

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | SEPTEMBER 2020

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Peck, DTM**

2020-2021
International
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We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.



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Undeterred, Unwavering, Unstoppable ... We Are Toastmasters!



As we entered 2020, none of us could have imagined that we would witness, and be a part of, Toastmasters history. But when the COVID-19 global pandemic appeared, we were forced to change everything. What we once considered “normal” had left the building.

Each of us has had to step into the unknown. This has led to a series of historic firsts for our members and our organization. For the first time since World War II we had to cancel our in-person International Convention, and for the first time in history our Annual Business Meeting was conducted online. We began holding all meetings virtually. We learned we could travel around the world in a single day, visiting clubs without having to empty our bank accounts and experience jet lag!

These unprecedented changes are impressive, but to me the most impressive part has been the way you, our members, quickly responded to challenges and found opportunities to overcome them. I view challenges as opportunities in their rawest form. They enable us to view things differently ... to try new things ... to break free from the norm ... and to experience change. You proved this to be true.

There has never been a time when we have been required to stay so far apart yet needed to be so close together.

As the challenges continued to roll in like waves on a stormy sea, you remained undeterred in your commitment to helping one another pursue individual goals. You found new ways of staying connected, becoming technology experts in using video-conferencing platforms. There has never been a time when we have been required to stay so far apart yet needed to be so close together, and you made it happen.

Despite the weight of the challenges posed by COVID-19, you remained unwavering in your commitment to the club, District, and Toastmasters International missions. You continued to uphold the organization’s four core values: integrity, respect, service, and excellence.

Your dedication, diligence, and ability to combat the hardship of this global pandemic prove that Toastmasters are unstoppable.

In the 2020–2021 Toastmasters year, it is highly likely we will again face unexpected adversities and will need to look for new opportunities to overcome them. Your actions have already shown that you’ve got this.

I look forward to working with and serving you during this program year and witnessing what we will achieve, as together we write the next chapter of Toastmasters history.

Richard E. Peck, DTM
International President

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Members celebrate club anniversaries with fun and flair.



Members of Lasin Toastmasters in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, celebrated the club's third anniversary in February 2020. Club members enjoyed playing team-building games to improve their collaborative abilities and encourage outside-the-box thinking.



Elite Toastmasters Club of Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines, celebrates its ninth anniversary with District 75 leaders in attendance. Attendees wore fun hats to honor the meeting's theme: "Tip of the Hat."








In December 2019, Woodland Toastmasters of Santa Barbara, California, celebrated its 60th anniversary with a club outing.



Send your fun club photos to 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.

www.toastmasters.org/Magazine

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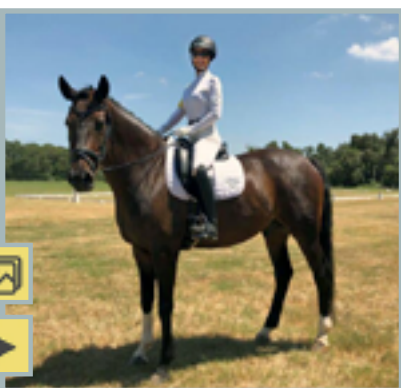


WHAT'S ONLINE THIS MONTH:



Meet Our New International President

Toastmasters has a new International President! Discover how Richard E. Peck, DTM, draws on his membership experience to take on the leadership opportunity of a lifetime. View photos and learn more about Richard through member-submitted questions.



An Equestrian's Endeavors

Toastmaster Deborah McAlexander is a blind para-equestrian dressage champion who does not let her impairment define her. Learn more

about Deborah's journey by watching videos and viewing a photo gallery in the online edition.

ONLINE EXCLUSIVE



2020 Virtual Convention Coverage

In August, thousands of members connected during Toastmasters' first-ever virtual convention. Check the [online edition](#) for highlights, including the Golden Gavel award presentation, what the education sessions covered, and who took home the title of 2020 World Champion of Public Speaking.

Enhance Your Voice



In this month's Toastmasters Toolbox by Bill Brown, DTM, hear about helpful vocal variety tools, including volume, pitch, pace, pause, and emotion.



This icon at the top of a page means an online extra is included with the article at www.toastmasters.org/Magazine.

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MEMBER RECOGNITION

Meet Some Masters of Online Meetings

These members were nominated for their outstanding contributions in helping others adapt and excel in a virtual environment. This is part of a [reoccurring series](#).

Darren Lauser • Cork, Ireland

A Personal Touch

Members of VMware Toastmasters—a corporate club in the information technology sector in Cork, Ireland—are no strangers to online meetings. From a technology perspective, that would seem like an advantage, but going online with our Toastmasters meetings could have been a disaster. In-person meetings were a welcome break from our screens. Toastmasters was where members saw faces and chatted casually—something hard to translate to the virtual world.



The 2019-2020 President, Darren Lauser, wasted no time figuring out how to make online meetings as social as in-person meetings. Darren is the first to log on and has his camera on at every meeting; he welcomes members by name as they join and chats with everyone while waiting for others. This is a huge difference from a work meeting where everyone waits silently until the attendees have joined and jump straight into the content. More people tend to speak up during the chat at the start of the meeting or during Table Topics® if they have been greeted personally at the beginning of the meeting.

As a corporate club, the challenge was to make sure that online Toastmasters meetings didn't fall into the humdrum flow of everyday work meetings, but that they were different, friendly, and interactive. Thanks to Darren, they've been a success!

Nominated by Orla Dowling, VMware Toastmasters of Cork, Ireland.

Tanay Rajwal • Pune, Maharashtra, India

A Virtual Warrior

Tanay Rajwal quickly became the go-to person for technology questions in his Bibvewadi Toastmasters Club and clubs all over District 98. He introduced an online voting platform for his club to make the meeting hassle free when counting votes. Tanay also recorded club meetings and uploaded them to a shared drive where members who were unable to attend, or were curious to watch the meeting again, could do so. Soon, his help was requested for recording several joint club meetings and speech contests.



Tanay even served as the “Zoom Master” for a District 98 event with 300 attendees, and it went as smoothly as it possibly could! He has been a true virtual warrior for a seamless meeting experience for all Toastmasters.

Nominated by Nigel Gomes, Ana Fonte Speakers Club of Margao, Goa, India; Pranav Kalaskarof, Bibvewadi Toastmasters Club of Pune, Maharashtra, India; Ravi Sharma, DTM, Andheri Orators Toastmasters of Mumbai, Maharashtra, India.



Cynthia Coleman • Omaha, Nebraska

Connecting Comfortably Online

Cynthia Coleman, DTM, doesn't have a background in technology, but when the pandemic hit, she knew she had to find a way to keep members and guests active. She helped her club, Why Not Speak, meet on Zoom and held practice meetings with hesitant club members. Her dedication to helping members feel comfortable using Zoom inspired many to embrace the joy of connecting online. One member attributed her ability to compete in an online Division speech contest directly to Cynthia.

Cynthia always displays a positive and supportive attitude and truly leads by example. She visits online clubs, identifying those holding successful meetings and those needing help, and she connects fledgling clubs with District leaders who can help them.

But she didn't stop there. Cynthia saw the need for Pathways training and for people to have more speaking opportunities. While Cynthia admits she doesn't know all the answers, she works with others to provide training and establish speak-a-thons for those needing to complete educational goals. Cynthia sets up District training based on identified needs and finds the appropriate people to do the actual training. Cynthia Coleman is an inspiration to her club and District 24.

Nominated by Jessica Codr, DTM, Rail Talkers Club and Toastmasters Club Omaha 229 of Omaha, Nebraska.

► 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: Unpaid officers lose access to Club Central 30 days after their membership expires.

For questions, please contact the Club and Member Support team at renewals@toastmasters.org or call +1 720-439-5050 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Mountain Time, Monday through Friday.

New Brand Manual

The [Toastmasters Brand Manual](#) has been updated to reflect the look and feel of existing templates and marketing materials and is easier to use and follow. Take some time to get acquainted with basic Toastmasters International brand guidelines, as well as the current design elements.



Did You Know?

New Look on Base Camp! – The Base Camp homepage has a brand-new look. Recently, this page got a refresh to make it easier to find your paths and the resources you use most. Log in to Base Camp to explore the changes and [share this video](#) with anyone who wants an overview of the new design.

Pathways Resources – With the traditional education program having ended on June 30, 2020, [here are some resources](#) to help you make the transition.

