

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | SEPTEMBER 2019

# TOASTMASTER<sup>®</sup>

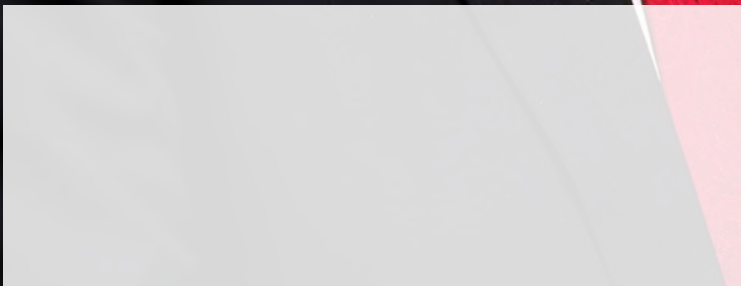
Meet  
**Deepak  
Menon,**  
DTM

2019-2020  
International  
President

**Infuse Your Club  
With Creativity:**

How to spice up  
lackluster meetings

**The Visual Power  
of PowerPoint**



# First Impressions

**Y**ou are nervous and tense, wondering how you will be received. You have no idea what will happen over the next hour or so. You have heard stories: some good, others not so good. Yes, you are a guest about to walk into your first Toastmasters meeting experience!

As guests, each of us formed a first impression—good, bad or ugly. If you are reading this message, you likely formed a good first impression, as I did during my first meeting 17 years ago. But what about those who did not? Did they give Toastmasters another chance? Or did they decide never to visit a club meeting again?

During my recent visit to Melaka, Malaysia, a veteran Toastmaster shared his first meeting experience with me. It was so bad it took him two years to attend another meeting, and that was only because someone he trusted made him come along. Fortunately, the second time was better; he joined. In fact, he flourished and years later, served as a district governor.

At my first meeting, people were friendly, the meeting was professional and I discovered things about myself that I wanted to improve and had been oblivious to until then. I joined before I left the meeting that evening!

What shapes that first impression? Have you considered what your guests think of you when they walk through that door? Have they started to form an impression even before then?

When someone decides to find out more about Toastmasters, they usually search the club listings on the Toastmasters website and then call or send you an email. An impression starts to form as soon as they receive, or do not receive, an answer. A welcoming conversation makes people want to visit your club. An email that goes unanswered due to outdated contact details on the website can turn someone away forever.

A positive first impression starts with an easy-to-find venue and signage for directions to the room, accompanied by a person with a welcoming, warm smile at the door. It continues when an experienced member sits with the guest and explains the meeting, demystifying the “strange” rituals we practice, such as applauding and “ah-counting”! A professionally conducted meeting that is relaxing and fun is also appealing. My home club invariably conducts a guest orientation and offers an invitation to join at the end of each meeting. Each guest leaves with information and a new-member form. Most of them return as members.

It is never too late to take stock of your guests’ experiences and find out if your offering leads to the best first impression. You can start making positive changes immediately to make sure every guest feels comfortable and welcomed. Make them eager to join your club right away. It’s the first step in having a robust and active club.

**Deepak Menon, DTM**  
International President



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Since 1924, Toastmasters International has been recognized as the leading organization dedicated to communication and leadership skill development. Through its worldwide network of clubs, each week Toastmasters helps more than a quarter-million men and women of every ethnicity, education level and profession build their competence in communication so they can gain the confidence to lead others.

#### Toastmasters International Mission:

We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.



**WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE**  
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## Club Members Show Their Toastmasters Spirit During Meetings



Members of Big "D" Toastmasters in Dallas, Texas, gather for the club's 70th anniversary. District 50 leaders and former club members attended the event, which featured speakers, a raffle and networking opportunities.



Members of Achievers Toastmasters club in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, walk the red carpet in celebration of their club's 300th meeting.



GE Markham Toastmasters in Markham, Ontario, Canada, commemorate the club's fifth anniversary with guests and the original club sponsors.



**Send your fun club photos to [photos@toastmasters.org](mailto:photos@toastmasters.org).** Include a description and your club name, number and location. Photos must be in jpeg format with a resolution of at least 300 dpi (dots per inch) and size of at least 1 MB (megabyte). Out-of-focus images cannot be accepted. It is not necessary to include the Toastmaster magazine or other branded materials in your photos, but if Toastmasters materials are displayed, they must reflect the current brand.

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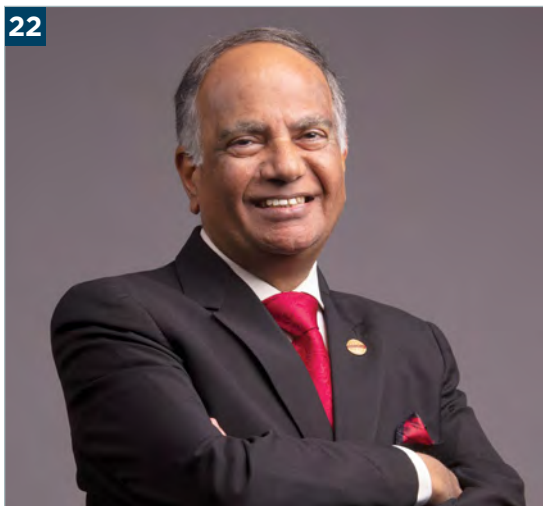
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## About Toastmasters International

Toastmasters International is a nonprofit educational organization teaching public speaking and leadership skills through a worldwide network of clubs. Membership exceeds 357,000 in more than 16,600 clubs in 143 countries.

Find out more at [www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org).



Improve public speaking skills



Build leadership skills



Maximize your potential

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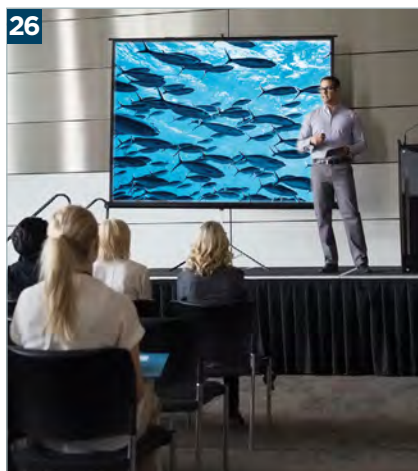
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**FIND MORE ONLINE THIS MONTH:** You are no longer required to log in to view the current issue, so sharing is easy!



## Meet Deepak Menon, DTM

Want to learn more about the new president of Toastmasters International? Go online to view additional photos of New Delhi native Deepak Menon and get the inside scoop on how to excel as a Toastmaster.



### Command with Confidence

Commanding the attention of a room requires having confidence in yourself. Watch a video to learn how to convey poise in front of a crowd and hear from Victoria McQuarrie, who gained confidence in her voice since joining Toastmasters.

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## What's Your Meeting Theme?



Listen to an audio recording by Toastmasters Toolbox author Bill Brown, DTM, on how themes can add a spark to club meetings.

### WEB RESOURCE



## Find an Accredited Speaker

Access the newly updated Accredited Speaker pages on the Toastmasters International website to learn about this program. While you're there, browse the profiles of active Accredited Speakers to find a professional speaker for your next conference or event.

[www.toastmasters.org/Accredited-Speaker](http://www.toastmasters.org/Accredited-Speaker)



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## ▶ CLUB PROFILE



## Finnish Club Supports Mothers in Business

Achievement, cheers and childcare mesh seamlessly for these Helsinki Toastmasters.

Finland, along with other Nordic nations, is often recognized for providing generous benefits for women in the workplace.

So it's not surprising that an energetic, career-minded group of Helsinki women chartered Mothers in Business Toastmasters several years ago. The club is affiliated with Mothers in Business, a national Finnish organization committed to advancing the professional and personal success of women.

The club, one of five in Helsinki, the nation's capital, meets two evenings a month and is structured like clubs all over the world—with one possible exception. To accommodate the special needs of its members, MiB allows them to bring their children to meetings. This unconventional arrangement makes it easy for women to participate without worrying about childcare or canceling if childcare arrangements fall through.

As a country, Finland has a family-friendly culture, which dovetails with the club's speaking and leadership development goals, says Anna Saura, a communication professional and mother of two. A Toastmasters hallmark—supportive peers—is especially valuable to MiB members, she adds.

"Making the time to develop new capabilities, stay current professionally and practice speaking skills are important to all of us," Saura says. "It's not always easy for women with small children to enjoy educational pursuits like Toastmasters. Yet in our club, everyone understands the demands of family and a career. We root for each other to maximize all our talents and life goals."

Initially, the women were uncertain about the Toastmasters club model, notes Emma Tullila, an entrepreneur, mother of a 5-year-old and the mastermind behind MiB.

