

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | MARCH 2020

TOASTMASTER®

Growing Young Talent

**Corporate
Clubs Spark
Careers**

**Cultivating
New Club
Officers**



The Roving Ambassador



Basundhara, then a member of the Toastmasters Club of New Delhi, was waiting at a metro station for the train to arrive. Lost in her thoughts, she did not notice another young lady carefully observing her. Moments later the young lady tapped on Basundhara’s shoulder and said, “Excuse me, my name is Sowmya. I like the pin you are wearing on your shirt. Can you tell me about it?” Basundhara proudly announced, “I am a Toastmaster, and this pin is a symbol of my membership.” Sowmya attended the very next meeting as a guest and went on to become a member and a club officer.

When Vinay of JPKU Toastmasters in New Delhi boarded his flight, he was a little vexed to find he was seated between two passengers. Sighing, he settled into his seat and took out the latest issue of the *Toastmaster* magazine.

Yet destiny had something else in store for him! He had barely finished reading the inspiring column by then-International President Lark Doley, DTM, when he noticed the passenger on his left peering into the magazine. Vinay looked at him, smiled, and asked, “Have you heard of Toastmasters?” Vinay spent the rest of the flight chatting about our organization with his fellow passenger.

Each day provides us an opportunity to meet and talk to people about Toastmasters.

Do you remember who first spoke to you about Toastmasters or invited you to a meeting? If that hadn’t happened, would you ever have become a Toastmaster? Wouldn’t you have missed a golden opportunity—one that enhanced your skills and changed your life?

Each day provides us an opportunity to meet and talk to people about Toastmasters. We are roving ambassadors and brand builders, and we can help grow our club membership like no one else can.

Use every opportunity you find to talk about Toastmasters. Wear or carry a symbol of your membership wherever you go. It could be a Toastmasters pin, a cap, a pen, a pad, a luggage tag, or the *Toastmaster* magazine. The Toastmasters store (www.toastmasters.org/Shop) offers plenty of ideas! These silent symbols will act as icebreakers and attract the attention of people around you.

What do you tell people when they ask you about Toastmasters? Give them the big picture. Tell them about our mission, membership, and international network of clubs. Then tell them *your* story. Tell them how Toastmasters changed your life, introduced you to new friends, and helped you build an invaluable network. And then close the deal. Invite them to experience Toastmasters at a club meeting!

So, Toastmasters ambassador, what are you waiting for? Pick up your favorite Toastmasters-branded item and venture out today. The whole world is waiting, ready to join you in Toastmasters!

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Toastmasters International Mission:

We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.



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Clubs around the world show their Toastmasters spirit.



Members of Canton King Toastmasters of Guangzhou, Guangdong, China, represent their club at an event with 40 other Toastmasters clubs, where they shared the benefits of the organization with friends and guests.



Guests and members of Pro Speakers and Trainers Toastmasters of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, pose for a group photo after a meeting with the theme of "Laughter is the best medicine."



Port Melbourne Toastmasters of Port Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, consider themselves family and never miss the chance to celebrate—especially at their 100th Toastmasters meeting!



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.

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Cover photo credit: Aldair Sanchez

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-  **Access** valuable resources through hyperlinks.
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FIND MORE ONLINE THIS MONTH:



Corporate Clubs Deliver

Watch a video of 2014 World Champion of Public Speaking Dananjaya Hettiarachchi as he explains three ways corporations can benefit from sponsoring a Toastmasters club.

Pathways Pointers

It's now easier to access Base Camp, the online gateway to Pathways, and select a new path from your Toastmasters Profile. Watch a video on the new process and share it with fellow members to enhance their user experience.



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Connect at a Conference



Hear from author Bill Brown, DTM, as he shares his take on District conferences and what you can gain by attending yours this year.