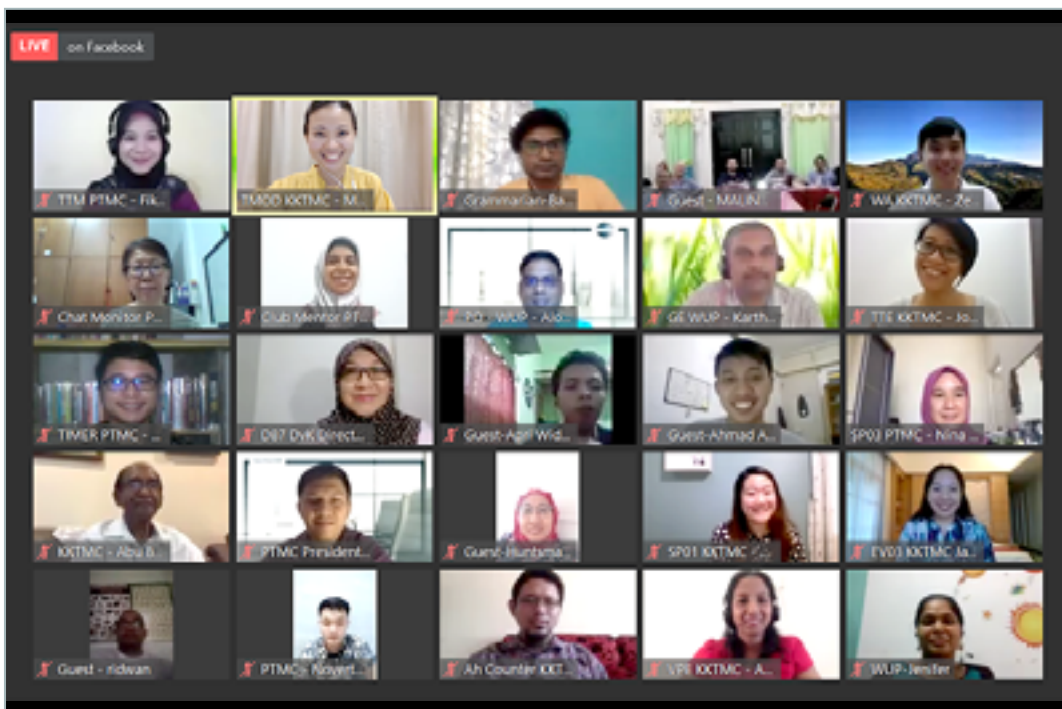
Rotary Course Flash Sheet – Are you curious about the educational content being developed for Rotary by Toastmasters as part of the alliance? You're not alone! Use this [Toastmasters/ Rotary Educational Course Flash Sheet](#) to be more prepared with information for yourself, other Toastmasters members, and Rotary members who might visit your club. It will help you quickly and easily familiarize yourself with the new Rotary educational curriculum. Remember, these courses are not available to Toastmasters members, because the content is taken directly from the more comprehensive Pathways program, already available exclusively to Toastmasters.

New Rotary Alliance Presentation – Share more information with members about the Rotary alliance by delivering the [Rotary Alliance Presentation](#). This can be conducted in your club or during a training program. Be sure to check the notes on each slide for details.

► MEMBER CONNECTIONS

We Are Global

In May, three clubs in three different countries hosted a joint meeting with the theme of “We are Global.” Members of Kota Kinabalu Club of Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia; Wake Up Chennai Toastmasters Club of Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India; and Pekanbaru Toastmasters Club of Pekanbaru, Riau, Indonesia, found the meeting to be a positive experience, and look forward to virtually connecting with others around the world.



▶ SNAPSHOT



In honor of International Women's Day on March 8, 2020, members of Deshpande Educational Trust Toastmasters Club of Hubballi, Karnataka, India, pose with their arms in an equal sign. Members are dedicated to ensuring their meeting space is safe and welcoming for all.

▶ PATHWAYS TRANSLATIONS

More Paths Available in Korean and Tamil

Two more paths in the Pathways learning experience are now available in Korean and Tamil. In all, four paths have been translated into those two languages: Presentation Mastery, Leadership Development, Visionary Communication, and Effective Coaching.

Korean and Tamil—an official language in India, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, and Mauritius—are the latest non-English languages that Pathways materials have been translated into. All 11 paths in the program have been translated into Arabic, French, German, Japanese, Portuguese, Simplified Chinese, Spanish, and Traditional Chinese. That's one of the best things about the Pathways learning experience: So many people can work in their native language.

In addition, the [online Navigator](#) is available in Korean and Tamil. (The other languages are expected to be translated to an online version before the end of the year.) The digital *Navigator* provides new members with an overview of Toastmasters, the club experience, and Pathways. It can also be [downloaded as a PDF](#) in English, Arabic, French, German, Japanese, Portuguese,

Simplified Chinese, Spanish, and Traditional Chinese.

Translation Review Teams, consisting of members around the world, ensure that all Pathways translations are accurate and authentic to local cultures. The members, who all volunteer their time, review the professional translations, help develop Pathways glossaries of frequently used terms, and ensure the translated content accurately reflects the Toastmasters experience.

Visit the [Pathways Translations](#) webpage to learn more about members of the Korean and Tamil Translation Review Teams as well as the other Translation Review Teams.

For more information, you can email the Translation Team at Toastmasters World Headquarters: translations@toastmasters.org.



TRAVELING TOASTMASTER



GET CREATIVE! Traveling *Toastmaster* wants to highlight creativity in quarantine! Take a picture in your home or socially distancing with your magazine or other Toastmasters memorabilia. Send your fun photos to photos@toastmasters.org.



1 | SANDRA FÉNELON of Montreal, Quebec, Canada, visits Mirador de Catalina, which overlooks the Apoyo Lagoon in Nicaragua in January.

2 | CURTIS HELT, DTM, and CRISTINA SCOBLE, DTM, of Las Vegas, Nevada, didn't travel far with their Toastmaster during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3 | MARIANA CARRASCO of Parlin, New Jersey, is thankful she could get some entertainment from her Toastmaster while quarantining in Valparaiso, Chile, after her flight home was canceled.

4 | ZAFAR AGHA of Spring, Texas, spent five weeks traveling through New Zealand earlier this year.



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

Savoring the Sounds of Speakers

Arizona club enables those with hearing loss to enjoy Toastmasters.

BY HARRY WOLFE

October 17, 2018, was a frightening day for me. On that day, I struggled to hear the speakers at my Toastmasters club, Park Central in Phoenix, Arizona. I feared I would have to drop out of an organization that I have enjoyed for more than 30 years.

Preparing and delivering speeches offered me mental stimulation, enhanced my communication skills, and allowed me to share my experiences with a group of people who had become my friends.

But that day my hearing aids failed to compensate for my hearing loss.

I needed to find a system that worked for the hard of hearing—people with hearing loss who rely on audible communication and not sign language. With more than 800,000 people with hearing loss in Maricopa County, where Phoenix is located, I thought many others would likely share my experience. (More than 360 million people worldwide experience hearing loss.)

I decided to establish a club accessible for the hard of hearing: Audible Talkers Toastmasters.

It's been about a year since we formed. Because of this club, located in Tempe, Arizona, I didn't have to quit Toastmasters—I have been able to continue my journey of listening to and learning from fellow members. In fact, being a member of Audible Talkers has inspired my goal of becoming a Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM).

Our club uses assistive hearing technology. When I set out to start the Audible Talkers, I called several organizations to ask if we could use their meeting rooms, which had the particular technology we needed. I didn't have much luck until I reached Michele Stokes, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance specialist for the city of Tempe. She happily allowed Audible Talkers to use a room in the city's public library equipped



Harry Wolfe discusses the Audible Talkers Toastmasters club in a District 3 podcast.

with a special type of sound system used by people with hearing loss.

Why was Michele so eager to help? “I am a former Toastmaster who has profound hearing loss,” she told me, “and I firmly believe in the strategies that Toastmasters uses to improve public speaking.” The Tempe Commission on Disability Concerns sponsored the club.

Because of this club, I didn't have to quit Toastmasters—I have been able to continue my journey listening to and learning from my fellow members.

On July 1, 2019, we held our first meeting: a demonstration meeting, with Toastmasters from other clubs filling the functional roles. One of our guests was Peggy Staples, president of a local chapter of the Hearing Loss Association

of America. “I had always wanted to be in Toastmasters but because of my hearing loss, I was fearful of attending a meeting and not being able to hear and fully participate,” she said.

Word about the club spread, and in November 2019 we reached the 20 members necessary to become an official Toastmasters club. Half of the members were hard of hearing.

In the first three months of 2020, members registered for Pathways, learned the roles of meeting functionaries, delivered speeches, and participated in various Toastmasters speech contests. Our Tall Tales representative at the Area Contest, Minerva Gutierrez, who has cochlear implants in both ears, credits the Audible Talkers club for her ability to participate in a speech contest for the first time.

When our club began holding virtual meetings via Zoom because of the coronavirus pandemic, participating in online meetings offered more benefits: We were fortunate to use a free captioning service provided through the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

The development of captioning options for Zoom and other video-conferencing platforms provides an opportunity for Toastmasters clubs around the world to add captions to their video meetings, making them accessible to hard of hearing people.

Although the coronavirus pandemic has changed how the world operates, the Audible Talkers Club is ready for the challenge. The club has shown that hearing loss doesn't need to mean the loss of Toastmasters in our lives. **T**

HARRY WOLFE has been a Toastmaster for more than 30 years and is currently a member of the Audible Talkers Toastmasters in Tempe, Arizona.

Are You Ready to Take on Toastmaster of the Day?

When you serve in this meeting role, four different leadership qualities will emerge.

BY MEGAN PRESTON MEYER

The Toastmaster of the Day keeps everything running smoothly. They manage the meeting, adhering to the agenda and ensuring that transitions between speakers are seamless and the session stays on time.

We often think of the role as a master of ceremonies, but it is much more than that. To be successful in the role you'll need to pull from four different personas: the Event Planner (master organizer), the Tour Guide (gracious host), the Engaging Emcee (keeping the audience interested), and the Efficient Administrator (punctuality is pivotal). When you serve in this meeting role, you can draw on qualities from all four of these personas. You will benefit immensely from practicing and honing these diverse leadership skills.

The Toastmaster of the Day is a multifaceted and demanding role. Because you get to use several different skill sets as you prepare and lead the session, it's an incredible opportunity to improve leadership skills across multiple dimensions.

Read on to learn more about these four leadership types.

The Event Planner

You may know the type—these people are ruthlessly organized, dogged on details, and utterly in control. They have lists of lists ([like this one](#)) and leave no box unchecked. That's the Toastmaster as they prepare for the meeting, making sure the agenda is planned down to the minute and the meeting runs accordingly.

In this role, you may want to check with a club officer, such as Vice President Education, to make sure all the meeting roles are filled well in advance, or reach out to the meeting evaluators to see how the speakers would like to be introduced.