"I had heard about Toastmasters but found it a bit intimidating at first," she says. "Once I attended a few club meetings, I realized the power of the concept and how well it fits the needs of mothers who are in, or are returning to, the workforce." Finnish women have the option of a three-year maternity leave. Many take less time, but whatever their choice, an opportunity like MiB allows women to stay current with their professional skills and connections.

"Sometimes professional women have been reluctant to let their personalities show through in business interactions," Saura notes. "They may think they have to be extra serious to be taken seriously. In Toastmasters, we learned to relax and be ourselves."



**FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:** *Working Toastmasters mothers: Riikka Linna, Anna Saura (and baby Elias), Hanna-Kaisa Sihvo, Camilla Lindholm and Kati Korhonen.*

MiB members have learned to apply Toastmasters training to a variety of professional pursuits. "One member recently defended her doctoral thesis and used Toastmasters meetings to practice talking in front of the audience," Saura says.

She adds, "I have gained loads of confidence in my job, training corporate executives to become better communicators. If you train others, you must also train yourself! For me, Toastmasters has sparked a greater interest in public speaking. I'm even studying neuropsychology in my free time to understand different communications styles."

Club members say having children at meetings has helped speakers practice managing unplanned distractions. "Children aren't at every meeting, but if they're here, we're sometimes interrupted by some tears or little feet running around, but we're so used to it we barely notice," Saura says. "I myself have given several speeches with my two small kids attending. It's great practice!"

"However, it's important to have a variety of snacks available," she adds with a laugh.

Another benefit of having children at club meetings? They just might be Toastmasters in the making. "Who knows, we might have a whole generation of Toastmaster babies and toddlers growing up in the most northern corner of Europe," notes Saura. "Once they learn to speak, they will do it with precision, energy and, of course, keep to the specified time limit."

**Stephanie Darling** is magazine team supervisor for the *Toastmaster magazine*.

## QUICK TAKES

### ▶ MEET MY MENTOR



## Faisal Lee: Lessons From 'Mr. Everywhere'

Thiago Oliveira Marinho credits his mentor's energy and attitude.

Thiago Oliveira Marinho joined Toastmasters to gain confidence in public speaking, but he gained so much more when Faisal Lee offered to become his mentor.

Thiago was looking for an English-speaking Toastmasters club in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. As a Ph.D. student, he wanted to polish his English skills so he could comfortably present in front of technical experts. When he found the Rio Gringo club, he joined immediately.

Faisal joined the club a few months later, after moving to Brazil from Malaysia. Faisal quickly became well-known for his friendly and approachable personality and has earned the club nickname "Mr. Everywhere" because of his habit of taking a selfie with every member he meets outside the club and posting it to social media.

After seeing Thiago's Ice Breaker speech, Faisal—now the club president and program quality director for District 111—invited Thiago to enroll in the Pathways education program. A few meetings later, Faisal offered to serve as a mentor.

#### What do you admire most about Faisal?

I admire him obviously because he is an excellent speaker. But also, because as a foreigner in Brazil, he learned our language and knows about our culture. He has this great sense of humor and is a very easygoing. He has fully adapted and integrated into a very different society. To me, this is a tremendous and admirable skill.

#### How has Faisal influenced your Toastmasters experience and your club?

Faisal is dedicated; he is someone who reads the manuals and magazines, understands the Pathways program and applies it all in life. He is the combined effect of "leadership plus speaking skills,"



Faisal Lee and Thiago Oliveira Marinho

and this is a great source of inspiration. He has taught me the power of smiling and positivity. He masters this at our meetings with his positive attitude, good energy and complete engagement.

#### What do you hope to accomplish with Faisal's help?

I expect to grow as a professional speaker but also ultimately as a human being with a purpose. Sometimes you just need a reference and guidance, someone with a positive attitude and good energy that you can learn from by observation. Being close to someone like him is a privilege.

Laura Amann is associate editor for the *Toastmaster magazine*.

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

#### LOOKING FOR A MENTOR IN YOUR CLUB?

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

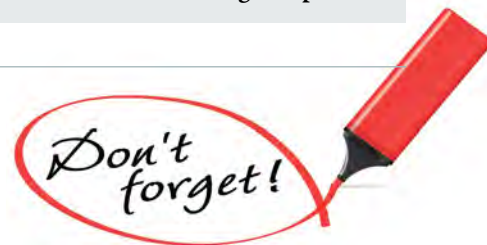
### ▶ NEWS FROM TI

## Remember to Renew Your Dues

To ensure your club is in good standing and receives credit for the Distinguished Club Program, log in to Club Central and process member dues on or before October 1. Per Policy 2.0: Club and Membership Eligibility: The minimum renewal requirement is eight paid members—at least three of whom were members of the club during the previous renewal period. Don't forget:

Officers who haven't paid their dues lose access to Club Central 30 days after their membership expires.

For questions, please contact the Club Quality and Member Support team at [renewals@toastmasters.org](mailto:renewals@toastmasters.org) or call +1 720-439-5050 between 6 a.m. and 7 p.m. Mountain Time, Monday through Friday.





▶ **SNAPSHOT**

Members of the Daffodils Toastmasters club in Bangalore, India, traveled 13 hours to Goa for a vacation and to celebrate their 795th meeting. The theme was “Salty Water and Sandy Feet,” as they spent time on the beaches of Arambol and visited Fort Aguada, a 17th-century Portuguese fort and lighthouse. Overall, members say they enjoyed the vacation together and how it strengthened the bonds of their friendship.

▶ **CLUB EXPERIENCE**

## Collegiate Communicators

Tips for launching and maintaining a university club.

Here are eight ways to ensure the success of your university club:

- 1 **Build a support group.** Open your membership to staff, faculty, alumni and local residents, as well as graduate and undergraduate students. This provides stability, offers various perspectives and increases access to resources like meeting spaces and funds.
- 2 **Elect committed officers.** Ensure officers are dedicated and committed, and represent the diversity of your club's membership.
- 3 **Adapt with the seasons.** Summers will be slow, which means members who attend during those months can benefit from increased speaking experience. Prepare for the influx of new members at the start of the academic year.
- 4 **Know that you're not alone.** New clubs have mentors and sponsors. District officers can help. There's even a Club Coach Program for struggling clubs.

- 5 **Consider department sponsorship.** A college department might be willing to pay the chartering fee. However, it is important not to have a particular department or segment of the university population dominate the program.
- 6 **Get the word out.** Use all the technology and campus media available to you to publicize your club. Fliers placed strategically around campus can also be effective.
- 7 **Be flexible and creative.** Approach challenges in creative ways that work for your members—like speak-a-thons, themed meetings and joint meetings with successful clubs.
- 8 **Recognize your limits.** Many aspects of Toastmasters—such as establishing a mentor program and achieving Distinguished status—require a club to be two years old or have members who have reached specific speaking goals. Set realistic goals for your members and your club, and celebrate your successes!

Contributed by **Jennifer Blanck, DTM,** and **Brett Howe.**




**1 | FRANCE GERMAIN** of Garibaldi Highlands, British Columbia, Canada, takes in the inspiring vistas of Mount Fitz Roy near El Chaltén, Argentina.


**2 | ROB JETT** of Lake Oswego, Oregon, enjoys a warm weekend on Lake Oswego wakeboarding with his magazine.

**3 | RONAK WANI** of Bengaluru, India, visits the pyramids in Giza, Egypt.

**4 | MOHOMED IKHLAS FARID, DTM,** and his wife, **SHAISTA,** of Doha, Qatar, take the Toastmaster to new heights while parasailing in Cape Canaveral, Florida.



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

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

## Social Events Build Bonds

How my club fosters friendships and strengthens support through fun activities.

BY FIONA CLAYTON

**S**pa Speakers is a thriving Toastmasters club that meets every other Wednesday night in Leamington Spa, a market town nestled in the heart of England. When I became president in 2016, I considered how I wanted to build on the strengths of this fantastic club and looked for areas of improvement.

The venue for our meetings—which end at 9:30 p.m.—requires us to leave by 9:45. However, many members are still engaged in conversation at that time. I felt we needed some time and space outside of meetings to get to know each other better, where conversations could flourish uninterrupted and friendships could blossom.

I first organized a picnic in our local park. Naturally, it rained, but 12 brave souls turned up bearing food of all varieties. We couldn't help but have fun while huddled under a gazebo until the sun, eventually, decided to join us. Spurred on by the success of that first event, along with requests for more, I organized a bowling night in the autumn, a Christmas meal in winter and wine tasting in the spring.

In 2017, I passed the baton of leadership to a wonderful new president, Jas Kandula. Jas had attended all the previous social events and felt the club benefited greatly from them. They had helped build camaraderie and support for newer members so they could quickly integrate. Jas asked me to take on a new “social secretary” role. So I organized a social program that included one event per month. Not a meeting went by where I wasn't announcing a future activity or reminding members to sign up for the next get-together. Having something in the works helped the social program stay top-of-mind.

