toastmasters. As she continues participating in Toastmasters, she hopes to inspire millennials to join a club to improve their communication skills in a digitally focused world.

Tell us about the Youth Leadership program.

In many ways, YLP is like a mini version of the full-blown Toastmasters experience. The coaches help teenagers understand everything from prepared and impromptu talks to parliamentary procedures. In my group, the YLP participants offered constructive feedback to each other, just like members in a Toastmasters club evaluate fellow members.

Why were you eager to learn public-speaking skills at such a young age?

I wanted to express myself well in English, so I could make friends after I immigrated to North America. Joining the YLP with that 10 dollars was the best investment I've made in my life. Starting with YLP, I gradually learned to speak well and present with confidence.

What do you want fellow young professionals to know about Toastmasters?

In today's digital age, effective communication and soft skills are even more crucial if you want to make a positive impact in your community. They shape our lives and the relationships we build. How do you promote yourself to land your first job? How do you convince stakeholders to adopt a proposal—be it a project that will increase workplace efficiency or a community project that will benefit those less fortunate? I want more young people to realize that, to get what they want in their personal and professional lives, they need to have solid communication skills.



Chen Rao

Why is it important to build speaking skills early in life?

Instilling good speaking habits early is like laying the foundation for a house: You can only add more layers and complexity when you know the foundation can support it. Young people tend to use a fair amount of colloquial language, which may not be suitable for speaking or professional settings. Traps like upspeak, vocal fry and informal diction can be hard to curtail without proper training.

What have you accomplished thanks to your strong speaking skills?

Public speaking has opened many doors for me, not just in terms of opportunities, but also meaningful relationships. As a professional, I thrive at giving keynotes and facilitating workshops for colleagues on the topic of public speaking. I've only attained this level of skill because I began at such a young age.

What would you tell millennials about communication and leadership skills?

The best learning is sometimes done via osmosis. Don't underestimate the power of words and the importance of transparent communication. Put yourself out there early to observe how things are done; try to lead without even being asked to do so, and you'll end up doing everything better as a result.

What do you hope to accomplish?

I hope to continue coaching others on effective communication, so they can speak more powerfully and achieve their full potential. Also, I want to help accelerate the growth of the younger generation, because these communication skills can help them thrive in an increasingly complex and digital world.

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

KNOW A MEMBER WHO HAS AN INSPIRING STORY TO SHARE?

Nominate someone from your club to be featured in a Member Moment by sending ideas to submissions@toastmasters.org.



Members of CECI Toastmasters jump in front of the Cloud Gate Dance Theater, home of the popular modern dance group by the same name. The club snapped this photo to celebrate the conclusion of a fun outing to the gateway to Taiwan's scenic North Coast—Tamsui.

▶ **CLUB RESOURCES**

Boost Your Open House With 3 Updated Resources

A suite of fresh materials is available to recruit members and enhance guest experiences during your next community open house or corporate demonstration meeting.

Couple these clear and compelling tools with your club's persuasive enthusiasm to "show and tell" the value of Toastmasters membership.

The three updated resources are:

1 "Find Your Voice" – A PowerPoint presentation specifically for open house events, "Find Your Voice" explains the Pathways education program and provides information on member benefits, including details on the extensive resources available to members.

2 "Develop Your Leaders From Within" – A PowerPoint presentation aimed at helping district leaders build corporate

clubs, it provides talking points on how businesses can transform internal talent through hands-on learning at Toastmasters. It lists specific skills employees can learn, like how to give and receive feedback, along with names of notable Fortune 500 companies that host clubs.

3 "All About Toastmasters" – This updated brochure provides general information for prospective members, club guests or anyone considering growing their communication and leadership skills.

Take advantage of these convenient materials available for download or purchase at www.toastmasters.org/Shop.



▶ MEET MY MENTOR



Wayne Lebowitz

Wayne Lebowitz, CC, joined Somerville Toastmasters not necessarily to gain public-speaking skills but to share them. Wayne is a retired jeweler who also helped facilitate classes like “Introduction to Speech” and “Developing the Speaking Voice” at the University of Bridgeport in Connecticut, United States.

Wayne says, as an experienced speaker, he relishes his role as mentor to newer members. “I get to socialize and learn from the stories and varied backgrounds of the mentees, while helping them formulate their speeches.”

When Wayne joined Somerville Toastmasters in 2012 the club had eight active members. Hoping to get the club back in good standing, Wayne and a few other motivated members set to work growing membership. “We created all sorts of activities to bring in new members. We had parties and events we still have today, such as barbecues and holiday parties.” Within two years of these renewed efforts, he says, the club grew to as many as 70 members at one point. “With all this new blood, it was just a more exciting club ... [offering] more new speeches and enthusiasm.”

Wayne has served as president twice and mentored countless members. His first mentee, Gina Salcedo, DTM, now serves as District 31 director. Gina also joined Somerville Toastmasters in 2012 and says she uses her ever-improving communication skills daily in her job as a transparency reporting specialist for a large pharmaceutical company. The nature of her role requires building relationships with stakeholders in every department, conveying requirements and influencing coworkers to submit accurate data in a timely manner.

How did Wayne become your mentor?

I called him about judging the club contest and took the opportunity to ask if he would mentor me. He agreed and even met me for coffee to discuss my Ice Breaker. Since then, we’ve met before most meetings. He still helps me with speeches, and we’ve developed a friendship that extends beyond the club. He and his wife even traveled to my wedding in Manta, Ecuador, in 2015.



Wayne Lebowitz, left, and Gina Salcedo

Why do you want to recognize Wayne?

Wayne is an incredible storyteller who brings life to almost any topic. Moreover, he’s invested in the success of the club and its members; he’s one of the key reasons we’ve retained so many members for more than five years. He’s also been pitching in at the district level. In my role as district director, I’ve asked him to use his charisma and skill to host district-wide webinars, and he’s been great. Watching his commitment to our community strengthens my own.

Why do you stay in Toastmasters?

District leadership has been a learning lab for me to polish my leadership skills and then go back and apply them at work. Giving feedback that doesn’t come across as criticism is exceedingly challenging and I’ve developed that skill through club evaluations. I now feel like an effective team-builder who can communicate smoothly, but it didn’t happen overnight.

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

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

▶ NEWS FROM TI

Keep Your Club Information Current for Prospective Members

Make sure your club’s contact information is accurate so you don’t miss important club-related items such as prospective-member inquiries or news from World Headquarters. Log in to Club Central on the Toastmasters website and verify or update your club email address (this will also update it in the Find a Club section).

For assistance, email the Club and Member Support Team at membership@toastmasters.org or call +1 720-439-5050, ext. 402, Monday through Friday between 6 a.m. and 7 p.m. Mountain Time.

The way prospective members contact clubs from the Find a Club page on www.toastmasters.org has been updated. Potential members will now fill out a form with their information and then an automated email will be sent to club officers. Do not reply to the automated email; ensure a club officer sends an email directly back to the prospect.

This update is the first of many to help manage leads. Soon you’ll be opening the door even wider for prospective members who are searching for a club to call their own.

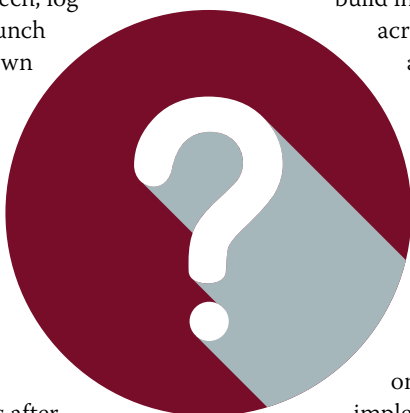
▶ PATHWAYS Q&A



Answers to Common Pathways Questions

Q . I saw a “Congratulations” page in my project, but now I can’t move on. I thought I was done with this project?

A . The **Congratulations** page is embedded as the last page in every project. However, that doesn’t mean the project has been marked complete. Once you have completed the components of a project and given your speech, log back into Base Camp and launch the project. Use the drop-down menu at the bottom of the page titled **Select to Move to Another Section** to go to the **Assess Your Skills After** interactive page. Then take the post-assessment by selecting the number that coincides with your personal experience in the project and clicking the “submit” button that appears after you have answered the final question. Doing this will mark the project complete, and if you are working on your Ice Breaker it will unlock the rest of Level 1.



Q . I want to do project 1 in Level 3 of my Pathways learning path because I have time to work on it now, even though I am currently on project 1 in Level 1. Can I get the materials to do that?

A . You must complete Levels 1 and 2 in Pathways before you can advance to Level 3. Pathways projects build in complexity across levels, so they are designed to be completed sequentially. For example, you may learn about organizing a small event in Level 4 of your path, and then in Level 5 you work on developing and implementing a larger event. The sequential order, and the time it should take to complete projects and apply what you have learned to the next project, are by design.

Q . Where do I upload my evaluations?

A . You can store your completed speech evaluations and other files, such as videos, audio and other documents, in your **E-portfolio**. Select the E-portfolio tab in your **Base Camp Profile** and select **Documents** on the following page. The folders are organized by level. There is also a *My Documents* folder. You can save your evaluations and other files in these folders. Select the burgundy text next to the folder where you want to store your document. On the next page, select the **Add File** button. Drag and drop a file, or select the **Select a File** button and choose the file you’d like to save. To finish uploading the file to your E-portfolio, select the **Add** button. To view an uploaded file in your E-portfolio, select the drop-down arrow next to the file and select **Open**.