If structured and detailed is not your natural style, even better! It's an opportunity to stretch yourself. Check all the details—especially those you might be tempted to gloss over. Are you familiar with all segments of the meeting agenda? Can you pronounce everyone's name correctly? And how about speech titles—is *Chasing the Bass* about fishing or hip-hop? Touch base with the speaker so you're 100% sure.

As Toastmaster of the Day, you speak more than anyone else at the meeting, and every utterance is an opportunity.

When the big day comes and the spotlight is on, it's easy to forget the details. You'll be glad your inner event planner left you so well prepared. Follow your agenda closely—and leave no box unchecked.

The Tour Guide

Toastmasters meetings—and clubs—each have their own culture. This can be intimidating, especially for guests who are not yet familiar with the jargon, norms, and unwritten rules. One of your main

tasks as Toastmaster of the meeting is to guide everyone comfortably and happily through the session. Public speaking is nerve-racking enough; no one should worry about doing the wrong thing at the wrong time and feeling silly.

Lay out exactly how the meeting is structured, and let guests know what is expected of them. Of course, they are encouraged to take part in Table Topics®, but are they allowed to vote for Best Speaker? Should they give individual feedback to speakers when club members are asked to provide that? Anticipate their questions.

It's not just guests who need answers, though. For instance, when our club started meeting in person again after the COVID-19 lockdown, we knew that some people would be worried about hygiene. The Toastmaster of the Day announced up front that it was a “contactless” meeting and he would forego the traditional handshake when welcoming a speaker to the stage. It was a graceful way to make sure that no one was put in a potentially uncomfortable situation.

Explain things clearly, set expectations, and eliminate ambiguity. Ease the way for members and guests to enjoy the journey.

The Engaging Emcee

Eager to practice connecting with an audience? Giving club speeches isn't the only way—the Toastmaster of the Day does a lot of speaking, and a good one engages all listeners.



Once the Club President hands the meeting over to you, the stage is yours for a mini monologue. Depending on your personality type, this may be energizing or terrifying (or both), but use the opportunity to go outside of your comfort zone. Don't be afraid to seize the spotlight as the emcee (also known as master of ceremonies) and put your personal stamp on the role.

The opening is not your only chance to engage the audience though. As Toastmaster of the Day, you speak more than anyone else at the meeting, and every utterance is an opportunity. Come up with a subtle theme for the meeting and sprinkle it throughout the session, whether you're thanking the speakers after they've



finished or transitioning to the next phase of the meeting. Anyone can read from a printout of the agenda; your job is to add some pizzazz!

As Toastmaster, you will be the most visible representative of the club, so don't be surprised if guests approach you after the meeting with questions. They *might* be asking for an autograph, but more likely, they're wondering about the club. Brush up on the membership process so you can answer basic questions, and make sure you know who the Vice President Membership is in case you need to defer to the expert.

The Efficient Administrator

From the time the meeting starts, the Toastmaster is a taskmaster (albeit a friendly one), keeping everyone on track and moving forward. Meetings are scheduled down to the minute, and your job is to make sure you end on time.

That doesn't mean it will be easy. No matter how scrupulously you've prepared, something will always go wrong. When the unexpected occurs, assess the situation and determine the best course of action. Is the second evaluator stuck in traffic? Shuffle her speaker to the end to buy a little time. Has the red timing signal been showing for more than a minute? Cut in and point out that Table Topics are *short* impromptu speeches and that *all* attendees would like a chance to participate.

For the duration of the meeting, you are the ultimate authority. This may be

daunting, depending on how much experience you have, but that's what Toastmasters is all about—putting yourself in tough situations and proving to yourself that you can soldier through them.

Act decisively, lead with authority, and—above all—stick to the agenda.

Putting It All Together

Because the duties are so varied, serving as Toastmaster of the Day is one of the most valuable ways to level up your leadership. You get to organize, guide, engage, and command, all in the space of one session.

Some of these leadership styles may come naturally, but others will not—providing a great excuse to get out of your comfort zone. If you're more of an Event Planner, plan to pull from the Engaging Emcee. If you're more of an Efficient Administrator, decide to guide your group graciously.

Determine which of these personas you want to work on, and use this opportunity to improve your skills. When the gavel drops at the end of the meeting, you'll have mastered more than just the ceremony. **T**

Megan Preston Meyer is a member of TM International Club Zug in Zug, Switzerland, and a regular contributor to *Toastmaster magazine*. She holds an MBA, worked for nearly a decade in analytics and insights, and now focuses on the stories that data doesn't tell.

LEADING AN ONLINE MEETING

The Toastmaster role will not change much other than needing a camera and making sure that the other meeting roles and speakers are prepared to participate in an online meeting. Here are a few tips to get you started:

- ▶ Join the meeting 15 minutes early to greet members as they arrive on the screen
- ▶ Help with technical issues if you can
- ▶ Display the agenda on the screen
- ▶ Explain the process of meeting online, especially for first-time guests and new members

Visit the [Online Meetings](#) page on the Toastmasters website for additional resources and [watch this video](#) for tips on taking on meeting roles in a virtual setting.

Surveys Speak Volumes

Member-satisfaction polls lead to valuable club feedback.

BY STEPHANIE DARLING

To pilot a thriving Toastmasters club, leadership teams need a clear vision of the purpose of their club and how they can best help members achieve their goals. Leaders should be backed by enthusiastic member support and eagerness to participate—something that can often be easier said than done. So how can your club create and sustain an energetic and successful culture that benefits everyone?

Start by asking questions. Survey your members at least once a year, if not more often. Some club leaders may be looking for specific individual input to enhance new member experiences, assure they are helping members grow, or better match mentors and mentees. Other club leaders may want broad, whole-club responses to help them develop an annual Club Success Plan, which, in turn, can make achieving Distinguished Club status an easier goal. Hopefully, member surveys will help you improve both members' experience and your overall club quality.

As a leader, you want to understand the interests and goals of individuals, and how those personal objectives align with and support overall club excellence. Regular member feedback will help ensure you are on the right track to successfully engage each person *and* channel that satisfaction back into a vibrant club setting.

Need more reasons to survey your members?

- ▶ Members will ultimately be more invested in club initiatives they help create. Surveys also send a clear message that leaders want to understand members' goals and opinions, and are open to hearing ideas, changes, and even constructive criticism.
- ▶ Understanding what makes your members tick adds clarity to nearly every club function, including relevant programs, succession planning, new member recruitment, fun, and best of all, retaining members in a vibrant club. "One of the most overlooked keys to member retention is reading member interest surveys," says Craig Harrison, DTM, a member of Silicon Valley ImprovMasters in San Jose, California.
- ▶ When conducted regularly, surveys provide a club quality benchmark. In essence, member surveys are a form of evaluation, a practice clubs already value highly. Sometimes, as clubs grow bigger and busier, and as leadership turns over every year, officers aren't able to keep in close touch with every member. Surveys help fix unintended communication gaps.
- ▶ Finally, surveys can help track the evolving interests of each member, a key factor in retention. While people *join* your club for certain reasons, they *belong* because they are enjoying ongoing value.

Whether your club already has a survey process in hand or you're looking for new ways to gather feedback, Toastmasters offers plenty of resources, which are all suited for online or in-person use.

Where to Start

If you're looking for baseline member feedback, distribute the Toastmasters [Member Interest Survey](#) and/or the [New Member Profile Sheet](#). Questions focus on an individual's goals, leadership aspirations, club likes and dislikes, and fresh ideas. Members can email the fillable PDF to a designated person, often the Vice President Membership or Education (VPM/VPE).

For members who may be reluctant to address problems in the club, try the [Club Quality Checklist](#). It can be done anonymously and will give leaders an idea of some adjustments they may want to make.

Club leaders can refer to the [Moments of Truth](#) module in the [Successful Club Series](#). It guides a current leader or a club coach in objectively evaluating how a club is running—from first impressions to fellowship to meeting organization. While designed for the broader purpose of creating the annual Club Success Plan, it's a good way to evaluate the workings of your club.

Many clubs craft their own surveys, drawing from the above suggestions and their own needs and questions. Leaders



Toastmasters International
MEMBER INTEREST SURVEY

Member Name _____
Club Name _____

Goals
List two goals you wish to accomplish this year as a Toastmaster:
1. _____
2. _____
List two objectives you want to accomplish in the next five months in support of those goals:
1. _____
2. _____

Interests

Personal and Professional	High Interest	Some Interest	No Interest
Improve club thinking skills			
Improve meeting skills			
Improve speaking skills			
Improve leadership skills if you wish			
Improve communication skills if you wish			
Improve evaluation skills			

Club Involvement	High Interest	Some Interest	No Interest
Attend all meetings for a year			
Attend all club events			
Attend all club social events			
Attend all club public appearances			
Attend all club conventions or rallies			
Attend all club seminars and workshops			

Outside the Club	High Interest	Some Interest	No Interest
Lead or help with a District project			
Lead or help with a Region leadership program			
Lead or help with a Club leadership program			
Lead or help with a public appearance program			
Lead or help with a community service project			

Within the District	High Interest	Some Interest	No Interest
Attend all District meetings			
Attend all District conventions			
Attend all District seminars			
Attend all District workshops			
Attend all District rallies			
Attend all District social events			
Attend all District public appearances			
Attend all District conventions or rallies			
Attend all District seminars and workshops			



CLUB QUALITY CHECKLIST

Evaluate your club with this easy tool.
Fill in four boxes on what a perfect Toastmasters Club is like. It involves enjoyable meetings, unlimited learning opportunities, friendly members... and what else?
This checklist offers you the chance to see your club's strengths and weaknesses against the "ideal."
Complete this questionnaire, then give it to your club president, who will discuss the answers with the club's officers.