The secret to maintaining such a full calendar, I found, was having some events that were easy to organize, such as tea and cake



Fiona Clayton

on a Saturday morning, and others that took additional coordination but felt a bit special, such as a trivia night at a local restaurant.

Club funds can't be used for social activities,

**“This social program draws us together, no matter what our background, to share, relax and laugh.”**

so it was also important to consider cost; we didn't want anyone to feel excluded. With this in mind, we made some events free and charged a small fee for others. But I always kept the latter to a minimum.

Over time, members also presented educational workshops on a range of subjects, such as evaluation, vocal variety,

rhetoric and challenging negative beliefs. The workshops helped us learn more about each other and the wealth of skills that exist within the club. These activities created a domino effect, with more members starting to organize their own events, including a winter walk, an open mic night and a visit to a literature festival.

Where have these efforts led us? The social program is now an integral element of Spa Speakers, as is the role of social secretary on the executive committee. But even more important, these additional events helped build connection and community. As with many clubs, our membership is diverse in nationality and background; some members are in partnerships, some live alone and some are newly arrived in the country and live here for the long or short term. The social program draws us together, no matter what our background, to share, relax and laugh. It is an additional bit of mortar on what was an already firm foundation.

Spa Speakers is a successful club for many reasons, but the social program indicates to guests that here is a bunch of people who enjoy spending time together and have a lot of fun along the way. Maybe this is one reason our membership has grown to such an extent that a new club has opened in our neighboring town, and there are now two social secretaries on the Executive Committee of Spa Speakers. In a few weeks' time, members from both clubs will gather in the local park for our now-annual summer picnic, and perhaps for the first time we won't have rain! **T**

**FIONA CLAYTON** is a member of *Spa Speakers in Leamington Spa, England*. For more information about the club, visit [www.spaspeakers.co.uk](http://www.spaspeakers.co.uk).

# Commanding, Not Demanding: A Mediator's Perspective

How I use poise and presence to facilitate solutions to disputes.

BY AMBER HILL ANDERSON

**S**neaking a glance at the people in the room, I take a deep breath to steady my nerves. I roll my shoulders back, straighten my posture, lift my chin and face the people who have come to me for help. Pausing to read the room, I register the hurt on their faces, the way they have positioned themselves away from each other in the small room and the deafening silence.

I quickly identify and mentally file away the physical, demographic similarities and differences between each person and myself. Then, in a calm, friendly voice I say, "Welcome to mediation. My name is Amber."

As a person who is petite, has a high voice and is often the youngest in the room, I have worked on my ability to command attention in ways that are authentic and effective. I practice these skills in both my Toastmasters meetings and my work as a professional mediator. Learning how to command the attention of a room requires having confidence in yourself, knowing the rules and understanding when to break the norm.

## Know Thyself

Mediation is a conflict-resolution process that can be used as an alternative to going to court. The biggest difference is that the parties decide their own outcome with the facilitated support of the mediator, rather than a judge or jury making a decision. The mediator helps the parties clarify the issues, consider options and reach a settlement.

As a facilitator, you don't have to be tall, loud or demanding to take control of a room. Since I possess none of these features, I have cultivated and focused on other techniques to command people's attention. I have walked into a mediation



Amber Hill Anderson

room distracted or slumped over, and I felt the participants pull away right from the start. But when I walk into a room with confidence and prepared to be attentive, my demeanor sets the stage for successful mediations. You need to establish the right tone to set the stage for a successful conversation.

When I am calm and clear about what participants can expect from the dispute process, I gain their confidence as they take cues from my composure. While the conduct of each participant and content of the mediation are not necessarily in my control, I honor the people and their interests by facilitating the mediation confidently.

Authenticity and cultural sensitivity, or lack thereof, is one of the quickest ways to gain or lose a room. If you do not know how you present authentically or what you do that works well, ask a diverse group of people in your life (like other Toastmasters!) for feedback.

When I lack knowledge about a particular culture or language used by mediation participants, I am honest and upfront about it. By acknowledging instances when I think a cultural misunderstanding is occurring, I remain authentic, engaged and curious with participants. Sometimes it's important that I slow down conversations to make sure I understand the context for everything being discussed.

## Know the Rules, Then Break Them

In Toastmasters, we often evaluate each other based on our ability to demonstrate good public speaking rules, such as standing with straight posture, exploring vocal variety and using intentional movements. But once the rules are understood and known, breaking them can be effective and attention-grabbing.

My Toastmasters club is relatively formal and filled with high-achieving people. We have professional public speakers who really know their craft. To rise to the occasion, I dress more professionally and conservatively than usual on Toastmasters days. One day I showed up to speak at a meeting wearing a casual, red-flannel pajama outfit. I was giving a satirical speech about entrepreneurship, so I purposely deviated from the traditional



professionalism to accentuate that satirical quality. Intentionally breaking the norm with my physical appearance was part of my message of poking fun at a serious subject. Members of my club noticed my outfit right away and recognized the link between my clothes and the speech's satire.

Similarly, in mediation, when a mediator breaks a rule, it can be effective when done purposefully and in the service of the participants. As with many situations in life that involve communication, you learn to be flexible. (Some rules, however, should never be broken by the mediator, such as confidentiality.) The general format of mediation is to begin with a summary of the roles, rules and possible outcomes. This establishes clarity and the same base of knowledge around mediation for all parties present. However, during one mediation, just as I was beginning the summary, one of the participants

blurted out to the other party, "Can I just pay you?" Traditionally, people come to mediation because there is an aspect of a disagreement they have not been able to resolve on their own. In this case, rather than rigidly adhering to mediation rules and process, I adapted the conversation to the discussion the parties had just begun having with each other.

**“Once the rules are understood and known, breaking them can be effective and attention-grabbing.”**

Demanding they adhere to my process would not have been effective or helpful. They did not need a facilitated discussion of their interests. Knowing neither party would be well served by a prolonged

conversation, I focused the facilitation on the self-determination and agreement of the parties.

Knowing yourself and understanding the rules are important components of commanding the room. Both principles require thoughtful consideration and conversation long before taking the stage or a leadership role. Once the techniques are mastered, however, purposefully breaking the rules can also be an effective tool. When done well and intentionally, circumventing accepted (and expected) conventions will alert your audience and grab their attention. Know yourself and know the rules—and sometimes break them. **T**

**Amber Hill Anderson** is a member of the Cherry Creek Toastmasters club in Denver, Colorado. She works as a mediator for Hilltop Mediation in Denver.



# What Broccoli Taught Me About Influencing Others

Learn to persuade any audience with three simple concepts.

BY MATT ABRAHAMS

Whether you're pitching ideas, teaching young people, or mentoring fellow Toastmasters, much of our communication time is spent trying to motivate and influence others. Three concepts are particularly important when it comes to persuading people: framing the positive, focusing on the benefits and understanding the underlying resistance.

## Frame to Gain

Let's say you face an awful choice: Your doctor says your only hope of overcoming a debilitating disease is taking advantage of an experimental treatment. Would you be more willing to do that treatment if you were told it had a 67% failure rate—or a 33% success rate? If you are like most people, it would be the latter. Language matters in persuasion. How you state what you want done—how you frame it, in other words—can influence the eventual outcome.

Whenever possible, frame your message in positive terms. A simple example of this effect can be seen in advertising, where the words “new and improved” are often put on products even though all that has changed is the packaging. The word choice and framing you use affects perception, attitudes and behaviors.

## Focus on the Ultimate Benefit

Broccoli is the bane of my existence. Trying to get my kids to eat this cruciferous vegetable has frustrated me for years. Then one day, I decided to try some of the persuasion principles I teach my MBA students. To my delight, I was eventually able to get my kids to eat their veggies without a battle, but not before trying a few techniques.

When attempting to persuade, consider the incentive that will lead to the change you want. Many effective persuasion efforts focus on “what's in it for me” by explaining why you should make the change being suggested: *Eat this broccoli because it will make you strong. Invest in this company so you can earn great future returns. Drive this car so you can impress a prospective romantic partner.* By highlighting the positive, you focus on the benefits or positive outcomes of enacting the change.

“Language matters in persuasion. How you state what you want done—how you frame it, in other words—can influence the eventual outcome.”

## Determine What Inhibits Change

However, focusing on the ultimate benefit is not always enough to effect change. You must consider what is preventing someone from changing. In our broccoli battles, my kids very clearly understood the benefits of eating their greens. However, they could not get beyond the texture and taste. These visceral responses prevented them from taking even a few small bites. By understanding the ultimate problem, I did a little culinary cover-up (dipping sauces and ice cream sprinkles) and was able to break down their distasteful barriers and achieve victory.