For more information about the Pathways learning experience, visit www.toastmasters.org/Pathways.

▶ MEMBER CONNECTIONS



Paddles Up: Leadership Lessons on the Water

The two-year-old B.E.S.T. Toastmasters of Zhuhai in Guangdong, China, tries to incorporate fun team-building activities to keep members engaged. Recently, club members worked together to paddle a dragon boat, a long kayak that is typically decorated with dragon heads and tails. Many members had never paddled before, so they paid close attention to the guide’s signals and focused on staying synchronized to move the boat forward. When members felt tired, the team banded together to keep the boat moving and maintain high spirits. This experience helped members become more cohesive as a team, confident in their abilities to conquer challenges and improve their skills.



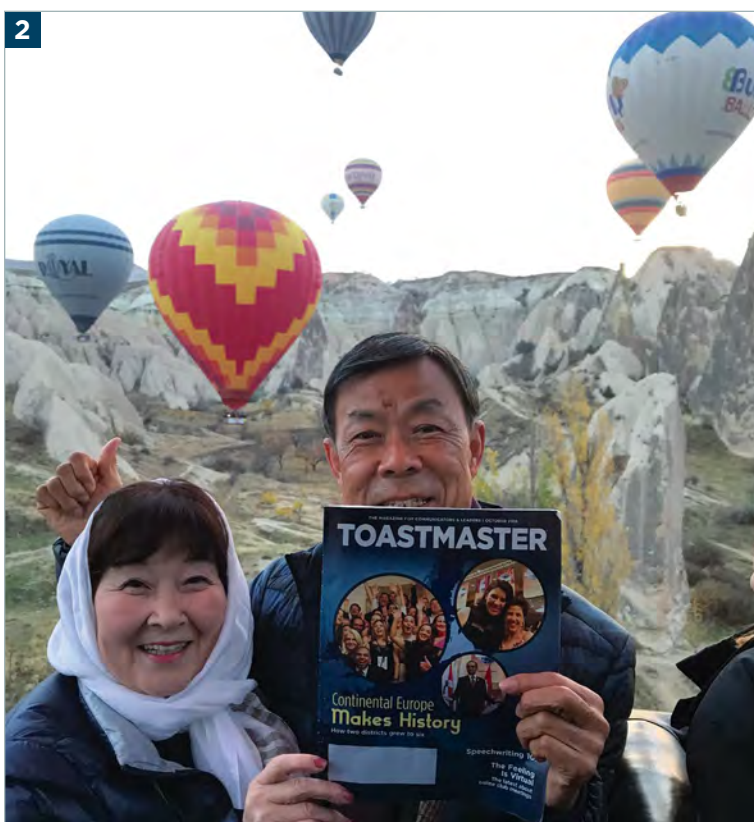


1 | SIU YAN SCOTT, CC, of Euclid, Ohio, carves her own path at the Sólheimajökull glacier in southern Iceland.

2 | KAY TAMURA, ACS, CL, and **MINORU TAMURA, DTM**, of Tokushima, Japan, fly in a hot-air balloon in Cappadocia, Turkey.

3 | KENLEY LIONG, of Manila, Philippines, visits Taroko National Park in Hualien County, Taiwan.

4 | KAYLA THOMAS, of Oakland, California, visits the Library of Celsus in the ancient city of Ephesus, now part of Selçuk, Turkey.



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



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

Giving a Speech About Yourself?

Build your story around people who influenced you the most.

BY PATRICIA FRIPP

If you are a successful professional—or you aim to be—it is likely that you will be asked to speak about yourself at some point in your career. Of course, all Toastmasters learn to do this in their Ice Breaker speeches. But a more robust speech about your background and how you attained your current stage in life might be appropriate with a promotion, accepting an award or some other community recognition.

Even seasoned speakers can be shaken by the idea of speaking at length about themselves. Didn't our parents teach us to be humble, work hard and keep our heads down? Giving a speech about how successful we are might feel immodest or boastful. Not if it's done properly.

As a professional speaking coach, I advise clients who come to me for help with crafting a speech about themselves to use two simple strategies: 1) Tell your life story in three clearly defined acts; and 2) Remember that no one becomes successful alone. While discussing your experience, be sure to give credit to the family members, colleagues and mentors who guided or supported you through your career. Highlight your success while thanking the people who helped you find it.

Structuring Your Story

Look at your life story as if it were a play: Act I: When you were young; Act II: When you were more mature and starting your career; and Act III: When you achieved success. Audiences want to know your personal story and details about your journey to success. Try to convey where you came from, how hard you worked and what motivated you through your life, and then finally, how it feels to be where you are now—always remembering to mention the people who helped you along the way.

Here's an example of what I mean: Consider Alex, a successful executive, who was to give a speech about his role



Patricia Fripp

as president of a real estate franchise. Speaking at the company's annual conference, Alex's audience of 700 realtors knew he was a multimillionaire. They did not, however, know of his humble beginnings.

“This is the secret to talking about yourself comfortably: give the best lines to your characters.”

Act I: His opening: “I never met my mother and didn't meet my father until I was 14 years old. I was raised by my grandmother, and life was perfect.” Scene I, Act I of his life “play” gives the audience a clear sense of who he was as a child. He continued by describing his first hero—his grandmother. He talked about the influence she had on him, her philosophy that would inspire his own, the unconditional love she gave and her death when he was 14. That's when Alex went to live with his father. Suddenly, he was forced to live with a person he never

knew and stepbrothers and sisters he hadn't known existed.

Act II: The owner of the business where Alex worked when he was 20 years old brought in a business consultant who noticed Alex and realized that he had great potential and initiative. The consultant guided him toward going into business for himself. That consultant gave him the courage to pursue entrepreneurship.

Act III: In this act, Alex talks about the man he referred to as his adoptive grandfather. This man also encouraged and guided him to expand his business beyond what Alex had believed possible. Alex included the actual words of support his adoptive grandfather said to him. This is a great example of the kind of story you can tell about yourself that helps the audience feel connected. In this way, his three influencers were the “heroes” of the speech, rather than Alex himself.

Alex's presentation described the influence of his grandmother, a business consultant and his adopted grandfather. This is the secret to talking about yourself comfortably: give the best lines to your characters. Repeat their advice in your speech—let them deliver the dialogue.

When you are putting together a speech about yourself, design it in three acts and give credit to all who helped put you on the right path. This strategy will help alleviate any anxiety. **T**

PATRICIA FRIPP, CSP, CPAE, is a Hall of Fame keynote speaker, executive speech coach and online learning expert. She was the first woman president of the National Speakers Association. She joined Cable Car Toastmasters in San Francisco in 1975. For more information, visit www.frippvt.com.

Yoga and Public Speaking

The two may have more in common than you think.

BY CHRISTINE CLAPP, DTM

After I facilitated a workshop on executive presence at a law firm, a participant came up to me and commented that she saw some overlap between my advice and the material she was learning in yoga teacher training—something she was pursuing on evenings and weekends. As someone who has practiced yoga for several years, I had never considered how the basic tenets of yoga are helpful practices at the lectern too.

On reflection, I realized my workshop participant was on to something. Since then, I have identified four habits that I think benefit practitioners of both yoga and public speaking.

Breath

In yoga, there is a focus on deep, smooth and controlled inhalation and exhalation that initiates each movement of the body. Likewise, paying attention to breath is helpful in managing nervousness associated with public speaking. When speakers get anxious, their breathing tends to get fast and shallow—causing

them to speak at a fast rate and with a breathy quality. Fast, shallow breathing can even lead to hyperventilation and an “out-of-body” feeling at the lectern.

Consciously deepening and lengthening the breath, especially right before you speak when nervousness generally spikes, can help lower the heart rate and allow for a louder, richer and slower vocal quality.

Presence

Slowing the breath also promotes being present. Yoga teachers often remind their “yogis” to become more aware of their breath and to be in the present moment—not worrying about what happened before class or the to-do list waiting to get done later in the day. The focus on staying in the moment is important for public speakers too.

Think about speakers you admire. They likely aren’t perfect—they’ll have a few hiccups in their speech, a typo on a slide, a few junk words. But they don’t dwell on them. They focus on authentically connecting with listeners—sharing a story or idea that is

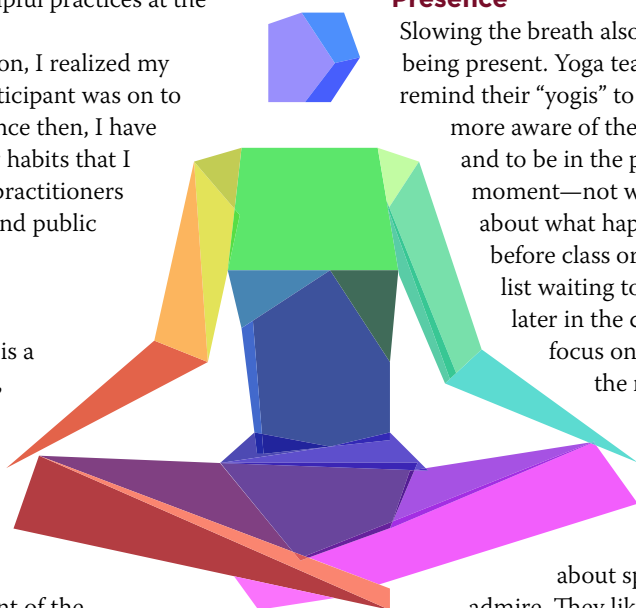
meaningful. This connection can only happen when speakers are present in the moment. Sounds easy, but how can speakers be more present?