Club Meetings

1. Is your meeting location conveniently located, accessible and user-friendly? Yes No
2. Are the program and agenda published, reviewed or a club website in advance? Yes No
3. Do club meetings start and end on time? Yes No
4. Does the meeting follow an agenda? Yes No
5. Does every member have a name badge? Yes No
6. Are all guests and members warmly greeted and welcomed? Yes No
7. Are all guests introduced to others? Yes No
8. Is the meeting atmosphere friendly, pleasant and enjoyable? Yes No

Club Officers

9. Do club officers have the necessary skills to lead the club? Yes No
10. Do club officers have the necessary skills to manage the club? Yes No
11. Do club officers have the necessary skills to represent the club? Yes No
12. Do club officers have the necessary skills to promote the club? Yes No
13. Do club officers have the necessary skills to evaluate the club? Yes No
14. Do club officers have the necessary skills to improve the club? Yes No
15. Do club officers have the necessary skills to develop the club? Yes No
16. Do club officers have the necessary skills to sustain the club? Yes No
17. Do club officers have the necessary skills to grow the club? Yes No
18. Do club officers have the necessary skills to change the club? Yes No
19. Do club officers have the necessary skills to lead the club? Yes No
20. Do club officers have the necessary skills to manage the club? Yes No
21. Do club officers have the necessary skills to represent the club? Yes No
22. Do club officers have the necessary skills to promote the club? Yes No
23. Do club officers have the necessary skills to evaluate the club? Yes No
24. Do club officers have the necessary skills to improve the club? Yes No
25. Do club officers have the necessary skills to develop the club? Yes No
26. Do club officers have the necessary skills to sustain the club? Yes No
27. Do club officers have the necessary skills to grow the club? Yes No
28. Do club officers have the necessary skills to change the club? Yes No

Draw on feedback from member surveys to create a high-quality club that people will want to join—and rejoin.



can design a custom Word document, a fillable PDF form, or Google doc.

Follow up for Feedback

Distributing the surveys may not be difficult, yet reeling in responses is not always easy.

“We do a member interest survey and yes, sometimes it’s like pulling teeth to get responses back. We encourage mentors to remind their mentees to respond and ask that club officers lead by example and return their responses in a timely manner,” says Greg Gazin, DTM, a member of Go Pro Speakers and New Entrepreneurs Club in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. “One thing we did that helped the response rate was to give members an example of a completed survey to review,” he adds.

Diligence is a tactic favored by Megha Jindal, a member of Empower Toastmasters in Bangkok, Thailand, and Feedbackers Toastmasters Club in Forest Grove, Oregon. Club Presidents start each new year surveying members via Google

(which offers forms to survey and collect information). “We follow up to ensure we get a 75% response rate,” she notes. “It’s a good pulse check.”

New Members, Mentors, and Prospects

Surveying new members right away is a must, says Kevin Markl, a member of Prep Squad in Dublin, California, and Hacienda Park Toastmasters in San Ramon, California. “It’s important for them to understand how our self-paced learning program can help them,” he notes.

The [Member Interest Survey](#) can be helpful not only to club leaders for gauging goals but also for engaging conversation between mentors and mentees. The form helps clubs find the best mentor to “hold [mentees] accountable as they work toward those goals,” while also allowing mentees to share their goals and ask for help, Markl adds. Cassandra Cockrill, DTM, a former District 57 (Northern California) leader, believes in surveying prospects.

She designed an interest questionnaire to print and give to club guests, with every box in the brief survey representing a skill Toastmasters teaches.

“It’s a good conversion tool,” she says. “When people check almost every box, then *they* are clear on how much they *need* and *want* this training. This survey was highly effective and helped VPEs encourage progress that met the specific needs of each member.”

Member Retention

As noted earlier, member surveys offer insight and ideas for changes that are key to successful member retention. Harrison, the ImprovMasters club member, says if you monitor your members’ changing interests, you can keep them aware of all that Toastmasters offers.

“Once most members achieve their initial goals, they need new challenges. But they may not be aware of additional growth opportunities in Pathways, leadership, and other pursuits to glean or hone new skills,” he says, noting that the alliance between Toastmasters and Rotary International is a good example of all-new, intriguing possibilities.

“You can keep members for life if you support a learner’s mindset. There’s so much more to experience once members’ initial fears are conquered and goals met,” he says.

Your leadership team may discover that member surveys speak volumes—and provide an invaluable earpiece in learning what members need to join—and stay.

As your club accelerates into the 2020–2021 program year, be sure there are plenty of member voices supporting your efforts. If you’re not sure about your members’ goals or what they’re looking for, ask them. It’s never too late. **T**

Stephanie Darling is senior editor for the *Toastmaster magazine*.



Meet

Richard E. Peck, DTM

Toastmasters' 2020-2021 International President is always game to learn—about himself and his fellow members.

BY STEPHANIE DARLING

As a lifelong learner, Richard E. Peck, DTM, is quick to embrace all types of engaging experiences, especially when it comes to supporting Toastmasters around the world.



Peck asked to wear the white robe and keffiyeh headpiece, traditionally worn by men throughout the Arabian Peninsula, when attending the 2019 District 20 Annual Conference in Bahrain.



Richard and Bettyann Peck, at the 2019 International Convention in Denver, Colorado.

He's ridden go-karts on an international karting track with members of District 20 in Bahrain; enthusiastically accepted an unexpected mentor request in the middle of an online meeting sponsored by the Shanghai Xujiahui Toastmasters Club; dropped by a club meeting to virtually support a new member giving her first Ice Breaker in District 26; and worked diligently to learn the proper pronunciation of each Chinese name prior to installing District 85 officers, although he's not sure how well he did.

In the months before taking office, Peck anticipated a year of stability, along with plenty of the planned and serendipitous member engagement and learning experiences he has enjoyed since joining his home club, Nutmeg, in Woodbridge, Connecticut, in 2006. He is currently the club's Vice President Education, and also a member of Park City Toastmasters of Stratford in Stratford, Connecticut.

“When I first joined as a club member, I quickly realized that I could talk, but I couldn't communicate.”

“As I looked at my coming term, Toastmasters was trending well. I wanted to build on that and yet also give members a time to be settled, to work on personal growth, with no major organizational changes,” he laughs.

Then came the coronavirus pandemic, threatening the very viability of Toastmasters' long-standing, in-person club structure and self-driven education program. Peck quickly realized there would be hard decisions, rapid change—and astounding opportunity on a worldwide scale.

“We were dropped into this situation, and we have to find ways to work within it and still give our members what they need. Fundamentally, there will be some organizational shifts and we still don't know precisely what the end result will look like,” he says.

However, as an electrical engineer with an MBA degree and an ardent interest in international business and culture,

Peck is exhilarated by the connective opportunities for Toastmasters clubs

no longer constrained by geography.

“As an organization, I feel that we will come out of this current situation wiser, our members will come out of this as a more closely knit community, and there will be a greater realization that the borders between us, real or imagined, can be overcome with just a little ingenuity. I also feel that our members are becoming more culturally aware through their ability to join club meetings around the world and experience a different culture, even if just for a short time,” he says.

“In the years to come we will look back on decisions made in difficult times and know that we rose to the challenge, that we put our members first, and that we faced the unknown and stood strong.”

Keep reading to learn more about Toastmasters International President Peck.

Why did you join Toastmasters and why have you stayed?

I met Les Brown, who received Toastmasters' Golden Gavel award in 1994, at a workshop. He asked if I'd ever thought about public speaking. I hadn't, as I was well into my career with AT&T at that point.

But later I wondered, why did he ask? So I called and asked his recommendations for taking such a step. The first suggestion out of his mouth was to join Toastmasters. So I did.

When I first joined as a club member, I quickly realized that I could talk, but I couldn't communicate. I hadn't had to worry about those skills for much of my career until Toastmasters showed me totally different learning avenues to pursue.

What really hooked me was quickly realizing that because we are club- and member-based, we can actually witness change in individuals. Someone is terrified in their first few speeches, and 10 speeches in they are commanding the room because they've had that metamorphosis about who they are. That's kept me hooked.

How would you describe your leadership philosophy and leadership style?

I've used this phrase in some of my keynotes—leadership is not about being the center of attention, it's about being the epicenter of action. If you are willing to take a leadership role with no

title or credit, you're there for the right reasons. If not, a title is leading you.

As for leadership style, a Past International President once jokingly referred to me as "the lawyer," for my tendency to listen carefully and not be the first to jump into a discussion. I function best when taking time to formulate my thoughts before acting—but as with any personality trait, not everyone perceives it the way you mean it. We all have primary traits, yet they don't work in every situation, so I've learned to be adaptable. Basically, as a leader you are never, ever going to have full knowledge of the skills needed for every situation. Just when you think you have

MR. PRESIDENT, I HAVE A QUESTION

In this brief Q&A, International President Richard E. Peck, DTM, answers a few questions from members around the world.

I believe corporate and community clubs have different needs and priorities, especially during COVID-19. Now that Pathways is the official education program, will Toastmasters International revamp the way it helps to grow clubs in the corporate setting?

Sudha Krishnamoorthy, DTM
Fremont, California

I absolutely agree that corporate clubs, regardless of COVID, have different needs. The Corporate Relationships Committee presented a series of recommendations to the Board of Directors to help strengthen the support for corporate clubs. Unfortunately, due to the virus, we have had to delay implementation of these recommendations but hope to address them in the near future.

Do leaders have anxiety? If so, how do they overcome it?

Sethupathy T.S., DTM
Mesaieed, Qatar

Speaking for myself, yes! Anxiety comes from wanting to deliver your very best in every situation. I also think having anxiety shows you have a passion for what you're doing. If I am visiting a District, I want to ensure that everyone benefits and sees value. If I'm visiting a corporation or doing a media spot, I want to make sure that I am representing Toastmasters International properly. However, I don't

necessarily try to overcome anxiety but rather use it as a motivator to be at my best for the job at hand.