WEB RESOURCE



Statistics and Data Hub

World Headquarters conducts extensive research to gain insights about Toastmasters members and their experiences. Some of the research gathered through studies and surveys is available to help District leaders build marketing plans and strategies to achieve their goals and strengthen club officer training.

www.toastmasters.org/Statistics-And-Data



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

Showcasing members, mentors, and clubs

Maheeka Gunasekara-Ariyapperuma (at left), a member of the Wiri Ramblers club in Auckland, New Zealand, expresses gratitude to her mentor, **Mike Diggins, DTM**, for all the guidance and advice he has given her. She says, “As an individual, he is the heart and soul of this club. What is so special about Mike is that he is so supportive and encouraging, is never too busy to help, and will never miss responding to an email even if he is overseas.”



George Jacob (at right), **DTM**, of Trivandrum Toastmasters in Trivandrum, Kerala, India, receives his Distinguished Toastmaster plaque from his mentor, **Abraham Thomas, DTM**, whom he credits for helping him achieve the distinction.

In September 2019, **Fran Okeson, DTM**, a longtime and extremely active and dedicated member, passed away. A resident of Staten Island, New York, United States, she first joined Toastmasters in 1988. Over the years, Okeson received many awards from District 46 and later District 83. She held every officer role in each of her seven Staten Island clubs and served as Area Director several times. She completed the work for her Distinguished Toastmaster award 20 times and was one of the first to earn the Competent Communicator designation when it was first offered in 2006.



Not only did Okeson charter clubs on Staten Island, but she was also instrumental in chartering clubs in other countries. In addition, she sponsored several clubs, as well as more than 500 new members, and was a mentor to many. She facilitated more than 40 Youth Leadership Programs and helped present more than 35 Speechcraft courses.

She will be remembered for her devotion to Toastmasters and its principles, and for the countless members she helped through the years.



Sandra Meza-Irbe, of Ejecutivos Del Humaya Club in Culiacan, Sinaloa, Mexico, says she chose her mentor, **Nadia Varidina Ortiz Bernal** (at right), because of her natural speech style and compassion for others. “She demonstrates a lot of self-confidence and knowledge of the subjects she talks about,” she says of her mentor. “Besides that, Nadia is a very charismatic speaker; you feel connected and uplifted while you are listening to her.”

TALK TO US! Do you have a short story (aim for 130 words), fun photo, inspiring anecdote, or Toastmaster “Ah-Ha” moment you’d like to share? Mark your submission “Member Recognition” and email it to submissions@toastmasters.org.

► NEWS FROM TI

What's in It for Club Officers?

Club-officer election season is coming soon. To help persuade members to fill positions, use TI's new officer documents (www.toastmasters.org/Leadership-Central), which summarize each officer role and list the responsibilities and transferable skills members will gain in fulfilling a role. And don't miss additional officer recruitment advice in the article "Cultivating Club Leaders" on page 12.

Renewals Due in April

To ensure your club is in good standing and receives credit for the Distinguished Club Program, remember to log in to Club Central and submit your dues payments by April 1, 2020. Per Policy 2.0, the minimum renewal requirement is eight paid members—at least three of whom were club members during the previous renewal period.



Unpaid officers lose access to Club Central 30 days after their membership expires. Email the Club and Member Support Team at renewals@toastmasters.org if you have questions.

An Immersion in Conversion

Whether you are responding to inquiries from Find a Club on www.toastmasters.org or preparing for an open house, try these best practices to inform, welcome, and convert promising prospects into engaged new members:

- Go to Club Central at least once a year and make sure your Club Contact and Meeting Information is up to date.
- Get into the habit of checking your email at least every other day to see if anyone has tried to contact your club.
- Respond to inquiries within 48 hours. People who go through the process to reach out to you are very interested in joining your club, so make sure you contact them. Details on parking and getting to the meeting room are helpful to add in your reply.
- Always give contacts information about your next meeting and ask them to attend as a guest. What better way to understand how a meeting works than to attend?
- Within 48 hours of a meeting, contact all guests, ask if they have questions, and do everything you can to sign them up as a member of your club. For help, use this guest follow up email, www.toastmasters.org/Resources/Guest-Email-Follow-Up. If they aren't interested in joining, thank them for their time, and wish them well.