- ▶ Thoroughly understand the audience and context.
- ▶ Be passionate about the topic. Reference areas of importance and interest to yourself and the audience. Provide helpful information.
- ▶ Carefully prepare to avoid dependence on a script or outline.
- ▶ Smile and relish the role of presenter.
- ▶ Look into the eyes of listeners and have a conversation *with* them, not *at* them.

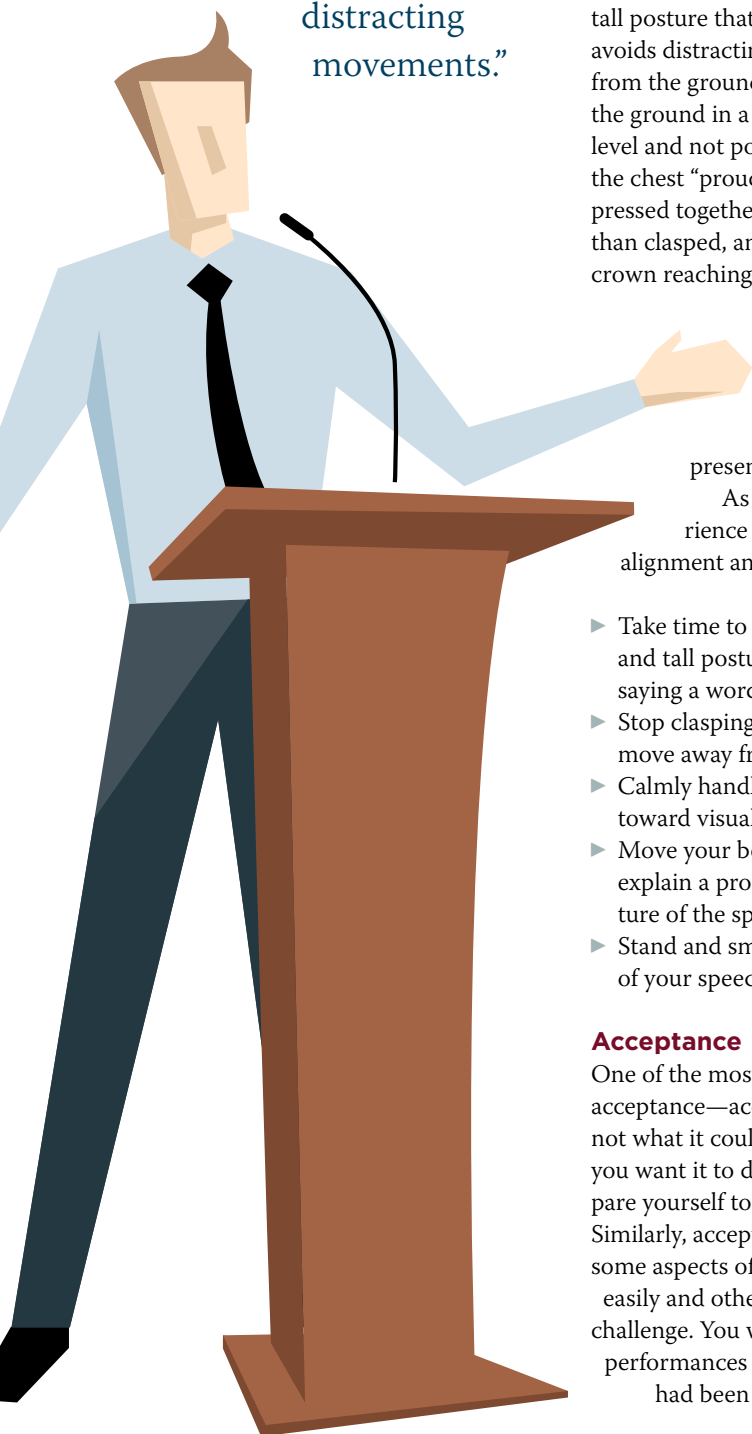
Posture

In addition to being present in the moment, yoga enthusiasts cultivate body awareness as they move through yoga poses. They pay attention to grounding their feet, aligning their hips, opening the heart and creating space between each vertebra in their back. I find one of the most rewarding aspects of practicing yoga is the “aha” moment when you finally achieve proper alignment in a posture or deepen your experience of a pose you’ve done hundreds of times in the past.

A focus on proper alignment and purposeful movement is also key for a public



“Presenters must cultivate a stable, open and tall posture that conveys confidence and avoids distracting movements.”



speaker. For optimum stage presence, presenters must cultivate a stable, open and tall posture that conveys confidence and avoids distracting movements. This starts from the ground up—with feet planted on the ground in a wide, athletic stance, hips level and not popped to one side. Keep the chest “proud” with shoulder blades pressed together, hands at the sides rather than clasped, and head high with the crown reaching toward the ceiling.

Once the body is calm and expansive (this will take some practice), speakers can use body language to make their presentations more dynamic.

As a speaker, you might experience an “aha” moment of proper alignment and posture when you:

- ▶ Take time to achieve a stable, open and tall posture at the lectern before saying a word.
- ▶ Stop clasping the lectern and even move away from it while you speak.
- ▶ Calmly handle a prop, or gesture toward visual aids.
- ▶ Move your body to reenact a story, explain a process or emphasize structure of the speech.
- ▶ Stand and smile confidently at the end of your speech as you receive applause.

Acceptance

One of the most difficult yoga lessons is acceptance—accepting your body as it is, not what it could do yesterday or what you want it to do in the future. Don’t compare yourself to the person next to you. Similarly, accept that as a public speaker, some aspects of presenting will come easily and others will be more of a challenge. You will have both incredible performances and speeches you wish had been better.



It is important not to get frustrated or judge yourself harshly when you struggle or give an off performance. It doesn’t mean you are a poor speaker. Accept that it is a proficiency that challenges you, or that it was an off day. Then, let it go. Focus your energies by reflecting on ways you can improve, leveraging your strengths and preparing as best you can for the next presentation.

These four yoga habits—breath, presence, posture and acceptance—are instructive for public speakers to consider (even if they don’t practice yoga). I’m grateful that my program participant helped me make the connection. Learning from audience members is one of the greatest gifts of presenting. **T**

Christine Clapp, DTM, is a member of the United States Senate club in Washington, D.C., and is a presentation skills consultant who helps professionals build the confidence to connect and the capacity to lead. Reach her at christine@spokenwithauthority.com.

Changing the Game

Jamaican entrepreneur's 'cheat code' for success:
Learn, take action and share your vulnerability.

BY PATRICK SMITH

As a teenager, Jeffrey Azan spent countless hours playing video games. Inspired by his virtual heroes like the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles—who use martial arts to fight crime—Azan decided to master those skills himself. He dedicated himself to the practice and earned a third-degree Shotokan Karate black belt.

Today, Azan, ACG, ALB, trains for another passion—motivational speaking. As president of the Pacesetters Toastmasters club in Kingston, Jamaica, he sharpens his inspirational messages and learns strategies to weave video-game and martial-arts analogies into his presentations. “Every time I go to a Toastmasters meeting, I’m training on the basics over and over again,” the 30-year-old says in his melodious Jamaican accent. “When you’re thrown into a new situation, the things you’ve been practicing come to life; that’s what Toastmasters does for me.”

A False Start

In June 2013 Azan transitioned from his role in the family retail business to start Select 'n' Start, his motivational and professional speaking business. He joined Toastmasters that October and raced

through the *Competent Communication* manual, receiving his first designation in just 29 days. “As life would have it, I didn’t learn anything. I just shot through it.”

It wasn’t an effective way to grow, but Azan didn’t realize it until he began mentoring a new member. “My mentee tried to do what I did and complete his first manual as fast as possible,” Azan says. “I realized he wasn’t growing, and I used it as a mirror for what I had done. I told him to take it one step at a time. He probably achieved the same amount of growth in his first 10 speeches as it took me three years to do. That’s when I recognized that Toastmasters truly works—if you allow it to work.”

As the growth of Azan’s mentee became apparent to Pacesetters club members, the club president approached Azan with a unique idea: Would he be willing to repeat the *Competent Communication* manual to perfect some of the techniques he missed the first time? Azan agreed and pushed himself to share more meaningful stories than he did during his first 29 days working in the manual. “By repeating the projects,” Azan says, “I delivered some of my best speeches to date.”



Jeffrey Azan practicing Shotokan Karate
Photo courtesy of A. Gilbert Bellamy

Changing the Game, Changing Lives

A lifelong video-game player, Azan incorporates a “cheat code” into his motivational and professional speaking business. In many games, cheat codes allow players to move through a level faster and easier. Azan uses such codes as a metaphor for taking action in life. “A cheat code requires people to make a decision and take action,” he says. “That’s what I want people to do. I try to help them find their story and level up in life. I want to give them the cheat code for success.”

“By repeating the projects, I delivered some of my best speeches to date.”