How can Toastmasters clubs optimize the value of remote and in-person meetings?

Carrie Webster
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

This will be the subject of considerable conversation by the Board in the coming months. As a result of COVID-19, we have adapted our traditional ways of doing things to the current environment. It's possible that some clubs may now want to function as hybrids, offering both meeting formats. As we move forward, the most important issue will be to evaluate innovative ways to meet the needs of our members and continue to grow our organization. The use of online meetings will be just one of many things to consider.

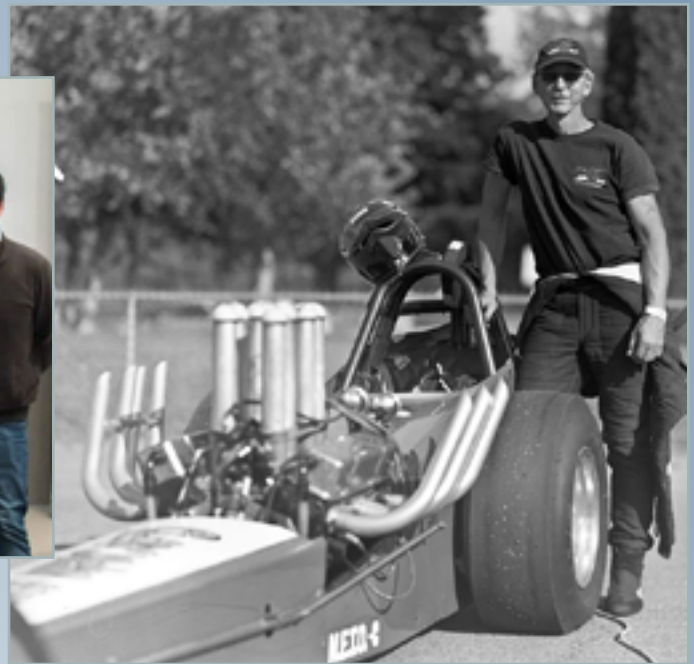
Will virtual Club Officer Training be allowed once the COVID-19 crisis is over, without having to obtain special permission?

Stephanie Srader, DTM
Blue Spring, Missouri

I was part of a conversation on this topic recently and learned there are no policies or documents that prevent or require permission for virtual/online training. Training needs to be presented in a "live" format and offer more than just watching a video. Of course, because of the experiential learning value, in-person training is always encouraged. Districts planning online training should contact World Headquarters to ask questions and get suggestions, ideas, and best practices for optimal training results.



Peck joined the Lisbon MBA Toastmasters Club as a guest speaker at the NOVA School of Business and Economics in Carcavelos, Portugal, during a 2018 visit to District 107.



Peck, an avid drag racing hobbyist, stands with his 1963 Front Engine Dragster, also known as a slingshot, due to its shape.

it all figured out, something new comes along—and so you add something into your skill set.

What is your advice to Toastmasters interested in pursuing leadership roles, especially at the international level?

I can only speak for myself as I didn't join Toastmasters with the mindset of becoming International President. However, I'd advise building and practicing skills at each level you achieve. Look for evaluators, someone who can give you a sense of your strengths and weaknesses. Find a mentor—in fact, find ones that specialize in every expertise you'd like to learn, and mentors in different parts of the world if possible.

“Leadership is not about being the center of attention, it’s about being the epicenter of action.”

Be self-aware. You may think you're a great leader because you keep moving up—but is that because no one is running against you? Road test those skills. When I lost my first run for 2nd Vice President in 2016, I was devastated. I'd never lost before. Then I realized I hadn't really won anything because I'd been relying on existing skills. I was pushed hard in that election but hadn't allowed myself to increase the skills I needed for the position. The voting members were right—I hadn't risen to the level of the leader they saw the organization needed.

First, be the great leader in the role you are in. Then, if the opportunity arises, build the skills to continue. It may be that you can have far more impact as, for example, an Area Director on the individuals you work most closely with. An International President has to see and do things differently at that level.

Beyond the Boardroom:

The Personal Richard Peck

Spouse: Peck describes his wife, Bettyann Peck, DTM, as “my rock and support throughout my leadership journey.” She is a member of Park City Toastmasters of Stratford in Stratford, Connecticut, and serves as District 53 Public Relations Manager. Bettyann is a former Area Director who teases her husband at times that she earned her DTM before he did.

Around the House: Peck enjoys cooking. He's especially fond of baking since it's an exacting science that requires attention to detail. Both Pecks are adventurous foodies, having tried foods ranging from fried ants and chili crab, to the local cuisine at a hawker center in Singapore.

Picturesque: As an amateur photographer, Peck enjoys sharing the hobby with fellow Toastmasters around the world. One of his favorite stops recently was virtually joining the Lensmasters Toastmasters Club in Costa Mesa, California. Combining speaking and artistic skills, this club's amateur and professional photographers craft their Table Topics® sessions around photos provided by members.

Fast Times: Peck jokes that he learned the meaning of leadership after assembling a dragster car racing crew he could trust with his life. The crew oversees the automotive details while Peck buckles into the cockpit, hits the gas, and rockets the car down a quarter-mile strip, reaching 157 miles per hour in 8.1 seconds. A parachute fires out of the back end to stop the car. He and Bettyann are the only two people allowed to pack the parachute, Peck notes, wryly. **T**

Stephanie Darling is senior editor for the Toastmaster magazine.

What Does Integrity Really Mean?

Why Toastmasters' core values matter.

BY BETH BLACK

In Toastmasters, all members are guided by a set of essential core values: *integrity, respect, service, and excellence*. These values enable member achievement through club excellence. In fact, through the process of practicing and learning in Toastmasters clubs, we discover that the fourth value—excellence—cannot exist without adherence to the first three. And of those, the very first value is perhaps the most important. Let's take a closer look at *integrity*. It's a key value for good reason.

Three Meanings of Integrity

As Toastmasters International Chief Executive Officer Daniel Rex has said, "The entire Toastmasters program depends on the integrity of each member; that is why it is our first core value." Through our experiences in Toastmasters, we become better people who take the lessons we learn in the club and apply them in our families, communities, and careers. Integrity leads to success in the wide-ranging landscapes of our lives. But what does integrity really mean?

The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary offers three definitions:

1. firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic values
2. an unimpaired condition
3. the quality or state of being complete or undivided

Each form of integrity builds success in its own way. A club must have

incorruptibility (adhering to the club mission and all rules), soundness (a solid foundation), and completeness (collaboration and participation) in order to survive and thrive through any challenge. Whether it's the classic struggle to attract more club members or the recent effort to conduct meetings and education projects online, the solutions that champion club integrity lead to personal and professional growth. For example, when we adhere to a code of values when competing in speech contests, we strengthen our powers of communication and persuasion.

Know the Rules So You Can Follow Them

Toastmasters Past International President Jim Kokocki (2015-2016), DTM, places high value on having a code of conduct in Toastmasters and in life. "When our members learn to communicate organizational goals with people who can help achieve them, and then pursue the goals guided by core values, they become well-equipped to serve their organizations and the world," he says. Kokocki sees that definition as an excellent starting point for developing personal integrity. "Without people who are dependable, honest, and forthright, no organization could continue to grow and thrive in today's world," he says.

Kokocki suggests a discussion around core values for Table Topics®. Start by

asking: *What does integrity mean to our club?* From there, you can build questions around each of the values and their meanings.

Tip: Your club members will benefit when the rules to speech contests are clearly understood and followed. Violations of contest rules can cause disqualifications and are not fair to fellow participants. Begin by reading, sharing, discussing, and observing the detailed guidelines presented in the [Speech Contest Rulebook](#). Every time you make an effort to learn the rules of any activity, you're more likely to get them right and adhere to the agreed-upon code of moral or artistic values.

Protect Your Club's Reputation

Unethical behavior has the power to destroy the structural integrity of an entire organization. This is one reason Toastmasters International lists integrity first in its core values. As Michelle Alba-Lim, DTM, of Sutherlin, Oregon, puts it: "I have come to understand why we state Toastmasters' core values as integrity first. The acronym [for "integrity, respect, service, and excellence"] is 'IRSE.' Even though 'RISE' would make a better acronym, without integrity the other core values would lose their true meaning. ... We put its letter first, because integrity is more than just a value we teach—it's critically important to the credibility and

solidity of any organization in which our members participate.”

Tip: Once your club members understand the rules, a good means of preserving the condition of your club is displaying *transparency* in your attempt to follow those rules. Be open with everyone about expectations and outcomes. For example, you can create a poster that shows time restrictions on speeches in all categories. If your club meets online, you can create a shared document that displays time requirements. When the club timer reports exact times, it aids transparency, so that no one questions the condition of your club’s integrity. Follow these steps with all the rules, so that everyone understands all speech requirements and how well they were met.

Completeness of Individuals Leads to Completeness of Clubs

Currently, this application of integrity is the most relevant to the success of all members. With the advent of COVID-19, a high percentage of clubs have been forced to move their meetings online for safety’s sake. While it’s likely a temporary situation, this offers both challenges and opportunities.

While many clubs have been successful in transitioning to meeting online, others have hesitated. It’s a call to action for every club leader to ensure that *all* members have access to club meetings, understand the technical requirements, and continue to participate. Are you persistently reaching out to those who haven’t connected and helping them

“The entire Toastmasters program depends on the integrity of each member; that is why it is our first core value.”

— TOASTMASTERS CHIEF
EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DANIEL REX



find their way online? You can preserve your club’s integrity by respecting its individuals.