► CONVENTION

Oui Paris!

When the 2020 Toastmasters International Convention heads to Paris, France, on August 5–8, Toastmasters have the opportunity to be inspired by professionals and speech contestants, to network with old and new friends, and to advance personally and professionally. But Paris itself offers visitors a variety of enticements outside of the convention center. Museums, architecture, food, and shopping usually top people's lists. If you're someone whose eyes light up at the thought of shopping, or if you love to gaze at windows and dream, we've rounded up some suggestions to put on your list.

For luxury shopping, head to the Rue Saint-Honoré or the Champs-Élysées. There you'll find the flagship stores for designers such as Chanel, Dior, Louis Vuitton, Versace, and Hermès, as well as famed art galleries.

Paris boasts three large, well-known department stores ("grand magasins"), which are as much about the experience as the shopping. The Galeries Lafayette and Printemps are on Boulevard Haussmann. Le Bon Marché is Paris's oldest department store and was built by Gustave Eiffel in 1852.

For antiques, head to Place des Vosages and Rue Saint-Andrew des Arts where you'll find regional specialties, unique gifts, and vintage clothing.



If you love to hunt for treasure, you won't have to search for long at a French flea market. The Saint-Ouen flea market (Les Puces de Saint Ouen) is the largest antiques market and

secondhand shop in the world. It's held Saturdays, Sundays, and Mondays. The Marche aux Puces de la Porte de Vanves is located in the center of Paris and is open every Saturday and Sunday.

People who love to wander in small shops in quaint neighborhoods should head to Rue du Commerce (near the Eiffel Tower) and the Marais neighborhood.

Finally, Paris is home to one of the most famous bookstores in the world. Located on the Left Bank, Shakespeare and Company is known for its rare finds and eclectic atmosphere.

Convention registration is open now! Early-bird registration ends May 31, 2020. Head to www.toastmasters.org/Convention for more information.

▶ SNAPSHOT



Members of Serendib Toastmasters Club of Colombo, Sri Lanka, celebrate how Toastmasters support and lift one another up, and grow together throughout the year. In this photo, they represent this sentiment by lifting Toastmasters materials and magazines above their heads.



PHOTO BY PATHUM GOONAWARDENE

▶ EVALUATION

The Three R's of Preparing to Evaluate

Evaluating a speech should be more than just listening to it and quickly filling out an evaluation form. Preparation is a key ingredient, and without doing our homework ahead of time, we lessen the impact of our speech evaluations. For the past few years, I have been using a technique that centers around a three-step process I call the “Three R’s”: **Reach Out**, **Research**, and **Reflect**.

1 Reach Out. Your first step as a speech evaluator is to connect with the speaker to collect information that will help facilitate their growth and motivate them to continue to progress. Assuming the speaker is working in Pathways, find out what project they’re working on and download it from the Tutorials and Resources page in Base Camp, the online learning management system for Pathways. (Or have them send you a copy of that project’s evaluation resource.) Second, ask if the speaker has any additional skills they want you to focus on during your evaluation (such as vocal variety). Finally, ask about the speaker’s overarching goal in Toastmasters (why they joined, what skills they hope to gain). This information can also provide motivational leverage for your evaluation.

2 Research. Once you know the project and the speaker’s motivational touchpoints, familiarize yourself with the learning and competencies of the project. Review the project description you downloaded. Then, read it again, highlighting

main points and taking notes to ensure understanding. Reach out to seasoned evaluators in your club and your Vice President Education for additional effective evaluation strategies.