—JEFFREY AZAN

As his talent for public speaking has grown, he has learned the power of vulnerability to connect with his audiences. Speaking to various-sized crowds, including sales teams, churches, social clubs, schools and government agencies, Azan draws on difficult life experiences for captivating stories. His speeches focus on topics such as his parents’ divorce, his turbulent relationship with his father and his failed businesses.

“The first time I spoke about my father and the relationship we had, I was speaking to a corporation about development,” says Azan. “The opening line was, ‘I’ve never shared with anyone what I’m about



Jeffrey Azan at his home in Kingston, Jamaica

to tell you. I hope it means as much to you as it does to me.' At the end, the person in charge told me, 'I wish every father in this organization was here today to hear your speech.' It's the stories nobody knows about you that nobody forgets when you share them."

As Azan speaks to crowds across Jamaica, a country with a high poverty rate, he is reminded of its great potential. "I want others to see the opportunity that I see for all Jamaicans," he says. "We often don't have the education or resources. I hope to prove to my audiences that they can succeed."

Always a Leader

After studying business at Boston University in the U.S., Azan returned home to help run his family's retail business, Azan's. He compares his family's store to a Jamaican version of Bed, Bath & Beyond, a popular home-goods chain found across North America. While he


helped run the family business, he also started several other businesses, including restaurants and beauty-supply stores.

"A cheat code requires people to make a decision and take action. That's what I want people to do. I try to help them find their story and level up in life."

—JEFFREY AZAN

In building these businesses, Azan repeatedly found himself becoming a coach and mentor to his employees. "I never trained my staff to be a salesperson, manager or server," he says. "I always trained people to be the best they could be. Every time they became a better person, they naturally became a better employee."

As Azan took pride in helping his employees grow, he began to question the direction of his own professional career. "I came to realize my natural talent for speaking," he says. "I was a motivator and speaker all along, I just didn't know the career existed."

Noting his own struggles and successes, Azan knows that there's inspiration to be found in each person's story. "It goes back to the fact that my story matters, your story matters," he says. "If we teach people how to communicate, how to be vulnerable and how to express their emotions, it can help them take the next step in their journey. That's why I point people to Toastmasters." 

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

Reframe Your Life in 5 Seconds

It's now or never: Stop procrastinating and leap into action with these productivity hacks.

BY DAVE ZIELINSKI

A devastating turn of life events inspired Mel Robbins to create a motivational concept that has helped millions of people stop procrastinating, leap into action and achieve goals that once seemed unattainable.

Robbins, one of the world's most popular motivational speakers, a best-selling author and a CNN commentator based in Boston, Massachusetts, was dealt a serious blow when the once-thriving restaurant business she and her husband had spent years building failed. For weeks, the then-41-year-old Robbins struggled to get out of bed in the morning, having lain awake each night consumed with worry about a potential bankruptcy. She felt immobilized by uncertainty about her family's future.

Robbins knew what she had to do to pull out of the tailspin but couldn't get herself to do it. The smallest things felt impossible. Exasperated by her own inaction, she hit upon an idea that would later blossom into a best-selling book and motivational concept: the 5-second rule. The essence of the rule is this: If you have an impulse to act on a goal, you must physically move within five seconds or your brain will kill the idea.

Spurred by a TV commercial she watched one night that showed a rocket launching, Robbins arose in her Boston bedroom the next morning and instead of yet again hitting the snooze button, she counted down five seconds and propelled herself from bed. She did it again and again over the coming days, discovering there was a brief window of time before her mind killed her positive thoughts.

Robbins used this simple-but-powerful concept to eventually pull out of her funk, create a successful new business, address her anxiety, get in shape and become a better mom to her children. Two years later, in 2011, she gave one of the most-viewed TEDx Talks of all time, "How to Stop Screwing Yourself Over," which served as a launching pad for her popular speaking and consulting business.

Don't Wait for Motivation to Strike

The desire to be more productive is ubiquitous in today's world. People are always looking for tricks and tips to avoid procrastination and maximize what they can accomplish each day. The 5-second rule doesn't make things easy, Robbins stresses, but it does make them happen. Robbins says people buy into a lie that they must *feel* ready to change or take action, whether that be a fundamental life change like she faced, or a smaller goal like pursuing a new education designation in Toastmasters. She says if you don't start doing the things that feel difficult or

“Using the 5-second rule can jumpstart your brain into action.” —MEL ROBBINS



PRODUCTIVITY

uncomfortable—if you simply wait around for motivation to strike—you’ll wake up a year from now in the same place.

“People have a tendency to believe that improving their productivity or efficiency has to include some big sweeping changes in their lives, but that’s not true,” Robbins said in an interview with the *Toastmaster*. “The 5-second rule is one example of how the simplest tool can make a big impact on your life.”

Robbins says neuroscientists have found that people have about a five-second gap between a stimulus and the way they typically respond to it. “It’s within this gap that you have the power to change your life,” she says. “When you decide to do something, count back 5-4-3-2-1, and immediately take action. The more you do that, the more your brain gets wired for action and the less you’ll fall victim to your mental resistance.”

The act of counting focuses you on the goal or commitment and distracts you from worries, thoughts and excuses in your mind, she says. Robbins has heard from many managers who’ve trained their sales teams to use the 5-second rule when making calls, from executives who’ve successfully used the rule to grow their businesses—often because they’re taking steps they had put off for years—from others who have used the rule to get over their fear of making presentations.

Productivity Hacks From Members

Many Toastmasters have developed their own versions of the 5-second rule, employing their own productivity “hacks” or methods for combating procrastination and accomplishing more of their goals while still maintaining work-life balance.

Mark Brown, who won the 1995 Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking, says making calendar entries has boosted his productivity. “I make appointments in my calendar to take care of important work tasks because if I don’t, I know I’ll be distracted by emails, phone calls or texts,” Brown says. “Setting aside and committing to a window of time to accomplish specific tasks is a deliberate and purposeful way to increase daily productivity.”

Brown, a member of Macon Toastmasters in Macon, Georgia, and a professional speaker, developed a concept called the “focus funnel” to help busy people use their time more effectively. Those successful at “multiplying” their time often follow this five-step process, Brown says:

Eliminate. Ask yourself: Is this task worth doing?

Automate. If so, can it be automated to save time? For example, consider using the Hootsuite app when making posts to social media sites.

“You can make one post to Hootsuite and it will automatically disseminate that post across all platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram,” says Brown

Delegate. Is someone else better equipped to handle it? Can you train others to do it?

If a task can’t be eliminated, automated or delegated, you must do it yourself, Brown says. The question then becomes whether it should be done now, or later.



“When you make a decision to do something, count back 5-4-3-2-1, and immediately take action.” —MEL ROBBINS

If it must be done now: Concentrate. Eliminate distractions like social media, email, text or phone calls—forward calls to voicemail or turn off phone apps and notifications—and focus on the task at hand.

If it can be done later: Procrastinate on purpose. It sounds counterintuitive, but Brown says there are times when procrastinating is a useful strategy. If a task doesn’t need to be done in the moment—if there is no obvious urgency—it can be moved back to the top of the focus funnel for further consideration.

Examples of procrastinating on purpose might be delaying responding to emails and setting a time later in the day to answer them in batches. Or putting a freeze on hiring new employees after an unexpected change in corporate leadership, Brown says.

Follow the Rules

Back to the 5-second rule. Robbins says it works because it can “jumpstart your brain into action.” Say you’re sitting in a meeting and have what you think is a great idea or piece of feedback. Yet instead of offering it to the group, you hesitate. Robbins says delaying for just that moment sends a stress signal to your brain. Rather than hesitating, consider counting down five seconds, trusting your impulse and offering the idea, she says.

It’s also not unusual to procrastinate before writing or rehearsing a speech, says Robbins, or before making a decision like starting the Pathways learning experience.

“We’re more likely to procrastinate when we’re feeling stress, because those moments that we put off what has to be done hit our brains with small amounts of dopamine that feel good,” Robbins says. “But that feeling is temporary and the more we put off what has to get done, the more stress we feel.”

Robbins suggests that Toastmasters first develop habits to manage their stress, such as exercise, putting away their phones or tablets for specified periods each day, taking short walks in nature and choosing a diet that fuels the body.

The 5-second rule also can be used for things like grabbing a healthful snack, holding your tongue instead of saying something derisive to colleagues or loved ones, finally sending that email to a potential client or anything related to your goals.

The Power of Setting Technology Limits

It's easy to think that the phones and tablets we tether to our bodies each day are indispensable engines of productivity and efficiency. But the opposite is true when we find ourselves mindlessly surfing social media or checking email deep into the night. Robbins and other experts say setting limits on technology use can increase energy, sharpen our focus and boost our daily work output.

"One of the most powerful changes I've made in my life is leaving my phone in my closet at night to recharge," Robbins says. "No more keeping the phone by the bed so I can scroll through social media or answer work emails before bed or first thing in the morning. I sleep so much better now and feel energized in the morning."

The 'Einstein Window' and 'Harmless' Procrastination

Bachir Bastien is a Toastmaster in Hsinchu City, Taiwan, who speaks and writes frequently on the topics of time management and productivity. He also is a contributor to the website www.Addicted2Success.com, a site that aims to empower and inspire people around the world.