Also, seize the opportunity to serve your club members as they grow and adapt in a changing world. The skills they develop will benefit them personally and professionally through society’s shift toward the new normal of online interconnectedness. As leaders, you can build on the experience of setting up and participating in [online meetings](#). Even after you return to in-person club meetings, you’ll have gained effective skills to help promote your club online. Through Toastmasters’ core values, starting with integrity, we can make a real difference in our clubs and in the world.

Tip: Integrity in this form is not just about your club or District. More importantly, it’s about helping each individual member reach their personal and professional goals. Are the leaders of your club checking in with all members to confirm that they’re making progress toward achieving their goals? If you haven’t already done so, make sure to take full advantage of the [Pathways Mentor Program](#). Club leaders can go a long way in assisting mentorship, even among seasoned members. By making mentoring a regular club activity, you’re supporting the integrity—the journey toward reaching one’s full potential—of your fellow members. **T**

Beth Black is a freelance writer and former Toastmaster who lives in Orange County, California. Learn more about her at www.PracticalPoet.com.



The Power of Body Language

Have something important to say?
Make sure your gestures support
your message.

BY DAVE ZIELINSKI

What's the difference between a memorable speech and one that is quickly forgotten? Researchers say hand gestures are key.

Speakers should strive to convey confidence and expertise through their stage presence. Nonverbal messaging—body language—is a key part of public speaking and has been a hot topic of research. What is it about a speaker's gestures and posture that make audiences transition from being indifferent to engaged?

A few experts in particular have studied the effects of body language. Vanessa Van Edwards, David JP Phillips, and Jesse Scinto, DTM, have spent years analyzing the impact of body language on speeches. Van Edwards researches human behavior, communication, and the science of relationships, and delivered a TEDxLondon talk, "[You Are Contagious.](#)" She is the founder of Science of People, an organization based in Portland, Oregon, and author of *Captivate: The Science of Succeeding with People*.

When Van Edwards set out to study the factors separating viral TED Talks from other, less popular TED Talks, she learned that body language and nonverbal behaviors played a key role in how well speakers' messages resonated with audiences.



Van Edwards agrees with the Toastmasters philosophy that effective use of body language helps speakers gain confidence, increases their influence, and allows them to become better presenters and professionals.

The Surprising Power of Body Language

In Van Edwards' study of body language, 760 volunteers rated hundreds of hours of TED Talk videos posted on TED.com in 2010 to examine speakers' body language and nonverbal patterns. Edwards discovered one eye-opening finding that stood out: There was no difference in the ratings of researchers who watched the TED Talks on mute with no text displayed



What is it about a speaker's gestures and posture that make audiences transition from being indifferent to engaged?

and those who watched the talks with sound. Van Edwards says that discovery suggests that the nonverbal behaviors speakers employ—how they use their bodies to communicate rather than simply what they say—has more impact on audience perception than previously thought.

“We wanted to know if there were any big differences between the most popular TED speakers and the least popular, according to view count,” she says. “The biggest thing we noticed in the study was the correlation of the volume of hand gestures to high speaker ratings.” The lowest-rated TED Talks in her particular study had an average of 124,000 views and speakers used an average of 272 hand gestures during their 18-minute talks, she

says. But the top-rated TED Talks had an average of 7.3 million views and used an average of 465 hand gestures.

It wasn't just the number of hand gestures that separated the best TED Talks from the others, Van Edwards found, but rather the type of gestures speakers selected and how they were used.

“The best speakers used congruent gestures,” she says. “Those were gestures that added meaning or depth to words. If a TED speaker said they had a big idea, they held their hands out wide like carrying a heavy load. If a speaker said they had three ideas, they held up three fingers.”

Van Edwards has observed many speakers using various nonverbal techniques in her Science of People laboratories.

“The biggest mistake people can make is thinking about nonverbals like an interpretive dance,” she says. “While hand gestures are



David JP Phillips

incredibly powerful for comprehension, charisma, and fluency, there is such a thing as too much of a good thing.”

Rather than scripting speeches with nonverbal signs and interpreting every point with their hands, Van Edwards’ advice to speakers is “watch a video of yourself speaking to see where you naturally add hand gestures. These are where you can dial it up. If you feel unnatural doing a hand gesture, don’t do it. The audience picks up on that as well.”

Another nonverbal message also stood out as important: smiling. Whether or not a speaker had a funny or more serious topic, she says, “The more smiling, the higher the views.”

This finding helped free her as a speaker. “In the past I thought if I’m speaking about a serious topic, I’d better look serious,” she says. “Now I know we always want something to smile about, and [that] a little bit of laughter helps with retention and learning.”

Body Language and “Thin Slicing”

The term “thin slicing” refers to the tendency to judge others within moments of meeting them or seeing them walk onstage to speak. Van Edwards’ TED Talks research found that nonverbal behaviors have an outsized impact on these first impressions. Viewers decide if they like a TED Talk within the first seven seconds, she says, and that impression has very little to do with the words speakers use.

“As speakers, we often forget that our first impression happens *before* we even start speaking,” Van Edwards says. “It happens when you are doing your technology check or even when you’re in the audience waiting for the event to start. Don’t forget that your stage presence starts the moment you walk into the room.”

While you’re interacting with the audience before a speech, Van Edwards advises having “visible hands,” making eye contact with people as you walk by, relaxing your shoulders, and keeping your head and chest high.

The details of posture—how we stand and move onstage, even tilting our head—not only helps the audience to pay attention but also helps us feel more confident onstage.



Vanessa Van Edwards

Importance of Synchronizing Nonverbals and Speech

Other researchers around the world have conducted their own studies on the use of body language and nonverbal patterns in public speaking. David JP Phillips, an international speaker, author, and CEO of a presentation-skills training company in Västerås, Sweden, spent seven years studying 5,000 speakers around the world. From that research, Phillips was able to distill 110 separate skills that help separate great from good speakers. The study is fully detailed in Phillips’ [TEDxZagreb Talk](#), “The 110 Techniques of Communication and Public Speaking.”

While hand and arm gestures are a key part of body language, Phillips says the details of posture—how we stand and move on stage, even tilting our head—not only help the audience to pay attention to your message but also help us feel more confident onstage. He emphasizes using “open” versus “closed” body language. So rather than crossing your arms or placing them in pockets, or taking a step back when speaking, focus on keeping your arms by your side when not using them to gesture, lean slightly forward to make a point, and have your body weight equally centered over both legs. Even how the head is positioned matters: Tilt it slightly forward toward the audience as part of your open body language, and tilt it slightly to one side to show empathy.

Phillips agrees with Van Edwards that hand gestures should have a specific purpose and match the message. “The best speakers also used a distinct stop to hand movements they

HOW BODY LANGUAGE MATTERS WHEN SPEAKING ONLINE

Joe Navarro, a body language expert who has studied nonverbal behavior for more than four decades, says not to overlook the importance of body language in virtual settings where speakers are often stationary and only their upper torsos are projected on screen.

Navarro, co-author of *What Every Body is Saying: An Ex FBI Agent's Guide to Speed-Reading People*, says body language becomes even more important during videoconferences where fewer contextual cues are generated by speakers or audiences to help interpret how messages are being delivered or received.

Here are his tips for presenting or leading meetings online:

▶ **Pay attention to how you position your face.** “You want to fill no more than one-third of the screen when speaking online,” Navarro says. “Many people place the camera too close to their face. If you watch the best television broadcasters, you’ll see they never fill more than a third of the screen with their face.”

- ▶ **Adjust your use of hand gestures for the new medium.** Use hand gestures in a way that emphasizes your messages but doesn’t distract viewers. “Human beings as a species have a need to see hands,” Navarro says. “But gestures that are too broad won’t be seen on webcam, so ideally they should be made in front of you somewhere between your breastbone and chin, and no wider than your shoulders.” When not using your hands to gesture, place them on a desk or table where they can still be seen.
- ▶ **Continue to use nonverbal cues to show listening and interest.** “You should still nod or tilt your head on camera to acknowledge you’re actively listening and are engaged,” Navarro says.

Finally, lean in slightly to the camera when someone says something compelling, and avoid looking off to the side of the screen to check emails or texts, which signals disinterest.

made either out to the left or right, rather than a ‘sloppy’ stop,” he says. “That distinct ending of a gesture was associated with higher credibility.”

Phillips also found that many speakers struggled with effectively using facial expressions to support their spoken messages. “It was unusual in the research to see a well-animated face,” he says. “That is problematic because it’s the part of your body an audience tends to look at the most.” Besides the benefits to the audience of a speaker’s warm smile, Phillips points out it delivers benefits to the speaker as well. In an Ideas.TED.com article he says, “As our emotions work from the inside out and the outside in, it means that you can affect your own emotional state in a positive way by smiling on stage.”

Those speakers in his research who mastered the use of body language demonstrated a high level of synchronicity between their gestures, mannerisms, and words. “If your movements aren’t carefully synchronized with what you’re saying, it causes a disturbance for your audience.”

Using Three Types of Gestures Effectively

Jesse Scinto, DTM, a member of Greenspeakers Club in New York, New York, and a professor of strategic communication at Columbia University in New York City, also is an expert in the use of body language in public speaking. Scinto says while it’s common for people to group all hand gestures in one category, in reality three different types of gestures should be used selectively, based on the intent of spoken words.

Scinto, who also is CEO of the company Public Sphere, which conducts presentation skills training, classifies gestures in three different categories: *dramatic* hand gestures that should be used to act out scenes or actions being described; *emphatic* gestures to drive home or underscore a point; and *orchestrated* gestures, the scripted kind often used by television broadcasters to help clarify or highlight messages. “It’s important to make a conscious decision about which of the three gestures you’ll use for specific purposes,” he says.