Failing to address what is causing resistance can actually make the problem more difficult to overcome. People can become frustrated if they desire the change you are promoting but can't get beyond the forces restraining the behavior. For example, consider a typical campaign to get sedentary people to exercise more. The promoting arguments are clear and desirable—greater health, more energy, etc. However, new exercise regimens take time and energy and involve potential pain, which can be intimidating and prevent people from starting. If people are bombarded solely with cheerleading messages, they might begin to resent anyone who tries to help them be healthy—they are focused more on their inability or unwillingness to exercise. A more complete and effective campaign would focus not only on the benefits but on developing less strenuous and less time-consuming workouts.

The bottom line is that your persuasion efforts can be augmented by crafting your messages so they appear beneficial to your target audience, while also considering what may inhibit them from taking on your desired change. So the next time you present, take time to learn about what motivates and inspires your audience and also consider what might cause them to be hesitant and resistant. **T**

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# Inspiring Quotes for Leaders

Whether you've just stepped into a leadership role, or are still gathering the courage to do so, these quotes may be just the inspiration you need. Enjoy the different viewpoints on leadership below.

**“Powerful, impactful leaders know there is not a monopoly on intelligence.”**

—CARLA HARRIS

**“If you know how to do things, you will always have a job. If you know why you do them, you will always be a leader.”**

—STRIVE MASIYIWA

**“Whatever your grade or position, if you know how and when to speak—and when to remain silent—your chances of real success are proportionately increased.”**

—RALPH C. SMEDLEY

“Culturally intelligent leaders understand what makes people different.”

—DAVID LIVERMORE

“I learned to always take on things I'd never done before. Growth and comfort do not coexist.”

—GINNI ROMETTY

**“The simplest thing we can do to understand others' definition of leadership is to sit down and ask (them).”**

—MOHAMMED MURAD

**“We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak.”**

—EPICTETUS

**“Have no fear of perfection—you'll never reach it.”**

—SALVADOR DALÍ

**“A leader takes people where they want to go. A great leader takes people where they don't necessarily want to go, but ought to be.”**

—ROSALYNN CARTER

“There are good leaders who actively guide and bad leaders who actively misguide. Hence, leadership is about persuasion, presentation and people skills.”

—SHIV KHERA

“Integrity is the most valuable and respected quality of leadership. Always keep your word.”

—BRIAN TRACY

**“People buy into the leader before they buy into the vision.”**

—JOHN C. MAXWELL



**Infuse Your Club  
With Vitamin C:**

**C**reativity!

BY CRAIG HARRISON, DTM





*Campanas #1 Toastmasters, in Sao Paulo, Brazil, shared its charter party via Skype with the Minnesota Returned Peace Corps Volunteers club in the U.S.*



*The ALE HK club in Hong Kong gave speeches in a dark room to remove visual cues and focus instead on vocal variety.*

Over time, many clubs become a bit stale, with members lapsing into a routine pattern each week. Sometimes it's a result of the sameness of the room, identical meeting formats or the absence of enough new members to infuse the club with new energy. Over the years I've watched clubs succumb to lethargy. Yet the remedy is as easy as a little dose of vitamin C—creativity.

Administer this vitamin to your club whenever you feel you're in a rut or want to do some team building. Past International Director Paula Tunison, DTM, puts it this way, "Toastmasters is like a love affair. Everything is exciting at first and then, if you're not careful, it can become dull and routine. Changing your meetings helps to keep it exciting."

Here are some ways to spice up meetings with changes of pace, fresh ideas and a dose of fun to create a renewed vitality:

**A different room layout.** Many times, we accept the room layout as a given: the placement of the lectern, chairs and tables. Change it up by reversing the location of the lectern before the next meeting. If possible, put it at the opposite end and feel the difference. Other variations: If your lectern is at the narrow end of a long table, try placing it in front of the wide side. Or

consider removing the table and holding the meeting in a circle or semi-circle, a chevron pattern (inverted-V shape) or some other configuration of chairs. Remember, environment informs experience. Add flowers, a scent or some fun decorations for further effect. Create a new environment and the experience will surely feel fresh and exciting.

**A joint meeting with another club.** Find one that meets nearby at the same time. You can host them for one meeting, and they can reciprocate another time. It's exciting to entertain guests who already know the Toastmasters traditions. The extra people and energy from this joint meeting doubles your fun! For a truly different experience, schedule a Skype meeting with a club in another part of the country or the world. It will require some creative logistics and cooperation between clubs. For example, a Minnesota club with a connection to a club in Sao Paulo, Brazil, joined a lively charter Skype party for the new Brazilian club.

**A grab-bag meeting.** Designate your next meeting as a grab-bag where, upon the arrival of members, all meeting roles are

*The KT Talkers club members, in Milpitas, California, U.S., donned “bunny suits” to meet in their company’s semiconductor clean room.*



drawn from a bag filled with slips of paper. Use a fill-in-the-blanks agenda, or a flipchart or whiteboard where you write in the roles chosen from the bag. Any member may end up as Toastmaster, speaker or evaluator. The drama adds a layer of excitement as even the prepared speeches feel like Table Topics.

**The theme’s the thing.** Turn a normal meeting into a special event! One club in the United States held an Academy Awards meeting where the Toastmaster wore a tuxedo, the Table Topics questions related to movies and the winners gave acceptance speeches! Another club honored the American baseball season with a meeting in which each member assumed a baseball-related role: The Toastmaster became the manager, the General Evaluator became the head umpire, speakers became batters and the Topicsmaster became the pitcher. Members fielded topics. You can do the same with football/soccer—the General Evaluator becomes the referee, the Topicsmaster becomes the goalkeeper, kicking ideas back to members, and the speakers become the offensive line. Add a cheering section!

Other themes may relate to topical holidays or current events of a local, regional or national nature. Celebrate the Cherry Blossom Festival in Japan, Independence Day in your country or even a club, district or company anniversary.

**A reverse meeting.** Once a year, say on April 1 (“April Fool’s Day”) or January 31 (“Backwards Day!”), you begin with the closing thought, hear speech evaluations before the speeches and generally reverse the order of your entire meeting. Shaking up the order of meetings draws longtime members out of complacency and gives a fresh perspective on each segment.

**A costume party meeting.** People tend to be more relaxed when they’re dressed differently than usual, so a costume party presents a great opportunity to practice composure and professionalism even while wearing a mask or crazy outfit. Think about a celebratory time of year in your country that you could tie into—Halloween, Carnival, Day of the Dead, the Lunar New Year. Just be sure to clearly explain to any guests what you are doing and make sure they feel included. Maybe bring along some extra adornments in case they want to participate!

Alternately, try wearing “uniforms” during Table Topics. Members of the corporate club KT Talkers in Milpitas, California, held a Table Topics session inside their company’s semiconductor cleanroom, a room almost entirely devoid of airborne particles. They dressed in their sanitized “bunny suits,” which included a head cover, face mask, white suit, blue gloves and boots. If you’re in an industry with uniform regulations, see if wearing different types of clothing causes you to talk or behave differently.

**A time machine.** If your club is ambitious and likes a challenge, tie your costumes or themes to a historical period. Encourage members to dress like a past generation: platform boots and silk shirts with wide lapels for the ’70s, bobby socks and leather jackets for the ’50s, the gangster suits or flapper dresses for the ’20s. You’ll find a new energy comes with such wardrobes. Or go back further: the Renaissance era, Roman or Greek empires or even the Stone Age. Perhaps you’d rather fast-forward to the year 2058 or 3008? When the time comes, come in character.

In addition to dressing for a particular epoch, try using bits of related language, phrases and speech topics. Methinks you speaketh the King’s English fits in your Elizabethan era. For the Roaring ’20s, work in a few quotes from F. Scott Fitzgerald or Virginia Woolf. And your Table Topics and speeches can relate to the themes of the era as well. Again, explain to any guests what you are doing and why—in case they think they need to dress like Antony or Cleopatra next time.

**A progressive story.** The Topicsmaster begins the fun, and it’s continued by all the members. Collectively, you tell a story designated by the Topicsmaster. This requires listening skills, creativity and quick thinking to complete. Each member contributes a sentence or two in the co-creation of a new story.



*Members of the Port Melbourne club in Melbourne, Australia, celebrate the launch of Pathways in Region 12.*

Participants loved the creativity of the session and how the darkness forced them to think outside the box when figuring out how to give timing signals. Members had to focus on taking mental rather than written notes and evaluators had to memorize their statements.

**A debate.** Your Table Topics can have two participants arguing alternate sides of an issue. Or plan a debate with numerous “candidates” for a fictitious election to involve as many members as possible. Another alternative: You can ask Table Topics respondents to argue both sides of an issue. To further develop debate skills, allow a Table Topics responder to rebut the previous participant’s topic.