Bastien's top ideas for improving daily productivity and performance include:

- ▶ **Know your "Einstein Window."** This is the time of the day when your mental ability peaks and you're most productive. Save your most important tasks for these windows, Bastien says. "Study your patterns and then allocate your most challenging work accordingly so you can get the most productivity from the least amount of time," he says.
- ▶ **Practice "harmless" procrastination.** Backing away from work for a bit can improve your focus, creativity and productivity later in the day, Bastien says. "This might be a walk outside of your office, 10 minutes of mindfulness or just checking in with another person, he says. "I think of this as harmless or goal-oriented procrastination because it allows you to recharge for the challenges ahead and helps you feel empowered."
- ▶ **Use accountability measures.** Within the NTHU Toastmasters club in Taiwan that he founded, Bastien created "learning groups" based on specific interests of club members. "Officers work with members to set goals for achieving education designations and other objectives, and serve as their accountability partners," Bastien says. "These small groups ensure that members who tend to stay quiet in the larger group have their needs and goals addressed."

All of us face challenges to accomplish goals both big and small. Using the 5-second rule, being more mindful about how we spend our time and knowing our own "Einstein Windows" can help us accomplish more of those goals without sacrificing a sense of well-being in the process. ■

Dave Zielinski is a freelance journalist and a frequent contributor to the Toastmaster.

ACCOUNTABILITY COUNTS

Conor Cunneen, a DTM and Accredited Speaker based in Chicago, works with organizations to improve their performance and productivity. He believes that one of the best ways for Toastmasters to achieve their goals is to create public accountability for fulfilling promises.

"Publish or make other people aware of what your goals are," says Cunneen, a former marketing executive at Unilever. "Even if those people don't ultimately hold you accountable for pursuing your goals, the mere act of telling others will give you more of a moral compulsion to achieve them."

When Cunneen speaks to Toastmasters clubs he often asks members how many have set clear goals for improving as speakers or leaders. Most hands



go up. He then asks how many have had difficulty making progress toward those goals.

"Almost all hands go up again," he says. "I encourage people to start creating public accountability such as putting their names down to give a speech in two weeks or telling others in their club they're pursuing a specific goal like an education designation."

Cunneen applies this concept to his own life as a keynote speaker. One way he seeks to add more humor to his presentations is by participating in open-mic nights at comedy clubs in the Chicago area. "I will regularly put my name down for certain nights, which commits me to having to develop new material," he says. "Publicizing the goal makes me accountable for accomplishing it."

—Dave Zielinski



The Path to Presentation Mastery

Educational projects help you become an accomplished speaker.

To become an accomplished public speaker, you must connect with your audience. The Presentation Mastery path, part of Toastmasters' Pathways education program, provides the techniques to do just that. It helps you write a persuasive speech, tell an engaging story, handle difficult audience members and generally become a better speaker.

Presentation Mastery is one of 11 paths in Pathways. Like all paths, it features five levels of progressive complexity, with a mix of required and elective projects. The early projects include foundational ones common to all paths, such as "Evaluation and Feedback" and "Introduction to Toastmasters Mentoring." You broaden your speaking skills in Level 3, with a project about persuasive speaking, and electives that cover a variety of topics including storytelling and social speeches (such as toasts, award-acceptance speeches and eulogies).

In Levels 4 and 5 projects, you apply your skills to real-world situations—for example, presenting a full-length keynote-style speech and choosing electives where you handle a question-and-answer session or moderate a panel discussion.

Roger Fung, DTM, says completing Presentation Mastery helped him professionally. A member of the Online Presenters club and three community clubs in Dallas, Texas, U.S., he is a freelance trainer and marketing consultant. Fung is also a stand-in preacher who used to be a full-time pastor. He says he used to spend 80–90 percent of his time focused on content when preparing his sermons.

"After completing the Presentation Mastery path, I now spend more time on how I'm going to connect with the audience," Fung says. "Now I think about content about 60 percent of the time. For the other 40 percent, I focus on who I'm talking to, how I will reach them and what possible questions or interruptions I will face—whether out loud or in the audience members' minds."

Raising the Ceiling

Fung joined Toastmasters in 2017 to build his skills and help him become a professional speaker. "I was relying on my natural talent whenever I spoke, but I didn't have any structure," he says. "I hit a ceiling with my abilities."

"Now I can recognize the different types of interruptions and have tools for what I can do to bring people back to my presentation."

—ROGER FUNG, DTM

He selected the Pathways Presentation Mastery path to take his skills to the next level. Fung was particularly excited about the Level 4 project "Managing a Difficult Audience." It teaches speakers how to calmly manage audience disruptions and defuse uncomfortable situations. "I've been in corporate settings when discussions became heated,

and people—because of their rank or passion—have interrupted," he says.

In this project, members are tasked by the Toastmaster or vice president education to serve in four specific disruptive roles throughout a speech. The roles include "The Interrupter" (constantly breaking in when someone else is talking), "The Chatterer" (the person who keeps making side comments to his neighbor) and "The Arguer" (the know-it-all type who insists he's always right). Although speakers know the different types of interruptions possible, they don't know who will be doing what or when it's coming. For example, one member kept constantly asking Fung questions.

Toastmasters isn't an environment where people typically interrupt, so Fung had never practiced dealing with disruptions. "Even though it was a role play, it was quite different from just reading or watching a video about it," he says. It was a challenging exercise but one that helped him, Fung adds. "Until I actually delivered that speech, it was all just theory. Now I can recognize the different types of interruptions and have tools for what I can do to bring people back to my presentation."

Strategies recommended to keep the Interrupter at bay include:

- ▶ Early in the session, tell participants you will address all their questions and comments at the end.
- ▶ Give a specific task to the disruptive audience member, such as recording other participants' responses from a brainstorming activity.

PRESENTATION MASTERY BY THE LEVELS



▶ Deliver Social Speeches

LEVEL 4:

- ▶ Managing a Difficult Audience
- ▶ Question-and-Answer Session

LEVEL 5:

- ▶ Prepare to Speak Professionally
- ▶ Moderate a Panel Discussion
- ▶ Reflect on Your Path

Becoming a Professional Speaker

M. Zain Ul Abidin, ACG, ALB, joined WrocLove Speakers in Wroclaw, Poland, in 2016 to improve his public speaking and become a professional speaker. He selected Presentation Mastery because of its focus.

He particularly appreciates the Level 5 “Prepare to Speak Professionally” project. “I thought it would be similar to the *Professional Speaker* manual in the Advanced Communication series and tell me what a keynote speech is,” he says. “But when I started reading, I was surprised. It goes beyond that ... and gives you great tips.”

The project stresses the importance of highlighting your area of expertise, whether it’s academic or professional, and crafting a message around your life experiences. It also helps you learn about audience demographics and how to market yourself as a professional-level speaker, including creating a website and networking with other speakers and potential clients.

The project helped Zain focus on longer speeches and taking a presentation to a bigger audience. “It’s exactly what I was looking for,” he says. Zain turned one speech into a workshop he presented at his division conference.

Building a Brand

The Level 4 “Write a Compelling Blog” elective (available in all paths) has also helped Zain advance toward his long-time goal of writing a blog. The project required eight posts over four weeks. He learned how to express himself through writing. “Speeches and blog posts are similar in that you have to have a message and a structure, and hold people’s attention,” he says. “But you can’t express yourself as clearly in writing as when you’re speaking.”

The more he wrote, the more he learned and improved. He plans to keep working on the blog. “Blogging is actually part of being a professional speaker,” he says. “It helps build your brand.”

Lisa Wright, DTM, from Confidence Builders Toastmasters in Riverside, California, also found an elective helpful for her business. Wright joined Toastmasters in 2015 to be a better speaker. “I’ve been a dietician for 20 years and, with so

The mix of projects across the five levels of Presentation Mastery helps you become an accomplished speaker and improves your connection with audience members.

LEVEL 1:

- ▶ Ice Breaker
- ▶ Evaluation and Feedback
- ▶ Researching and Presenting

LEVEL 2:

- ▶ Understanding Your Communication Style
- ▶ Effective Body Language
- ▶ Introduction to Toastmasters Mentoring

LEVEL 3:

- ▶ Persuasive Speaking
- ▶ Connect With Storytelling

much knowledge in my head, I tripped over my thoughts when people asked me a question,” she says. “I needed to think more logically, slow down and package my ideas better.”

She picked Presentation Mastery to help her interview and promote new business initiatives. The Level 4 “Building a Social Media Presence” elective motivated her to focus on her online brand and explore different aspects of social media. “The project gave me incentive to reach out of my comfort zone to connect with more people,” says Wright. “It led to different conversations about gardening and community connections.”

She had already launched her own Meetup group for gardeners and was able to expand it from 80 to almost 400 members because of the project. “So many doors have opened as a result of me applying the projects to growing my business,” she says.


Making an Impact

Even the foundational projects have been redesigned to help highly experienced speakers. Adolph Kaestner, DTM, from The Sages club in Johannesburg, South Africa, joined Toastmasters in 1983 and has given 11 Ice Breaker speeches. The path’s Ice Breaker gave him something different.

“As a professional speaker, I believe it’s important to continually hone one’s skills,” says Kaestner. “So I gave myself a personal challenge with this path: I would not do speeches. Every single project would be done as a presentation with some type of presentation tool.”

He changed his usual approach to Ice Breakers by incorporating graphics. “To do it as a presentation was a challenge,” he says. “But I found that the addition of visuals made a stronger impact on the audience.” Now when he gives talks at an organization, he includes pictures.