Scinto recommends being intentional about how you move on stage or in front of an audience. “Some speakers like to walk while they speak, but there is a risk of looking like a caged tiger if it’s not done right,” he says. Instead, he recommends to stand still and plant your feet before delivering a thought or point. “The more settled you look, the more authoritative you usually look,” Scinto says. “If you do need to move, pause your speech, walk to where you’d like to go, and only then start speaking again after you’ve stopped moving.”

Consider how this research on body language can help you perfect your craft. By studying lessons from these findings, you can choose and apply the nonverbal behaviors proven to have the biggest impact on audience perception and content retention. **T**

Editor’s Note: “*Effective Body Language*” is a Level 3 elective project available in all 11 paths in the Pathways program.

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Riding Through Adversity to Victory

Toastmaster and blind equestrian Deborah McAlexander helps others open their eyes to life's possibilities.

BY STEPHANIE DARLING

The good news is, you're here to train," the world-renowned riding instructor told his new client in March 2019. "The bad news is, you don't do anything right in dressage."

Toastmaster Deborah McAlexander wasn't bothered in the least by this matter-of-fact evaluation. She was an experienced rider, although admittedly new to the precision equestrian sport of dressage. However, she had been rising above life's challenges for more than 40 years after becoming legally blind in her early 20s. She knew her passion for a dream—to represent the United States in para dressage at the 2021 Paralympics in Japan, and the 2022 World Equestrian Games in Denmark—would lift her over this challenge too.

Life's hurdles can be "overwhelming obstacles or empowering energizers," McAlexander notes. "It's not about what happens to you but how you choose to handle it." And she knew exactly how to handle her dream of riding in the world's most prestigious equine show rings.

In spring 2019, at age 64, McAlexander moved from Missouri to Wylie, Texas, to train six days a week at the North Texas Equestrian Center. The facility is considered a center of excellence by the United States Equestrian Federation (USEF), which governs equestrian sport in America. She trains with her initial "evaluator," Kai Handt, the only USEF-recognized para-dressage trainer at the master level in the U.S. McAlexander has grown passionate about dressage,

which requires horse and rider to execute a pattern of complicated movements using only exquisitely subtle, nonverbal communication between them.

"Toastmasters teaches us to go into any arena in life with confidence and the communication skills to hear and be heard."

—DEBORAH MCALEXANDER

Now, less than two years later, McAlexander and her equine partner, an 11-year-old Bavarian Warmblood named Cornet Noir, are advancing rapidly in the sport. They are regularly "in the ribbons" at horse shows and are qualifying for regional and national events.

The Ride of a Lifetime

In the equestrian world, "para" refers to a sport in which riders with a physical impairment compete on a parallel basis with able-bodied riders at an Olympic level. McAlexander follows the same training and during competition, executes the same precise movements required of any elite dressage rider. Yet she is legally blind, with no light perception in one eye and only a tiny straw of center vision in the other eye. She was just 24, and a scholarship performance violinist at the St. Louis Conservatory of Music, when

she was diagnosed with the genetic disease, retinitis pigmentosa.

It was initially a bitter pill. However, she was sustained by her lifelong love of music, realizing that "there is nothing more joyful than making sound." She chose to refocus on piano and from that point, there was no looking back, nor any adversity that kept her down for long.

"Adopting the mindset that you will conquer and not be conquered will ultimately change you," McAlexander says. For her, the term "vision" took on a far more important meaning than just being able to see. "Losing eyesight is far less significant than losing vision beyond eyesight," she adds.

McAlexander went on to earn a master's degree in piano performance and flourished during a 28-year career as a professional pianist and educator. She wrote music, created a charitable foundation to advocate for the disabled, and built a motivational speaking career.

"I try to take that little straw of light from what's preserved of my eyesight and use it to open others' eyes to what's possible, to find their dreams," she explains. Not surprisingly, she finds that equestrian sport offers powerful lessons in life skills—such as discipline, faith, trust, strength, and compassion—that matter in an often unpredictable world.

The Toastmasters Connection

Toastmasters has had a strong influence on her life. McAlexander joined Capital Toastmasters in Jefferson City, Missouri,



Photo by Rachel Zent Handt



FROM TOP LEFT:

Deborah McAlexander and Cornet Noir sport a regional U.S. dressage championship ribbon, won in a class of sighted riders.

McAlexander and top para-equestrian trainer Kai Handt.

Two partners bond in the Texas sun.

in 2016. She was an experienced public speaker but wanted to polish her talents for yet another passion—advocating for the disabled through her charitable foundation, Vision Beyond Eyesight, Inc. The foundation focuses on public education, dispelling stereotypes, and supporting horseback riding opportunities for disabled individuals.

“Dealing with negative attitudes and awkwardness toward me as a blind woman was a tremendous challenge,” she says. “I wanted to change others by speaking about it. I wanted to take all my experiences, good and bad, and inspire people.” Toastmasters helps her do that, every time she speaks.

“Toastmasters teaches us to go into any arena in life with confidence and the communication skills to hear and be heard,” she explains.

As one who is quick to see connecting concepts, McAlexander likens the nonverbal communication practiced in dressage to what she’s learned in Toastmasters. Dressage builds on learning progressively difficult skills, just as the Pathways learning experience does.

Quick thinking, the kind perfected through Table Topics®, has been especially useful in dressage, McAlexander explains. Any unexpected action near the ring—a loud noise, an unexpected gust of wind, a

flash of color in the crowd—may unnerve the performing horse. The rider must react quickly, sending a clear quick message to keep the horse confidently on track with the required movements.

Her horse, a superbly trained and confident athlete, is an excellent “Toastmaster” colleague, McAlexander laughs.

Keep Calm and Ride On

McAlexander sees every day as an opportunity to rise above challenges meted out in an often inexplicable world and is passionate about sharing that ideal. She knows this for certain—if you’re bucked off the horse, get back on.

“I’ve learned that victory is not measured by the color of the ribbon, the wealth or position of the individual,” she says. “Victory is measured by the adversities, obstacles, and failures that one overcomes in trying to achieve victory.”

It’s a parable she’s had a lifetime to prove. **T**

Editor’s Note: Read more about McAlexander [on her website](#).

Stephanie Darling is senior editor for the Toastmaster magazine. **Linda Sullivan, DTM**, of Capital Toastmasters in Jefferson City, Missouri, contributed to this article.

Oops! The Surprising Gift of Making Mistakes

Don't punish yourself over errors—use them to learn and grow.

BY CAREN S. NEILE, PH.D.

Although the worst mistake I ever made occurred nearly 25 years ago, it feels like yesterday. Somehow I edited a book under a tight deadline and managed to inadvertently indicate that it was okay to put acid into one's eyes. An ophthalmologist complained, and the books had to be pulled. The publishing company I worked for was lucky that no one got hurt. I was lucky I didn't lose my job.

The story has an interesting ending. Rather than berate me, my boss told me the worst mistake *he* ever made. As a young journalist, he was told to deliver sensitive material to an editor across town. (This was before the days of email or faxes.) He handed the man just one document, totally missing the second piece of paper in the envelope, which he promptly discarded. Oops!

Let's face it: Mistakes happen to everyone. The 18th century English poet Alexander Pope wrote, "To err is human; to forgive, divine." This reminds us that forgiveness is a good response to a mistake. So is learning from it.

Emily Harris, a member of Woman 2 Woman Toastmasters in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, saw the importance of both forgiveness and learning from mistakes at a recent online club meeting.

"One of the members was washing dishes in her kitchen when the meeting began," she says. "I typed a private message in the chat box: 'Please mute yourself.' She did. Then she typed an apology to everyone for making the mistake of washing her dishes with the microphone

on. I typed back to everyone, 'We're all learning this virtual technology together. It's harder than it looks. We aren't used to being on camera in our homes.' And that was that. It never happened again."

People who make mistakes don't need to be told in great detail, least of all by themselves, what they did wrong. Angelika Kofler, Ph.D., a social psychologist and certified life coach in Vienna, Austria, says such a process is counterproductive.

"Toastmasters is our gym: It's where we come to practice, to make mistakes, to stay curious."

— CHANA GITTLE DERAY, DTM

"Where does it get you?" she asks. "Just more of the same. It's better to focus on what the mistake or problem might be good for [in terms of growth], and then direct your gaze to possible solutions."

By definition, a mistake is something we know isn't right. We just need to learn how to not do it again. Along these lines, many Native Americans don't punish their children for their misdeeds. Instead, they tell them stories, real or imagined, of the child who made a similar mistake and got hurt, or hurt someone else. That's what my boss did. Now not only do I triple-check my work, but to this day, every time I open an envelope, I look to make sure there's nothing else inside!

Too often we are so afraid of making a mistake that we don't dare take a chance and try something new. A veteran Toastmaster I knew used to say, "Toastmasters is a great place to make mistakes." Harris, the Toastmaster in Pennsylvania, says a founding member of her club (the dish washer in the earlier example), Chana Gittle Deray, DTM, emphasizes at almost every meeting that "Toastmasters is our gym: It's where we come to practice, to make mistakes, to stay curious."

Think about it. You are working with supportive individuals who are also learning, you are there to spread your wings, and you are not fiddling with nuclear materials. In other words—it's a safe space!

Artists, in particular, tend to welcome mistakes, probably because they are naturally open to new things. "Forget your perfect offering," wrote the famed Canadian poet and songwriter Leonard Cohen in his song "Anthem." "There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in."

It's not just artists who can benefit from missteps. Richard Jones, who runs a financial advisory business in Los Angeles, California, knows that mistakes can be a necessary byproduct of innovation.

"We've tried different portfolio strategies," he says, "and some didn't work well. But I'm glad we tried. We just had to recognize that we made a mistake, and change our course of action."