Debates build both listening skills and persuasive skills, and also challenge listeners to consider a different point of view and think more deeply about a topic.

**A television newscast.** Bring journalism to your club. Your sergeant at arms can give the countdown until you go live and also be the “voice-over” that introduces the newscast. Your Toastmaster of the day is the anchor, with the Topicsmaster and the General Evaluator as your sports and weather co-anchors. Speakers become field correspondents with reports. You can even turn some roles into commercials.

**A speech marathon.** Help your members earn their educational awards as you dedicate an entire meeting to prepared speeches. For clubs with a lot of members and the constraints of a one-hour meeting time, this periodic pumped-up housekeeping event helps more members speak and shortens the wait time between speeches. It’s educational for audience members to see multiple speeches in rapid succession. These popular events can be staged at a regular club meeting or scheduled in addition to your regular meeting time and place.

**Tap into your senses and conduct your meeting with the lights off.** Members of the ALE HK club in Hong Kong used this experience as a way to practice vocal variety. Without seeing body language and facial expressions, listeners are better able to home in on speaking pitch, pace, volume and vocal pauses.

**Tall tales are terrific.** Once in a blue moon, or on April 1 (“April Fool’s Day”) or April 4 (“Tell A Lie Day”), you can dedicate a meeting to embellishment, aggrandizement and bald-faced lies. Everyone can get into the act. Your speech introductions, speech theme, Table Topics and more can play fast and loose with the truth. Make outlandish claims and issue representations of gigantic proportions for comedic effect. Then, just to confuse your audience, throw a complete truth into the middle and see if they detect it! Make Pinocchio proud.

During Table Topics, play Truth or Lie. For some, this is easy. For others, it might be a challenge. Vote after each topic response on whether it was the truth or a lie.

If you’re troubled by fostering lies in a Toastmasters meeting, rest assured that each April 30 you can honor Honesty Day with a meeting dedicated to truth—which is often stranger than fiction!

**Go Hollywood!** Themes abound from the world of motion pictures. Whether you take your inspiration from Hollywood, Bollywood or the movies of Hong Kong, you’ll find wonderful ideas from films and TV shows as diverse as *Game of Thrones*, the *Harry Potter* series or *Downton Abbey*.

Whether you employ these or other ideas to spruce up your meetings, that extra shot of vitamin C will breathe new life into proceedings. While you never want to eschew the educational value of meetings, such variations on our traditional formats will add a new dimension to your Toastmasters training and keep everyone fresh. Any time you apply creativity to your meetings, the results will yield fun, energy and new perspectives. Ready . . . set . . . create! **■**

**Craig Harrison, DTM,** is a past district governor and member of Silicon Valley ImprovMasters in San Jose, California. He is the principal of [www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com](http://www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com) and author of Stellar Service! Merge Now with Wow to Create Customers for Life.



# The Path to Leadership Development

Improve your leadership skills and strategies through this Pathways experience.

BY SHAELYN BERG

**Y**ou can be a leader. In fact, you already are. You may not serve in an official leadership role, but nearly everyone has been in the driver's seat for something. Maybe it was a group project in school. Or leading a project at work. Maybe you organized a family event or an open house for your club.

Whatever the situation, you likely had to juggle many different skills at once: time management, communication, motivation (for yourself and for others), and planning, from the big picture down to bite-size details. If you want to improve all those skills and be more in tune with your inner leader, try your hand at the Leadership Development path in the Pathways learning experience.

Like the other paths in the program, Leadership Development begins by helping you learn fundamental competencies at Level 1, such as speechwriting, evaluation and research. After that, participants tackle projects that build on each other and allow you to tailor your learning to your personal goals.

## Your Inner Leader

Time management may seem trivial when you consider the dynamic qualities leaders possess. But planning your time, even on the smallest, minute-to-minute scale, sets you up for bigger successes.

When you dig into Level 2 and the "Managing Time" project, you learn various techniques to improve time

management and productivity, such as tracking time and prioritizing tasks. Nikhila Chenreddy, of Citi Singapore Toastmasters in Central Singapore, says this project helped her as a new member. At first, when giving speeches, she would rush her last points to finish on time. This project helped her develop a speech-timing structure she still uses as she develops new speeches. Chenreddy's increased awareness of time management has also paid off in her professional life; she is a solutions architect of consumer technology at Citibank, a financial services company.

**"We found that the number one precursor to people sticking around [in Toastmasters] is having a mentor."**

—JOHN RODKE, DTM

"Recently I conducted a weeklong workshop with one vendor to onboard a product," says Chenreddy. "One of the key factors was ensuring that the vendor's daily deliverables were presented on time and all the questions from our employees were addressed by the vendor during the workshop."

In the "Understanding Your Leadership Style" project, also in Level 2, participants identify the qualities of a good leader and how a leader's behavior affects those they lead. These insights come into play later in the path.

## Planning and Organizing

When members reach Level 3, they work on the "Planning and Implementing" project, in which they practice time-management skills to organize and carry out an event or project. They also lead a team if they need one.

Participants learn about project planning and all the processes involved, such as creating a plan, defining tasks and identifying potential risks before they occur. The project is full of helpful resources, including event and project-planning worksheets. It also details the benefit of using a Gantt chart—a graphical timeline of a project's tasks and milestones.

John Rodke, DTM, from Eugene, Oregon, fulfilled this project by developing a plan when he was a program quality director in 2017-2018 for outgoing area directors to help incoming area directors. It called for the experienced area directors in his district to provide tips and strategies to the new ones before they started their role. The project involved coordinating many logistics, as well as checking in regularly to evaluate progress. The outcome? "About 25 percent of our area directors participated. Those who did had their successors ready to go," says Rodke, a 2018-2019 district director.

## Boosting Your Team

At Level 4, you get to really flex your leadership skills. In the "Leading Your Team"



project, you learn attributes of good leaders, such as communicating effectively, possessing integrity, being optimistic and being open-minded. Why that last quality? Because as the project shows, it's important for a leader to listen and show willingness to consider new ideas. Doing so shows team members that you value them and ultimately empowers them to work harder.

The project also outlines techniques for motivating others and effective coaching. For example, it demonstrates how a successful coach should achieve goals, explain why certain activities are undertaken, acknowledge and listen to team members, seek a variety of opinions to reach solutions, follow up to ensure accountability, and praise positive results.

To learn these skills, participants initiate their own project and lead a team to complete it. Both Chenreddy and Rodke used this assignment to develop mentoring programs within their districts and clubs.

“We found that the number one precursor to people sticking around [in Toastmasters] is having a mentor,” says Rodke. He led the district’s program quality director and a group of vice presidents education to establish a new method for creating more mentorships within clubs.

To ensure the success of this new approach, Rodke developed a communication plan that involved presentations, trainings, online publications and in-person conversations. “Just having somebody to talk to helped members succeed,” he says.

All the projects in the path include resources to help you set goals, develop communication plans and manage details.

### Leading on a Large Scale

Level 5 is where all your emerging skills coalesce. In the “Manage Successful Events” project, you oversee an event of your design and lead a team in the process. You learn even more leadership

strategies, such as how best to delegate responsibilities to team members. Doing so makes you a stronger leader.

Chenreddy leveraged everything she learned along the way to plan a large annual party at her company, which included games, a talent show and a bonanza of fruit.


In anticipation of 300 attendees, she formed a team and began planning months in advance. The leadership skills she learned in the path, such as communication, coaching and motivating others, helped her manage a last-minute conflict regarding a fruit-decorating activity, she says.

“All the projects in the path include resources to help you set goals, develop communication plans and manage details.”

“One of my team members wanted to give everyone knives to decorate the fruit. I wasn’t very keen on that because if one person got injured, the event would be a failure. I tasked her with thinking of something else so we could still have the game but without knives.”

Her colleague arrived at a solution. The decorating activity, and the entire event, was a success.

As you consider embarking on the Leadership Development path, Chenreddy stresses, be open-minded about yourself and your abilities. “Jump in and enjoy the ride of exploring the leader in you, because you already were one when you chose to make a change by joining Toastmasters.”

*For more information about the Leadership Development path, go to [www.toastmasters.org/Pathways](http://www.toastmasters.org/Pathways). The website also provides an overview of the Pathways program, with history, videos and answers to frequently asked questions. *

**Shaelyn Berg** worked for the Pathways development team and is now a content producer at Kaplan Professional, an educational-services company.



# Meet Deepak Menon, DTM

The 2019–2020 International President embodies the lifelong pursuit of self-improvement.

BY STEPHANIE DARLING

As Toastmasters International nears its 100th anniversary, President Deepak Menon, DTM, says the organization’s programs and growing global member network offer a “formula for the future” in the continuing development of dynamic, talented and confident speakers and leaders.