Once Kaestner finishes the path, he plans to complete all the electives. “There’s so much to offer in there,” he says. “I don’t want to miss out.”

“This is a really good path if you want to be a pro,” adds Zain. “It takes you on a journey and gives you everything you need to know.” 

Jennifer L. Blanck, DTM, is a member of Skyline Toastmasters in Denver, Colorado, and a regular contributor to the Toastmaster magazine.



ONLINE EXTRAS: Hear what members are saying about the Presentation Mastery path in an exclusive Toastmasters video.

Snack on exercise

How I
Prepared for

18 Make-or-Break Minutes

Behind the scenes
of a TEDx Talk.

BY LAUREN PARSONS

Your name is called. The audience applauds. You walk out onto the red dot, under blindingly bright lights, heart racing, about to deliver your first TEDx Talk.

That scene had been a dream of mine for years, and after hundreds of hours of preparation, it finally became real for me on September 14, 2018, at TEDxOneonta in New York. If you're a TED fan, you know how brilliant the talks are, and I wanted mine to be right up there with the best. Captivating, entertaining, thought-provoking and most of all, action-inspiring.

While my family and I were living in Ottawa, Canada, during my husband's military assignment, I searched for nearby TEDx events and found one in Oneonta, New York, that was near enough to drive and had a great theme—"Connection." After applying



through a video submission, I was accepted within a few weeks. I was so thrilled that my idea was deemed “worth sharing,” as TED explains, and I immediately set to work on the monumental task of crafting my talk, “Snack on Exercise: Boost Your Brain, Body and Mood.”

My Toastmasters training—along with help from several veteran Toastmaster members—played an instrumental role in helping my dream go live. If you dream of speaking from the red dot yourself, I hope my story offers practical advice as well as inspiration.

1 Start with the end in mind.

Preparing for a talk of this importance involved a roller coaster of emotions. Once the date was confirmed, I was locked in—hurtling toward the deadline—with no way to slow down. My mood frequently flipped between optimistic and excited to panicked and back again.

Feeling a bit overwhelmed, I realized I needed to start with the end in mind and picture the best possible outcome. I imagined standing on the red dot, saying my final words, hearing the crowd erupt into applause, and feeling proud and elated. After all,

neuroscience has proven we are more likely to achieve goals we have first envisioned.

For your next club speech or presentation at work, picture your success ahead of time. If you can, spend time in the room itself and practice your opening and closing lines so you’ll feel more confident when the moment comes to stand and deliver.

2 Stories are the star.

The biggest challenge in preparing for a TEDx Talk is the 18-minute time limit and figuring out what to *leave out*. I worked with my coach, Teri Kingston, DTM, and 17 iterations later, finalized the content. I ended up cutting many of the stats, stories and phrases I’d spent hours researching and crafting. Teri called this refining process “killing my darlings”—so painful are the cuts. Yet the omissions helped the core message come through. She gave me two key phrases: (1) “When you squeeze too much in, you squeeze the audience out,” and (2) “Show them, don’t tell them.”

The best way to “show” your audience is through stories. The human brain loves stories. They captivate our attention and allow us to draw striking analogies and connect on an emotional level,

STAGE TO ENGAGE

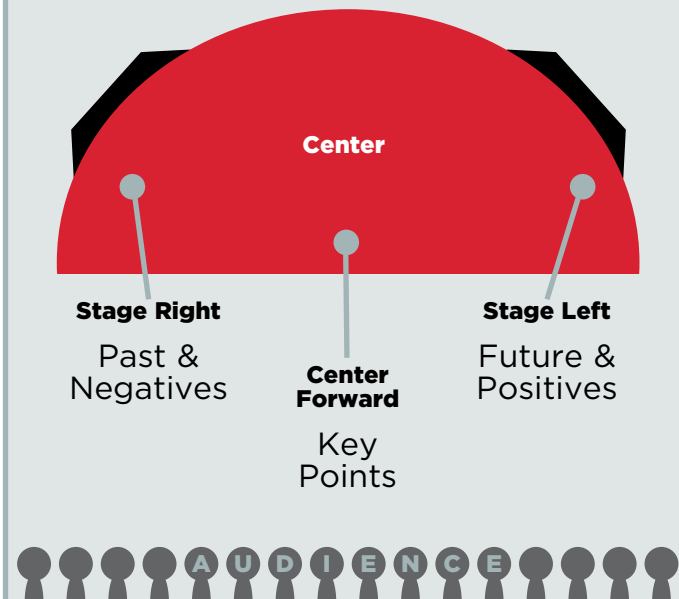
A successful presentation combines a harmonic blend of verbal and nonverbal communication. Movement matters, so don't forget to practice savvy stagecraft.

Purposeful movement and use of the stage allow your audience to follow your stories more easily. Avoid pacing. Instead, link each story to a different part of the stage and create movement almost as if you are creating three-dimensional hologram images.

Use the center and center forward stage for key messages. Use stage left for futuristic and positive statements; go stage right for negative comments and ones about the past.

This movement matches how many people tend to view time—in a linear fashion, from left to right—and helps integrate your comments into their brains. If you watch my talk, notice that I share information on the harmful effects of sitting, along with statistics and time-consuming research, from the right side of the stage. For positive stories and examples of time-saving research, I moved stage left.

Spatial planning also helps when memorizing a talk. Linking my words and my position onstage helped me remember the speech sequencing and avoid losing my train of thought. As I walked to each new spot, the words followed.



which is why stories often become the most memorable part of any presentation. Without stories we are left with facts, figures and statements. If you watch my talk, you might notice the seven different stories I included (some only 15 seconds long) to help bring the topic to life.

Whenever you speak—whether in a small meeting, to a large group or one on one—convey your message by telling a concise, compelling story. Try opening your next speech with one and see how it unfolds.

3 What's in it for the audience?

Above all else, presentations must benefit the *listeners*. If there's no “what's in it for me” factor, they will quickly lose interest. To reinforce the idea, speak as if you are talking to each individual person in the audience. Use “you” statements rather than “we” statements, which dilute the impact. I changed several “What if we ...” lines to “What if you ...” lines, because “you” statements call people to action on a personal level.

“When we face high-stakes situations, having familiar routines in place beforehand is vital to improving performance.”

In one of Nancy Duarte's TED presentations, “The Secret Structure of Great Talks,” she describes a formula for a phenomenal presentation. The acclaimed presentation designer recommends connecting the audience to the status quo, then flipping back and forth, contrasting the present struggles to the benefits of a new status quo and finishing with the ideal outcome or “new bliss,” as she puts it.

I aimed to follow her formula, contrasting the benefits of snacking on exercise with the downsides of a sedentary life and finished with my dream of shifting social norms. My goal was to inspire curiosity and persuade people to try my suggestions.

By creating an audience-centric message, your impact will be greater than if you simply talk about what *you* want to share. Decide how you want people to feel and what you want them to do differently after your talk, then structure your message with that in mind.

4 Feedback fosters growth.

Three weeks before TEDx day, I delivered what I *thought* was a good version of my talk to several small Toastmasters groups. Their insightful feedback helped immensely to elevate my presentation.

For example, Craig Senior, DTM, made me aware of a bad habit that I was oblivious to—leaning forward and speaking with a breathy voice. I realized that I tended to lean forward in an effort to connect with the audience. Yet this rounded-shoulder posture constrained the way I spoke, preventing me from projecting my voice properly. Craig lent me a fantastic book called *Voice Power* by Joan Kenley, and I used her breathing exercises and “body-speak” technique to correct the habit.

Often, we don't know what we don't know. Feedback from a skilled coach or mentor is essential to seeing and then mending bad habits. The more open to feedback you are, the more you will grow.

5 Preparation pays off.

There is absolutely no substitute for practice. In the final weeks, I recorded and reviewed my delivery almost daily. I wore my full outfit, used a countdown timer and clicked through my slides so that everything was as close to “the real thing” as possible.

Frank Schilder, DTM, taught me to watch videos of my speech in three distinct ways: with sound, without sound and listening to the audio only. This helped me focus on and improve each aspect of my verbal and nonverbal communication.

I also delivered the talk live to four Toastmasters clubs, which gave me a feel for the laughter points and the timing of the audience-interactive parts of my speech. When the actual event arrived, my talk felt so natural that I was able to deliver it virtually word for word.

Practice, along with video feedback, will give you the confidence to deliver a stellar talk on the day.

6 Routines rule.

When we face high-stakes situations, putting familiar routines in place *beforehand* is vital to improving performance. Like an Olympic athlete using a routine to center themselves before walking to the starting line, I focused on my mental preparation. On the day of my talk, I walked in nature and took a recharge nap. I arrived at the venue three hours early, allowing plenty of time for a final tech check.

I put on a calming essential oil, drank “throat rescue” tea and listened to my favorite Ed Sheeran songs while doing my makeup. These familiar routines kept me calm and centered, despite my flowing adrenaline. In the final few minutes backstage, I practiced the “power poses” advocated by psychologist and TED speaker Amy Cuddy. I breathed diaphragmatically and reminded myself to pause.

Before I knew it, I was delivering my first line. Right out of the gate, the crowd was wonderful—beautifully engaged and quick to laugh. It was an exhilarating experience. After my final words, I walked backstage on shaky legs and burst into tears, overcome with a huge sense of relief. I had done it! All without fainting, going blank or falling off the stage.