If we try not to punish ourselves or anyone else for making an honest



HOW TO BENEFIT FROM MISTAKES

1 Pay attention. While some of us may fixate on mistakes, too often we try to put them out of our minds because they're too painful to think about. But if we focus—for a limited amount of time, without judgment—on exactly what went wrong, we will be more apt to take the right approach in the future.

2 Unpack the mistake. How did it happen in the first place? Were you moving too fast? Did you rely on emotions instead of facts, or did you neglect your intuition, that little voice that told you, “Stop!”

3 Analyze the pattern. If you find yourself repeating the same mistake, or the same kind of mistake, it's time to figure out how to change up your modus operandi. Maybe, for example, you need to run your work by a second pair of eyes. Or maybe you need to learn a new skill.

4 Let the light in. Sometimes, a mistake may be the way our subconscious tells us there is a better way to do something. You know the term “accidentally on purpose”? Listen to your mistakes. They may know something you don't!



mistake, we will not only overcome it, we may also thrive.

Even Toastmasters World Champs have stories of painful slip-ups. When Ed Tate, the 2000 World Champion of Public Speaking, took the stage to deliver the keynote speech at the 2016 Toastmasters International Convention, he experienced every speaker's worst fear: He blanked out, unable to remember his opening line. For seven long seconds, Tate's memory failed him—and it was agonizing, he recalls.

But he took a few deep breaths, refocused, remembered the line, and went on to give a triumphant speech, earning a standing ovation and learning lessons that served him well going forward.

“So, yes, I forgot my opening line in front of over 2,000 people,” Tate wrote in the *Toastmaster* magazine earlier this year. “I didn't die. It wasn't fatal. In fact, forgetting my line had many positive unintended consequences that I never imagined.”

Manoj Vasudevan, the 2017 Toastmasters World Champ, also tells of an agonizing learning experience. Six years ago, he gave a presentation at a showcase event promoting Toastmasters. The Singaporean had given the same presentation before

and the audience loved it—but this time he spoke in the last slot of an evening event and was greeted by a group that was visibly sluggish and disengaged, some audience members almost falling asleep. Vasudevan says he was embarrassed and had erred in not anticipating a different dynamic because of the time of day.

But, ultimately, he benefited from the experience: In 2017, for the first time ever, the Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking® was held at night—and Vasudevan came prepared.

“When things go wrong it's difficult to see the light at the end of the tunnel,” notes Kofler, the psychologist in Austria. “But one thing is for sure. Everybody has more resources than they realize. If we manage to focus our creativity on those resources, good things will start to happen. All it takes is already there. It's in you.”

And if, by chance, it's *not* in you? Don't despair. It's almost definitely in your Toastmasters club. **T**

Caren S. Neile, Ph.D., is a frequent contributor to the *Toastmaster* magazine and has presented at two Toastmasters International conventions.

Word to the Wise

Don't gobblefunk around with words. You just might cause a crisis.

BY JOHN CADLEY

Okay, let's say you're taking a nice walk in the woods and a black bear appears about 30 yards up the trail. You are, quite naturally, afraid, causing your body to release pheromones that have a subtle but distinct odor. You can't notice them, but the bear—having a sense of smell 2,100 times sharper than yours—most certainly does. And fear, to the *Ursus americanus* olfactory system, smells like a rib-eye steak with sautéed mushrooms and onions. You could run, but you have two legs and he has four. What are your odds? If you freeze, he can still smell the fear, which only means you're saving him the trouble of chasing his lunch. Or you could wave your arms and yell, which will either scare him off or make him angry. How do you feel about gambling?

Things are looking grim. But wait! You've just been to a business leadership conference where a famous management guru gave a lecture on "out of the box" thinking. You weren't expecting much. Every time you think out of the box, your boss says it's too far out of the box. But suddenly the famous management guru punctured your apathy with a PowerPoint slide showing the Chinese word for "crisis," explaining how the word consists of two symbols, one meaning "danger" and the other "opportunity." Suddenly, you're wide awake. This is a revelation, an epiphany—a perceived danger containing the possibility of rich reward! What a concept! And here you are, in a crisis, facing danger—the perfect time to prove the truth of this Far

Eastern wisdom. Your fear is replaced with that good old entrepreneurial spirit. If there's an opportunity here, you're going to take it, so you decide to walk toward the bear, who jumps on you and kills you and you're dead.

What happened!?!? Well, to put it briefly, you were misinformed. That famous management guru with the best-selling books and the monogrammed laser pointer wasn't telling you anything new. He wasn't even telling you the truth. He was simply repeating a gross misunderstanding of Mandarin and other Sinitic languages, which, as Victor H. Mair, a professor of Chinese language and literature at the University of Pennsylvania, points out, has been perpetrated for years by people who want to appear wise when in fact they are displaying complete ignorance. The Chinese, on the other hand, are wise. They know danger when they see it and they don't pretend it's anything else. Yes, the Chinese do spell "crisis" with two characters, but they both mean roughly the same thing—Danger! Peril!—just so you get the point.

I use this example to warn our international readers that English, too, has words that are not always what they seem, and in the interest of keeping people from being eaten by a bear, I'll give a couple of examples. If an English speaker tells you they have some "incredible news," and if you know, through diligent study of English vocabulary, that "incredible" means "impossible to believe," you would be well within your rights to say, "Thanks,

but I prefer the credible kind." You are not being a wise guy; you are being etymologically correct.

Another fraught word is "downhill," which has both a literal meaning—i.e., physically going down a hill—and at least two metaphorical ones. If you say, "It's all downhill from here," it means you've finished the hardest part of some task and the rest will be easy. On the other hand, if you mention that a friend is "going downhill," it means the opposite—he or she is in some form of decline, which is anything but easy. So let's say you're in a car with a driver and two other passengers, one of whom is critically ill. Cresting the top of a steep incline, the driver says, "We're going downhill now." The healthy passenger, feeling the sick passenger's weakening pulse, says, "He's going downhill." And then the sick passenger suddenly recovers, sits up, and says he feels so good "it's all downhill from here." At this point it would be perfectly acceptable to say: "Why are you all repeating yourselves?" It would also be understandable if you got out and took a bus.

I hope you get my point. If not, then British children's author Roald Dahl certainly clears it up with this sagacious advice: "Don't gobblefunk around with words." I couldn't say it any better. **T**

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Why Vocal Variety Is So Valuable

Use this skill to bring emotion and personality to your speech.

BY BILL BROWN, DTM

Why is vocal variety such an important tool for the speaker? Many reasons. Vocal variety is more than merely avoiding the dreaded monotone. It is, at its foundation, the life that you breathe into what you say and do onstage.

More specifically, it involves your level of expressiveness. This includes your basic energy level. While your energy level is a variable, at a minimum you must avoid sounding boring.

In addition, vocal variety is your style of expressiveness. An effective speaker allows their unique personality to shine. In a way, vocal expression is your speaking personality.

In Pathways, “Understanding Vocal Variety” is an elective project in Level 3 of all 11 paths—in some ways, a sign of how fundamental this skill is considered to any kind of communication success. It, like the other Pathways electives, is available to all members regardless of which path they are working in. (In the traditional education program, “Vocal Variety” was project 6 in the *Competent Communication* manual.)

It is an elective, but my strong recommendation is that you choose it. Vocal variety is key to expressiveness, and expressiveness is essential for a speaker.

A significant component of vocal variety is how you emphasize what you say. You have various tools to affect this, including volume, pitch, pace, pause, and emotion. They can be used to build tension or add impact. Make an effort to master all of them.

You gain many benefits from using vocal variety. Those benefits boil down to three key principles.

1 **Vocal variety makes you more interesting to listen to.** You have, no doubt, heard many speakers of different skill levels over the years. Some of them are just plain boring. A couple of my university professors come to mind.

Most speakers are passable. They get the job done. But from time to time, you have probably heard a speech where you said, “Wow!” and hung on to the speaker’s every word. What made you react that way? Was it because of the speaker’s vocal variety and level of expressing their personality onstage?

Vocal variety is key to expressiveness.

Strive to get to the point where your listeners truly want to hear what you have to say—and to act upon it. You can do it. You can be that speaker. The key is to learn the vocal variety techniques and then give yourself permission to give them full expression. Let loose and have fun on stage. The audience members will love it. As stated in the “Understanding Vocal Variety” project, “With time and practice, every Toastmaster can become skilled at using [their] voice to move an audience.”

Voice inflection is vital. Sales trainer David Hoffeld, in his book *The Science of Selling*, says, “Those who use strong inflections are always able to hold the buyer’s attention better than those who use weak inflections, even when saying the exact same words. Voice inflections convey your passion and make you seem more interesting and engaging. Moreover, they

also produce in others the emotions you are conveying.”

2 Vocal variety is important because it conveys your emotion to the listener.

If you have ever taken a training course in sales, you have no doubt been challenged to tap into the emotions of the buyer. This is where the real buying decision is made.

If you are listening to a motivational speaker who is very excited, are you not also excited? The same is true for sympathy, anger, and other emotions. If strong wording is accompanied by expressive delivery, the effect of the words can be magnified.

3 Effective vocal variety can magnify the meaning and significance of your message.

It can powerfully make your point. I mentioned earlier that vocal variety involves emphasis. By effectively emphasizing the key elements of your message, you can enhance the listeners’ understanding of it. Each sentence contains key words or phrases that carry your point. Good vocal variety points to them and says, “This is what is important. Pay attention to it.”

Communication is an important component of leadership. Strong vocal variety can greatly enhance your effectiveness as a communicator. I strongly urge you to learn more about it, especially by selecting “Understanding Vocal Variety” in Level 3 of your path.

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



www.toastmasters.org