His optimism is based partly on his experiences in District 82, in India and Sri Lanka, where membership has skyrocketed since the district was founded in 2006. It was ranked the No. 1 Toastmasters district in the world for four straight years, including 2009–2010, when Menon was district governor. During his year of leadership, the district added 75 new clubs—a Toastmasters world record. (Read more about Toastmasters growth in India on page 23.) “The District 82 legacy was not built by its leaders, but by its members,” Menon emphasizes.

Menon, of New Delhi, is energized by that kind of member power and by the universe of prospects the world over who have never heard of Toastmasters.



## A LEADING LIGHT IN INDIA

One of this organization's great success stories in recent years has been the dramatic growth of Toastmasters in India. Deepak Menon has played a key role in that story.

When the new International President first joined Toastmasters, in 2002, only a handful of clubs existed in the country. Today there are nearly 900. The first club in India didn't form until 1991. The first district didn't emerge until 2006. Now, less than 15 years later, the country has four districts.

When that initial district did form, consisting of 40 clubs in India and Sri Lanka, Menon knew something special was building. However, when he first joined as a member of the Toastmasters of New Delhi (still his home club), it was the city's only club. At first, says Menon, the club was content to stay in its own bubble.

"We weren't that aware of other Indian clubs or clubs elsewhere in the world. We were happy within ourselves, learning and growing." But as the club grew, so did its ambitions. "The New Delhi club started getting a bit lonely," says Menon. "As we got better, we wanted to start more Toastmasters clubs."

As Menon has often noted, business community support was vital to Toastmasters growth in India. Of the 875 clubs in the country at the end of the 2018-2019 program year, more than half—480—are company-sponsored clubs. Menon says the large

percentage is proof that companies in India realize that Toastmasters training is invaluable to their employees, and, ultimately, a cost-effective business asset.

Indian leaders, through their dynamic drive, spurred club growth, giving rise to clubs and members who were increasingly inspired by the spirit of self-improvement, especially in English language and presentation skills.

District 82 now has more than 300 clubs—more than any other Toastmasters district—and about 8,000 members. It has also been the home of Past International President Balraj Arunasalam (2017-2018), DTM, and 2014 Toastmasters World Champion of Public Speaking Dananjaya Hettiarachchi, both of Sri Lanka.

Following another membership surge in the northern, eastern and western parts of India, District 41 was formed in 2011. Menon's home club is now part of that district. It was Smedley Distinguished—the top level of the District Recognition Program—in 2018-2019, and was President's Distinguished the three years before that.

District 41 covers over 200 clubs in India, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal. Since 2014, two more districts have formed in India: districts 92 and 98.

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**Paul Sterman** is senior editor for the *Toastmaster magazine*.

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**PHOTOS ON PREVIOUS PAGE:** *An eloquent speaker and avid world traveler, Deepak Menon is at home in local club meetings or on the international stage, especially when accompanied by his wife, Kavita.*

"I hear talk that the districts are saturated and additional growth isn't possible," he says. "I disbelieve it. We have the vitality and the members to kickstart outreach to millions of individuals who haven't had access to our programs or even know about them." As an example, he cites a recent speech he made to an organization in New Jersey, where 75% of the audience had never heard of Toastmasters, even though the area has three districts.

As a successful professional, Menon felt comfortable in his speaking abilities when he attended his first club meeting in 2002. Once the meeting began, he says it didn't take long to discover his personal challenges, along with the motivation to overcome them. That night, he joined Toastmasters of New Delhi, the capital's only club at the time.

His passionate involvement over the years, fueled by remarkable mentors and member connections, led him through Toastmasters' leadership levels, to the International Board of Directors and ultimately, the role of 2019-2020 International President. These experiences allowed him to discover and hone his leadership talents, and to complete the arduous DTM journey six times.

Professionally, Menon is a chartered accountant at J.P. Kapur & Uberai, a firm he joined in 1980 as a trainee. He was made a partner in 1986. The firm's portfolio includes typical accounting consulting services, with niche practices in hospitality, real estate, banking, finance and government contracts. Menon specializes in international cross-border taxation.

"The international element keeps the job interesting. There are changes every day around the world—the global business place is never static," he notes.

A talented, compassionate communicator? An optimistic, solution-oriented advocate for member opportunities and club excellence? Sounds like a good fit for a Toastmasters International President.

## QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Thanks to all the members who submitted questions online for the International President's response. Here are just a few, along with answers from Deepak Menon.



### **Is communication by way of speech-making more important than written communication?**

—Joi H. • St. Albans, New York, U.S.

*Communication in any form is important; learning to communicate effectively through speech is vital. Written communication allows the writer to ponder over the subject matter and edit the communication until it meets with our satisfaction. Oral communication requires an agile mind, fluency of tongue and the ability to hold the interest of the audience—essential skills we learn in Toastmasters.*

### **How can a new club president motivate new officers and new members?**

Monique Thompson  
USAA Leaders • Mooresville, North Carolina, U.S.

*The president's vision lays the foundation for the club's future success, and for the growth of members and leaders. He or she should help officers understand their roles, be a mentor, encourage teamwork—all these make for a vibrant, productive club. Dive into this role. What could be more satisfying than seeing members achieving all they want from Toastmasters?*

### **You mentioned corporate clubs—why are they so important in the “formula for the future” scenario?**

Growing our corporate club sector offers tremendous growth potential for Toastmasters. Success lies in being able to demonstrate the value of Toastmasters to company decision-makers and develop a rich cooperative relationship.

Sometimes these clubs are at risk—they may be quick to form and quick to dissolve unless we take the time to build and maintain those management relationships. It's critical to demonstrate how Toastmasters' education curriculum offers unique value to the company—a value they couldn't find elsewhere for the investment.

### **Continuing in that “future” vision, talk about reaching out to young people.**

### **How has your leadership style changed over 17 years?**

Kelmikis Mitchell  
Revenue Toastmasters • Union City, Georgia, U.S.

*It has undergone a significant change. My early leadership style was based on self-reliance; I thought I could fulfill all my leadership responsibilities on my own. I was a lone player. But as I climbed the district leadership ladder, I realized I could only be successful as a leader if I worked with a team by effective delegation of responsibilities. Toastmasters transformed me into a team player!*

### **What modern leader do you admire as a public speaker?**

Lisa Cole  
Collins Club • Palm Bay, Florida, U.S.

*A modern day leader who has captured the attention of the world through his charisma and public relations skills is the present Prime Minister of India, Mr. Narendra Modi. He is a leader worth emulating for the public speaking skills he displays.*

### **How would you advise me if I want to become Toastmasters International President one day?**

Akbar Sunnaadawala  
Wisdom Toastmasters • Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

*Excel in every leadership role that comes your way; use every opportunity to gain skills, knowledge and experience. Understand the organization and have a strategic vision for its future—all these can help ensure that you can one day be a successful International President.*

I was active in a Toastmasters' Youth Leadership program and English-language teaching effort under the umbrella of the American Center, which was attached to the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi. I was appointed chief coordinator and enlisted other Toastmasters to assist in using the program to teach English and transform students into leaders.

Over two years, 700 young people in seven cities went through the program, and the transformation was astounding. They used their newly acquired confidence to create positive change in new academic and professional endeavors.

This is another element to our future success. Obviously, young people are the leaders of tomorrow. If you can engage them early, when they have limited inhibitions, it's easier for them to improve and enhance their skills.





**TOP LEFT:** Menon awards a New Delhi JPKU club member the best speaker certificate.

**TOP RIGHT:** Menon and his wife, Kavita, attend the International Convention in Vancouver, Canada, in 2017.

**CENTER:** The Menons and their daughters, Ramita, left, and Rajita.



“Clearly we are an organization to build not just speakers but also business and societal leaders.”

**What is the role of the Pathways learning experience in both individual and organizational growth?**

I’m very excited about Pathways both for today and for our future. Yes, there are some glitches and challenges to overcome. Yet the overall program is so inventive—it’s meant to help us become the leaders who reach out to corporations and speak the language that business wants us to speak. Clearly we are an organization to build not just speakers but also business and societal leaders.

I also see Pathways as a quicker way for members to learn and advance. Learning in Levels 1 and 2 equals what took six (speeches) in the traditional *Competent Communication* manual. Yes, Pathways has significantly changed our methodology and education process, but I believe that is a tremendous benefit. We are giving members the ability to identify areas for improvement, start working on those immediately and build on skills steadily, sequentially.

**Tell us about your family.**

My wife, Kavita, is a high school principal at the Air Force Senior Secondary School in New Delhi. Managing a staff of

70 can sometimes limit her ability to travel with me, no matter how much she might like to. We have two daughters. Rajita has a doctorate in physics and is involved in biosciences work in Boston. In her spare time, she’s passionate about dancing and performs with several groups in the Boston area. Our second daughter, Ramita, has a degree in math but also loves dancing and is pursuing the discipline full time.