7 Just be you.

While preparation is vital, the biggest challenge with memorizing an entire speech is not to sound stilted or dry. Moments before stepping out onstage I reminded myself to be present, to connect with the audience and to have fun! As leadership expert



Brené Brown says, it's our vulnerability and authenticity that truly allow us to connect. “Strong back, soft front.” In other words, always let people see the real you.

During my TEDx Talk, I shared my story of being diagnosed with gestational diabetes while carrying my third child. Sharing this personal and painful story about the moment that led to my own health crusade that would later inspire this very talk almost made me break into tears—the pain of the memory was so vivid. Unexpected as my emotional reaction was, it enhanced my message in the moment. Many parents in the audience told me later how impactful that story was for them.

On the day of my talk, the most important thing I did was be authentic and share my message with all the passion I could muster. That is all we can ever do.

What about you? Perhaps, as a Toastmaster and speaker, you envision yourself on the TED stage one day. If you love a good challenge, have a great idea and are prepared to work, you can absolutely make that dream come true. All you need is determination, help from fellow Toastmasters and the passion to keep pursuing the best talk you can possibly give.

To watch Lauren Parsons' TEDx Talk in its entirety, visit bit.ly/TI_LP1. 

Lauren Parsons, CC, CL, has been a Toastmaster since 2014 and currently lives in Palmerston North, New Zealand. She is a well-being specialist who equips and inspires people to boost their health and happiness, for life. Learn more at www.laurenparsons.co.nz.

The Power of Taking Risks

Raise the stakes for yourself and get out of your comfort zone.

BY MEGAN PRESTON MEYER

Remember your Ice Breaker? I sure remember mine. My throat was dry and my face was burning; I felt like I'd been stranded in the desert for a week. The sheet of notes I was holding amplified the shaking in my hands until it looked like I was waving a white flag. I felt like I was taking a huge risk by standing there, speaking in front of everyone while my body clearly wanted me to surrender.

Fast-forward two years: I had given countless more speeches, served as club president and vice president education, and could speak in front of my club without batting an eye or breaking a sweat. I had this public speaking thing down.

Or so I thought.

The Spring Speech Contest was coming up, and I decided to compete. My speech was great, and I felt confident. The view from my cozy little perch in the center of my comfort zone was rosy. The club and area contests were a breeze—I took first place in both. There was no telling how far I'd go.

But then, when my name and speech title (and then speech title and name) were announced at the division contest, my shaking legs could barely carry me to the front of the room. My voice lacked the force and energy needed to convey my message, and my jokes fell flat.

Looking out on that sea of faces I didn't recognize, speaking in a situation where the stakes were high, I felt like I was giving my Ice Breaker all over again. The comfort zone I had built up by speaking to my own club didn't extend nearly as far as I thought it would—and I didn't realize I was breaching its borders until it was too late.

That's the danger of comfort zones; once they've grown a little bit, you lose track of their limits. It's not like there's a road sign (*Caution: Comfort Zone Ends in 1,000 Meters, Be Prepared to Stop*). If you're not looking out for the edge, you'll hurtle right over it, Thelma-and-Louise style, and then you *will* notice.

“Keep patrolling the perimeter of your comfort zone, taking short scouting trips to the outside.”

I'd recommend a more controlled approach to keeping track of your comfort zone, especially if you've already mastered the initial anxiety of public speaking. Make it a habit to toe the line, stepping outside, bit by bit, on a regular basis. You can admire your expanded comfort zone, be proud of its vastness—just don't get too cozy.

Increase the Risk

Part of the reason that comfort zones are so, well, *comfortable* is that you perceive your risk of catastrophic failure to be low. However, we need a bit of anxiety to perform optimally. A quick way to get outside of your comfort zone, then, is to add more risk, either by increasing the chance of failure (i.e., making it harder) or increasing the *cost* of failure (i.e., raising the stakes). Here are a handful of tips to help.

1 Change Up Your Audience

It's the *public* in “public speaking” that most people fear; we're afraid of what the

audience will think of us. But if you speak to the same group of people every time—your fellow club members—you can build up a tolerance quickly.

Find a different audience by arranging an exchange with another club in your area or division. Use the Find a Club tool on www.toastmasters.org to locate another club nearby. Sometimes all it takes is a different set of faces staring back at you to bring back those butterflies.

2 BYOE: Bring Your Own Expert

If no one can question your expertise, no one can drag you out of your comfort zone. Say you're using your club speech slot to practice a presentation for work, laying out the cost-benefit analysis on the make-or-buy decision for a new inventory management platform. It's easy to feel confident when you're the only person in the room who has any idea what you're talking about.

Or maybe you are one of the most senior members of the club, and the junior members are reluctant—or unable—to give you useful feedback about your presentation style because they simply don't have the experience that you have.

If you don't have any experts in your club, bring your own. Invite your colleagues—or your boss. Or invite an even more seasoned Toastmaster or speaker whom you admire. You need people who can judge you critically so you can grow and improve.

3 Go Multilingual

Do you speak a second language? Toastmasters clubs operate in many

different languages and have members who are native speakers of even more.

Find a club or an evaluator who speaks your non-native tongue—or even your native language, if you’re used to speaking in a different one—and then give your next speech in Spanish or try presenting in Polish. The added complexity of operating in a different language than you’re used to will push you right out of your comfort zone.

“Use the structure and support that Toastmasters provides to take bigger and bolder risks; remember, it’s a safety net, not a hammock.”

4 Change Up Your Preparation Style

If you are the type who carefully plans out and practices your speech several times, make a conscious decision to wing it. Conversely, if you typically play it more fast and loose, commit to outlining, practicing and preparing—and have your evaluator hold you accountable for doing so. If you typically don’t use visual aids, add some slides; if you typically *do* use visual aids, go blind. Figure out your usual crutches, and then kick them out from underneath yourself.

5 Face the Consequences

The beautiful thing about the Toastmasters model is that it allows us to practice, learn and improve in a supportive, low-risk environment. But practice is a means to an end, not an end in itself; it’s preparation for the main event.

So find the main event. Maybe it’s a speech contest, a TEDx Talk or a keynote speech. Maybe it’s a new path in Pathways or a presentation at the next all-company or town hall meeting; or maybe it’s a

workshop at a conference in your industry. Whatever it is, make sure it’s an event where performance matters and where failure has consequences. After all, this is what you’ve been practicing for.

Once you’ve overcome the initial anxiety of public speaking, don’t let yourself get too comfortable. Use the structure and support that Toastmasters provides to take bigger and bolder risks; remember, it’s a safety net, not a hammock. Keep

patrolling the perimeter of your comfort zone, taking short scouting trips to the outside. Find ways to make public speaking harder or to raise the stakes, so that you—and your comfort zone—continue to grow. **T**

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

MIX UP YOUR MEETING

Club officers can adapt meetings with these ideas to stretch members’ abilities.

Assign a ‘Simon Cowell’

We should always be giving constructive evaluations, but sometimes our Strength-Opportunity-Strength feedback sandwiches get a little light on the filling, especially when less-experienced members evaluate more-experienced members. Take a page from the reality TV playbook and assign a Simon Cowell of the meeting, an evaluator whose sole job it is to give blunt, honest, actionable feedback.

Not only will this push the speakers out of their established routines (knowing that someone is looking for every minor flaw is enough to make anyone uncomfortable), but it will help the evaluator move past the safe, easy “You-did-such-a-great-job-I-can’t-think-of-anything-you-could-improve-upon” trap. Plus, it’s fun!

Introduce Wild Cards

Even the most seasoned speakers can get thrown off their game when things go wrong. Re-create



that “Oh, no, what’s going on?” feeling by introducing a Wild Card feature for speakers (opt-in only, of course).

Once they’ve agreed to the Wild Card, let them start their speech, but then throw a wrench into it. Brainstorm a list of hiccups, for example:

- ▶ Unplugging the projector halfway through so the speaker must carry on without visual aids
- ▶ Loudly walking in and out of the room to create some disruption
- ▶ Cutting—or extending—the time limit to see how adroitly the speaker can adapt

Then see which of your members are brave enough to roll with the punches. And don’t forget to lead by example—draw the first Wild Card yourself!

Talk With Your Hands!

5 ways to incorporate effective gestures.

BY DIANE WINDINGLAND, DTM

Do you remember learning gestures to a rhyme or song as a child, to help you remember the words? Children recall words much better when meaningful gestures are paired with words. But using gestures as a mnemonic device isn't just for children! Using gestures when speaking isn't just a way to engage your audience and help them remember your content, either. Gestures help you, the speaker, learn, remember and articulate your speech.

Numerous studies have shown that using gestures can help people both encode memories and retrieve them. Research suggests that gesturing may free up working memory resources for speaking.

Two Types of Gestures

There are two main types of gestures: *beat gestures* (simple, non-meaningful movements produced with the rhythm of the speech, such as a hand flip with an open palm) and *iconic gestures* (meaningful gestures, like a wave meant as a hello). For adults, both types of gestures aid recall.

Spontaneous, unplanned beat gestures can enhance your language production, facilitating more articulate speech. This may explain why so many people gesture while speaking on the phone. It's obviously not for the benefit of the person on the other end! Spontaneous gestures may also help you access the elusive "tip-of-the-tongue" words and memories. Gesturing seems to help pull the thought from your memory.

Meaningful, iconic gestures are what most people think of when they think of gesturing, or body language. The list of iconic gestures is long but includes the thumbs-up and the OK sign, for example. A word of caution about cross-cultural gesturing: Check the meaning of your gestures when speaking in a different culture. For example, the thumbs-up gesture, used

in many countries to signify a job well done, is considered childish or obscene in other countries. The appropriate frequency, magnitude and type of gesture may also change depending on the culture or situation. The theatrical gestures of a winning contest speech may be inappropriate in a business presentation.

“Research suggests that gesturing may free up working memory resources for speaking.”

When creating your speeches, look for opportunities to incorporate iconic gestures to help you and your audience remember your content.

Here are some ways to incorporate gesturing into your presentations as a memory device:

- 1 Train yourself to gesture more.** Prod yourself in your speech notes to gesture, either with specific, meaningful gestures or planned, “spontaneous” gestures. This will seem awkward at first, but you don't have to add all the gestures you try to your repertoire.
- 2 Learn from the pros.** Watch a few World Championship of Public Speaking speeches or popular speeches online, focusing specifically on the speakers' body language. Get some new ideas to try.
- 3 Create a gesture for each main point.** Experiment with having a specific gesture for each of your speech points. See for yourself if doing so helps with recall.
- 4 Observe yourself in action.** Record yourself practicing and watch for what



looks natural and what doesn't. Gestures, even if planned, must flow naturally as you speak. If you script and choreograph your gestures too much, you may forget your speech and look or sound unnatural. Conversely, some spontaneous gestures may be too repetitive, such as continually slicing the air. Keep in mind that you may need to adjust the size/type of gestures to the audience or venue size (bigger audiences need bigger gestures).

5 Have a dress rehearsal. Practice your speech as you plan to give it, including all gestures you hope to use during your presentation. The words and the movements will be encoded in your memory, making recall easier.

Gesture for your audience and for yourself. Your body language can not only help your audience understand and remember your message; it can also help you remember your content and speak more fluently.

Go ahead, talk with your hands! **T**

Diane Windingland, DTM, is a presentation coach from St. Paul, Minnesota, and a member of two clubs: PowerTalk Toastmasters and Readership Toastmasters. Learn more at www.virtualspeechcoach.com.



ONLINE EXTRAS: Watch a video to learn additional tips on using gestures in your speech.



The Care and Treatment of Guests

Great first impressions lead to future members.

BY BILL BROWN, DTM

March is a good time during the Toastmasters year to review how you and your club are doing and set new goals. A good place to start is the way we welcome guests—a topic that's important to every club. Guests can become new members if the right steps are taken. What is your club's process for welcoming guests? Can it be improved?

Many guests find a club by visiting www.toastmasters.org and searching the "Find a Club" section. Make sure your club's information is accurate. Is your meeting address correct? Are the right meeting dates listed? Giving guests wrong information before they visit makes a dismal first impression. When I am searching for a club, I want to look at its website. If your "Find a Club" listing doesn't already link to your club website, be sure to add it.

Now let's look at the meeting itself. I asked members about how their club manages guests' experiences. Most clubs do a good job of greeting guests before the meeting begins. These clubs go one step further. Clement Pepe in Southern California says, "Guests at Challengers Toastmasters club are greeted by as many members as possible, and we seat them with an experienced member to guide them through the meeting."

At the Riverside Breakfast club in California, "the member sitting next to a guest is expected to introduce the guest to the club, so they make sure to get some pertinent details," says Roxann Andersen.

Powerhouse Pros in Las Vegas meets in a separate room of a restaurant, and members gather for dinner in the main room before the meeting. If a guest comes early, club members ask the person to

join them for dinner, says club member Melanie Hope.

Most clubs, although not all, have some sort of guest packet. The contents vary, but many include a membership application, the *Toastmaster* magazine, information explaining the organization and, sometimes, details on the Pathways learning experience. At the Ahead of the Curve club in Las Vegas, Vice President Membership Gail Swift gives guests a choice between a hard copy and an email version of the packet. She says that 90 percent of guests opt for the email.

"Giving guests wrong information before they visit makes a dismal first impression."

All the members I talked to say their clubs introduce guests at the beginning of the meeting. Some clubs also give the guest a name tag or tent card with their name on it. Some just verbally acknowledge the guest, while others ask them to stand, introduce themselves and tell why they came.

Jackpot Speakers in Las Vegas adds a little humor to the introduction. Dianne Hunter says, "After all the introductions, the president says, 'Don't be afraid that we'll ask you to join,' and all members say, 'We will!'"

Elaine Lung of Silicon Valley Storytellers in San Jose, California, shares a key point about guest introductions. Keep them short. "It's important to keep this part of the meeting fast, so that the meeting maintains momentum and you don't let the energy dissipate."

Approaches to Table Topics vary. Many clubs give the guest a choice of whether to participate. The Challengers club in Irvine, California, offers guests a choice—answer a Table Topics question or tell the group about themselves. Reg Boaler in Vancouver, British Columbia, has a different viewpoint. He believes only club members should be asked to participate in Table Topics. Watching the members do this activity "whets the appetite of the guest who is seeing that Table Topics can be a fun and lively experience, and encourages them to sign up as a member," he explains.

I can see the benefits of each approach, although I personally prefer the Challengers model: Let the guests decide whether to participate in Table Topics or talk about themselves.

There is much to consider when it comes to making a good first impression on guests. If your club has a unique practice you think would transfer well to other clubs, we'd love to hear about it. (Email submissions@toastmasters.org.) Let's put our heads together to make each Toastmasters meeting a memorable experience for each of our guests. **T**

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



ONLINE EXTRAS: Listen to an audio recording by the author for extra strategies on making a good first impression on guests.



To Do or Not to Do

Why put off until tomorrow what you can do today? Glad you asked.

BY JOHN CADLEY

When my editors asked for a column on procrastination, I said, “I have a great idea! I won’t write the column! Instead, just leave this space blank with a little editor’s note that says, *Mr. Cadley was going to write about procrastination, but he procrastinated too long.* It’ll be hilarious!”

Their reply was, “Very funny.” I said, “Thank you.” Then they said, “Tell us what—you give us a column with no words and we’ll pay you for it with no money.” That’s when I realized “very funny” didn’t mean very funny.

So I’m writing the column. The good news is, procrastinators are not to blame. Humans are preprogrammed to procrastinate! It starts with the limbic system, one of the brain’s oldest and most dominant structures, which tells us to avoid unpleasant tasks (*Do I really want to fight that woolly mammoth?*). The prefrontal cortex, on the other hand—the part that tells us to plan and act decisively—is newer and weaker. So every time we start to do something, there’s a big, mean bully in our brains trying to stop us. I told this to my editors, too, and they said, “Very funny.”

The people who study procrastination (Do their meetings start on time? I wonder ...) say there are three types of procrastinators. First, the thrill-seekers—people who get an adrenaline rush from waiting until the last second to get something done. (*If I jump out of the plane and wait till the last second to open my parachute, it will be SO much more exciting.*) Then there are the perfectionists who are paralyzed by the

possibility of failure. (*People will hate me. Worse, they’ll unfriend me.*) Finally, there are the poor indecisives who ask, *Should I or shouldn’t I?* until their ship sails and the question becomes purely academic.

“I just don’t like doing stuff that’s a pain in the neck. Does anybody?”

I don’t fit any of those categories. I just don’t like doing stuff that’s a pain in the neck. Does anybody? (Actually, some do. We’ll get to them later.) Look at Leonardo da Vinci. Many of his paintings remain unfinished because he kept avoiding the work. One he did finish—the vaunted *Mona Lisa*—took him four years, and then only after the guy who commissioned it said, “OK, forget the full-length portrait and just do the top half.” Or what about the author Victor Hugo, who instructed his manservant to strip him bare until he started writing? Think of that the next time you read *Les Misérables*. A lot of those words were written by a naked guy.

Of course, there are plenty of “cures” for procrastination, presumably designed by people who are *not* procrastinators, so how would they know? One is called “temptation bundling” (Lord, help us), where you accomplish a long-term goal by pairing it with some form of immediate gratification. An example would be reading a magazine (enjoyment now) while running on the treadmill at the gym (future health). I

wouldn’t do that. I tend to get engrossed in my reading. I would stop running to ponder a sentence and get catapulted into the rowing machines. Or you can break down the dreaded task into small, manageable chunks—which to my mind just means that now you’ve got several dirty jobs to do instead of one.

The truth is, I don’t really see procrastination as such a bad thing. It’s certainly better than *pre*crastination. That’s an actual word describing actual people—the ones who crave the feeling of accomplishment so badly they do things *before* they need to be done. If you want to finish your Christmas shopping in July or file your taxes three months early, fine. But then stop! Don’t keep looking for more things to do just so your endorphins can jump up and down. Don’t clean the garage. Garages are supposed to be messy. Don’t make a wardrobe grid for what you’ll wear each day of your vacation. It could rain on the day you planned for beach clothes and they’ll have to call the hotel doctor to give you a sedative.

Finally, be considerate of others. My editors know I’m a procrastinator. If I submitted this column a week early, they’d think they were hallucinating. So I made sure it was three days late and I know they really appreciate it. **T**

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