**What are some of your priorities as president?**

International Presidents step onto a sailing ship, with the power to make some tweaks in our journey, but in general we follow the Board of Directors’ Strategic Plan and stay the direction of our course.

I continue to see building global awareness of Toastmasters as a huge opportunity, and I plan to emphasize that outreach during my term. **T**

**Stephanie Darling** is magazine team supervisor for the *Toastmaster magazine*



# Make Your Slides Sing

Compelling images and sharp text will boost your PowerPoint presentation.

BY RYAN URIE

**P**owerPoint. For many, the very word conjures grim memories of colleagues monotonously reading projected bullet points while everyone else waits for the meeting to be over. With the advent of smartphones, audiences today will no longer tolerate such unengaging presentations.

PowerPoint *can* greatly enhance speeches. Want to make the most of this ubiquitous technology and ensure your presentation stands out and makes an impact?

As Toastmasters know, presentations are not primarily about sharing information. Videos, reports, infographics and other media can all achieve that goal far more expeditiously. No, the reason we still meet with real people in real places and give live speeches is because it's still the most effective way to build trust and create emotional connections.

A well-delivered speech can—in a few minutes—influence, persuade and inspire far more powerfully than any quantity of data, facts or logic. PowerPoint allows you to present relevant facts and data, and then

demonstrate *why* they matter. The slide deck is not the presentation—you are. The audience is there to experience *your* passion, *your* body language, *your* personality,

**“The easiest way to improve your slides is to put less stuff on them.”**

*your* spontaneity and presence. PowerPoint slides are only useful to the extent that they enhance you and your message.

## Do You Really Need a PowerPoint?

Take a moment to consider whether PowerPoint is the best tool for your message. It's the primary presentation format in much of the professional world because it's simple, expected and familiar. These strengths also make it predictable and easy to forget.

Attention-grabbing demonstrations, hands-on activities and props may be the best way to engage your audience. Consider how Bill Gates famously

released a swarm of mosquitoes during a presentation to drive home his points about the global malaria problem.

Another time he drank a glass of water that had been human waste only minutes before. What a dramatic stunt to draw attention to the potential of new water-treatment technologies. Both times he created a media sensation.

## Images Can Speak Volumes.

You can still create impact with PowerPoint. Simple yet enthralling slides can reinforce a point, evoke emotion, aid in understanding complex material and convey visually what words cannot. Create a wow-worthy visual statement. Fire up your listeners. To paraphrase Josh Bernoff, who blogs about writing and communication, if the audience is no different after seeing your presentation, then you have wasted their time.

Improve slides by putting less stuff on them. Too much content dilutes the message. So, to create value for the audience, you need to do the hard work of distilling



the details down to the essential message and nothing more.

Use as few words as possible, ideally no more than five or six per slide. If you have large amounts of data to share, use a hand-out or email a file; don't just cram it on the slide. Designer and **Lynda.com** instructor John McWade recommends making slides so simple they can be presented on a smartphone.

**“It’s not that reports aren’t valuable; they just shouldn’t be projected on a screen so an audience can participate in a ‘read-along.’”**

NANCY DUARTE,  
PRESENTATION DESIGN EXPERT

Hunt for sharp, memorable images that support your message. Sites like **pixabay.com** and **pexels.com** make it easy to acquire free, high-quality imagery, and they don't even require attribution.

Power past the traditional bar and pie charts. If you want to show that 25% of the forest burned in a fire, a map showing 25% represented by flames is more memorable than a pie chart. If your message is about overfishing, show 100 fish on the slide followed by a slide with the number proportionally reduced. Visuals help shift the audience's viewpoint from *understanding* your message to *feeling* it, and from there, wanting to *act* on it.

Presentations should be grounded in facts, but you need to connect those facts to your audience's real-life concerns for those facts to matter. Only then will your presentation have an impact. **T**

**Ryan Urie** is a professional technical editor and member of SEL Toastmasters in Pullman, Washington.

## GO FOR REAL-TIME IMPACT

Social media and Web 2.0 technologies have made people less willing to be passive observers. Now audiences expect to play a part in creating the content they consume. In short, the more you involve your audience, the better.

The May 2019 issue of the *Toastmaster* magazine covered a variety of interactive tools, including live polling devices for instant audience feedback. Add interactive textboxes to slides so that you can type and write in them during the presentation, effectively turning your slide into a giant whiteboard for capturing audience input.

Microsoft has recently opened up the world of 3D imagery to PowerPoint, including a large library of free 3D objects. These objects can be animated and rotated to show an object from every angle. While this kind of powerful visualization will eventually become the norm for PowerPoint, for the time being it is still novel enough to really capture your audience's attention.

Make the effort to rise above the norm and design slides that enhance your message and engage your audience.

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# Tackling the Topicsmaster Role

Solutions for more creative Table Topics

BY CHERYL ANDRICHUK



I've seen some great—and not so great—Table Topics sessions. Why do some stand out and others fall flat?

I brainstormed possible answers with Canadian Toastmaster Carolyn Kaldy, DTM, just before she won a division-level Table Topics Contest earlier this year. Her tips reinforced my goal whenever I serve as Topicsmaster: to ask the type of questions members want to answer. “The Topicsmaster role is about giving them a chance for success,” Kaldy says.

With that in mind, try these tips next time you're the Topicsmaster.

## Look for inspiration

- ▶ **Adopt a meeting theme.** Whether it's movies or motivation or buying your first car, having a theme offers all sorts of possibilities for questions.
- ▶ **Play with holidays.** In addition to established special days, check for unusual or wacky holidays. Kaldy's club recently chose the meeting theme of National Animal Cracker Day, and the Topicsmaster used it as a springboard for questions like “What's your favorite animal and why? What kind of animal are you like?”
- ▶ **Check the Toastmasters guide** to “Selecting Your Topic” from the Better Speaker Series at [www.toastmasters.org/Shop](http://www.toastmasters.org/Shop). This is a resource to help develop speeches, but Topicsmasters can draw on the same principles, says Kaldy.

## Formulating questions

“The questions shouldn't be too abstract, convoluted or likely to stump people,” advises Kaldy, a member of both the CanOrators and Pursuers clubs in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Save the easiest questions for a guest or a less confident member, she suggests; set aside the

more demanding ones for members who like a challenge.

The questions should allow speakers to offer opinions or stories from their own experience.

- ▶ **The most effective questions are open-ended**, meaning they can't just be answered with a “yes” or “no.” If you must ask a closed question, add “why” at the end.
- ▶ **Questions shouldn't ask for specialized knowledge**, like “How do airplanes fly?” Rather, something like “What was the best airplane ride you've ever taken?”
- ▶ **Be sensitive to people's circumstances.** “This is when it helps to know your club,” says Kaldy. “You wouldn't want to ask a question about losing a job if someone just got laid off.”
- ▶ **Keep it general.**
  - **Too specific:** What did Fred Rogers of “Mister Rogers Neighborhood” contribute to children's TV? (Some members may not have seen that show.)
  - **Better:** What constitutes good children's television? (Most everyone has seen some children's programs.)

## Picking speakers

When it comes to picking speakers, Kaldy suggests members look at the agenda and choose those who have no role in the meeting or a small role. However, don't overlook experienced Toastmasters who may not get called on as often because they take on more demanding roles at meetings.

Let guests know before the meeting that if you call on them for Table Topics, it's fine to decline the invitation if they're not ready to participate just yet. You don't want to put anyone on the spot. Call on

one or two guests, but not to the exclusion of club members.

Finally, in the lead-up to a Table Topics contest, make sure club representatives in the contest get a chance to practice.

## Presenting the question

State the question—then call on someone. That way, Kaldy says, everyone in the room listens carefully, thinks about how they would answer and gets that little jolt of adrenaline wondering if they are next. If you ask for volunteers, people who are shy may be reluctant to respond. And those who jump at the chance often need the least practice.

Be professional and positive. Avoid asking members if they'd like to answer the question. If they refuse, they've lost an opportunity to improve. Instead, welcome them warmly and enthusiastically to participate: “Frank, please come up and take the stage.”

Stand at center stage when you ask the question, then move to the side or sit nearby. When the speaker is done, start the applause and return to the center. After each speaker, make brief comments related to the speech such as, “Wow, it sounds like a car trip with you would be a lot of fun.” Then move to the next topic: “Continuing with our theme ...”

## Go for it!

Signing up to be Topicsmaster is a win-win for you and the club. The role is fun and creative and allows you to apply all your Toastmasters skills. More important, it's your chance to boost your club members' confidence and help them realize they can do this. **T**

**CHERYL ANDRICHUK** is a member of Golden Speakers Toastmasters in Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada.



# The Theme of Today's Meeting Is ...

Add a spark to your sessions with a unifying topic.

BY BILL BROWN, DTM

Over the last 13 years, I have been a member of 11 clubs. They are all different. And one of the most prominent differences is in the area of meeting themes. Some clubs have them. Some do not. And those that do, employ them in different ways.

Themes can add fun to your meetings. They can revolve around holidays, end-of-the-year celebrations, cultural events or universal experiences (favorite vacations, for example). How do clubs decide their meeting-theme policy? I asked some founding members of my primary club what went into their decision. They all gave me a blank stare and said, "Well, our club mentors said we had to have them." In other words, they followed the advice of more experienced members who helped start the club. There is nothing wrong, of course, with listening to your mentors. But it's also good to periodically examine and evaluate if something is beneficial, including how a concept like meeting themes works for your club. Here are a few options to consider.

In some clubs, the meeting Toastmaster sets the theme. In others, the vice president education handles the task. When the Toastmaster selects the topic, he or she typically presents short, educational segments related to the theme throughout the meeting. For example, let's say the theme is "the Academy Awards." The segments might include some history about the event or some tidbits about Oscar-winning films over the years.

Whoever picks the theme needs to make the topic interesting and entertaining for

members. Making material engaging is always a good skill to learn.

Recently, my club's meeting theme was "Nevada." That is not too surprising for a club located in Las Vegas. Our meeting Toastmaster was about to embark on a vacation to some of the most unknown tourist destinations around our state. We all found his travelogue fascinating.

**"The Toastmaster accepts the challenge to make the topic interesting and entertaining for members."**

Two months ago, another meeting Toastmaster selected "weird bugs" as the theme. Weird bugs? Believe it or not, it turned out to be an interesting topic. She showed us a picture of each bug and then told us which club member it reminded her of and why. It was all in fun, and we were driven to listen for the humor and for what she would say about each one of us.

Besides making such segments interesting and entertaining, it's also important to keep them brief or the meeting will run overtime.

Some clubs employ themes only in Table Topics. In this case, the topic is often selected by the vice president education or the Topicsmaster.

One of my former Southern California clubs uses this approach but adds a twist. As the club president opens the meeting, he or she announces the theme and then has everyone stand up, say their name

and briefly answer a question related to the theme. That way no one leaves the meeting without having spoken at least once, even the guests. In one meeting, the theme was "radio stations" and the question was "What is your favorite station?" In a meeting with a Mother's Day theme, the question was "When you think of your mother, what immediately comes to mind?"

As the club's membership grew, it became trickier to do this activity because of the amount of time it took. But I like this as a way to start a meeting. It adds energy right from the start.

Personally, I don't like to incorporate themes when I am the meeting Toastmaster. I see my role as giving speaking opportunities to as many people as I can, and not presenting a theme allows for one or two more Table Topics speakers. Others, however, like the practice. A member in one of my clubs told me she likes the continuity themes bring to the meetings.

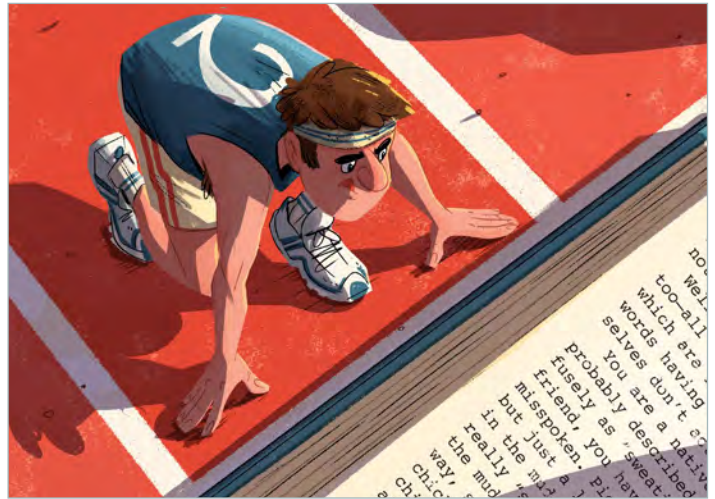
Themes can be fun, but they aren't for every club. It all depends on what you—and the members—want. Either way, it is good to know *why* you do what you do. If themes help your club have fun and accomplish its objectives, great! If not, don't be afraid to try something different. After all, the ultimate goal is individual member growth. **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](http://www.billbrownspeechcoach.com).

## Speed-Reading

If you think you're a slow reader, blame it on your fovea.

BY JOHN CADLEY



Let's say you have nine books stacked on your bedside table that remain as unread as the day you bought them, the shortest being 231 pages and the longest spanning 1,225 (yeah, it's *War and Peace* and you've sworn to read it. Don't blame me. You're the one who got ambitious.)

Now let's say you also know that the average person can read about 300 words per minute. So here you are, staring at a pile of literature roughly 22 inches high containing a few thousand pages that you have to read at the snail-like pace of 300 words per minute. It looks like a grueling, Sisyphean task, and it's the last thing you see before you go to sleep. No wonder you have a recurring dream that you're climbing Mount Everest with bowling balls tied to your feet.

Is there hope? Can you lower that pile, or will it forever stand as a small monument to your abject failure as a human being? Well—what if you could not only reduce it but knock it down to nothing in less than a week? Yes, desperate ones, I'm talking about speed-reading. You've heard about it, you've wondered if it works, and I'm here to give you the final, definitive answer, arrived at through many years of rigorous scientific study: yes and no.

The answer is yes, if you believe a former teacher named Evelyn Wood, who introduced her techniques for speed-reading back in 1958 with her book *Reading Skills* and the business she founded out of it: Evelyn Wood Reading Dynamics. Her most famous pupils were United States President John F. Kennedy, who claimed to read 1,200 words per

minute after taking her course, and a young woman who appeared on the American TV show *I've Got a Secret* to reveal she had read the 689-page novel *Gone with the Wind* in less than an hour! No scientific evidence backed up any of this, but Ms. Wood's seminars made her millions, proving at least one thing: An awful lot of people have nine books on their bedside tables.

**“Your chances of knocking off *Gone With the Wind* in less than an hour are equivalent to, well, climbing Mount Everest with bowling balls tied to your feet.”**

Her method involved a number of techniques: reading down the page rather than left to right; reading groups of words or whole thoughts in a sort of visual gulp; using a finger to trace the words for better focus; eliminating “subvocalizing,” which is our natural tendency to say the words mentally as we read them; and, if you actually move your lips while reading, simply putting a finger to your mouth.

Employ these techniques, Ms. Wood said, and you will read two to five times faster. But will you *remember* what you read? Ah, there's the rub. Experts say this is merely skimming, which typically yields low comprehension. Woody Allen

famously said that he used Ms. Wood's method to read the aforementioned *War and Peace* and could tell you it had “something to do with Russia.”

So much for the “yes” part of the answer. The “no” part comes from actual medical research that finds that, given the anatomy of the human eye and the way it reads, your chances of knocking off *Gone With the Wind* in less than an hour are equivalent to, well, climbing Mount Everest with bowling balls tied to your feet. Blame it on your “fovea,” the part of your retina that focuses on the words you read long enough to take in their meaning. It's a slow reader—one or two words at a time. Visual gulps? No, tiny nibbles.

But wait! Wasn't there a Howard Berg in the *Guinness Book of World Records* who claimed to read 25,000 words per minute? Yes, but then he was challenged by Maria Teresa Calderon, who said she was whipping through 80,000—with 100% comprehension!! Of course, you had to take their word for it. Maybe that's why there's no longer a Guinness World Champion Speed Reader category.

As for me, I enjoy reading, so I take my time. The sooner I finish a book the sooner I'll have to mow the lawn. I don't need speed-reading. What I need is speed-writing. Then maybe I'd turn my columns in on time. ■

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

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## CLIENT SPOTLIGHT - BO BENNETT, DTM

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

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

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

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

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# Wow the World

Share how your club wows and your tips may be featured on Toastmasters' social media pages!



## Tip #1

**Learn to listen...give opportunities to lead a meeting, a group of people, a discussion.**

- Gwinnett-Tucker Toastmasters Club  
Tucker, Georgia, United States



**Actively welcome prospective members. We enthusiastically share our communication and leadership skills with school groups and community organizations.**

- Hilo Toastmasters Club,  
Hilo Hawaii, United States



## Tip #3

**Provide members with quality leadership and personal growth training.**

- Ingleburn Toastmasters Club  
Ingleburn, New South Wales, Australia



To submit your #wowfactor tips, visit [www.toastmasters.org/We-Are-In](http://www.toastmasters.org/We-Are-In).