3 Reflect. Think back on any of the speaker’s recent performances—a past speech, a meeting role, Table Topics, etc. What strengths did they exhibit? What could they have improved? What comments did they receive from other members? Having this information for the evaluation allows you to recognize any improvements in the speaker’s performance—be it an even better display of their strengths or showing more polish in making a point. Recognition of improvement is a critical element in motivating others, and a successful evaluation is a motivational evaluation.

By the time you are ready to evaluate the speech, you’ll have a solid foundation for providing thoughtful and valuable feedback, both verbally and in your evaluation scores. The Pathways evaluation criteria allow for specific and detailed feedback, so don’t wing an evaluation on the spot. Preparing ahead of time allows you to offer not only your insight to the speaker but also important motivation for their next speech.

Justin Bordessa, DTM, is a member of the Downtown Toastmasters in Santa Rosa, California.



1 | JULIA TAHA of Selangor, Malaysia, strolls along the Bund waterfront in Shanghai, China, and takes in the night scene, including the landmark Pearl TV Tower, lit in blue.


2 | MARILYN MCCONKEY BOYLES, DTM, of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, takes her Toastmaster to the University of Iowa Hospital, while receiving cancer treatment.

3 | BOB NOWAK of Jacksonville, Florida, poses outside of the home stadium of the National Football League's Jacksonville Jaguars.

4 | MASATOSHI DENKO of Tokyo, Japan, stands on a bridge above the Corinth Canal in Greece. The canal connects the Gulf of Corinth with the Saronic Gulf in the Aegean Sea.



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

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

A Learning Experience

How I went from a high school dropout to a college commencement speaker.

BY ERICA ALFARO

Both of my parents are from Santiago Asuncion, Oaxaca, Mexico. They came to the United States in hope of a better life when I was 13 years old. At that time, I didn't know how to speak English. School was difficult for me, and one day my mother took me to work with her in the tomato fields. When I told her I was tired, she said, "This is our life. If you want a better life you need to get a good education."

My parents never had the opportunity to go to school, and they barely know how to read or write, but they always knew the importance of a good education.

This lesson took a while for me to understand, but I ultimately earned my undergraduate degree and even gave the commencement speech at my college graduation ceremony. Education, including what I have learned in Toastmasters, has helped me achieve the life I wanted.

I never would have had the opportunity to give that commencement speech if it weren't for a final assignment in my college sociology class. Each student was asked to give a 25-minute presentation on their life story. I had always struggled with presentations, but the assignment was worth 25% of my grade, and I was determined to do well.

I remembered a presentation given by a guest speaker from Toastmasters in a previous class. So I found a Toastmasters club and went to a meeting. A Latina woman gave a speech there, and she inspired me. I knew I wanted to learn to share my story like she had.

My goal was to give a 25-minute presentation about my family, not about myself. But the night before my speech, I began to reflect on my past. I realized that if I shared more about myself, I might inspire other students, just as I was inspired at my first Toastmasters meeting.

I began my presentation by talking about my family's move to America, and how I struggled in school. I ultimately



Erica Alfaro

dropped out of high school when I was 15 and became pregnant. I moved away from my family to be with my baby's father and lived with domestic abuse for many years.

I realized that if I shared more about myself, I might inspire other students, just as I was inspired at my first Toastmasters meeting.

One night, I made the decision to leave the abusive relationship, finish my schooling, and raise my baby with my family. I promised my son I'd make him proud of me. Ultimately, I kept that promise, and worked hard as my son continued to grow. I completed high school, went on to community college, then was admitted to a four-year university, California State University San Marcos.

I never thought of my journey as unique, or inspirational—at least not until I saw the reactions of my university classmates and professor when I told my story for my final assignment. I was later invited to be the commencement speaker. In the meantime, I had joined a Toastmasters club, and when I told club members the news, they celebrated with me and were there to support me and help me prepare.

An article that talked about my life was published after my graduation speech, and a local business owner read it. Without even knowing me, the individual decided to finance my education to help me earn a Master of Arts in Education from San Diego State University, which I completed in May 2019.

As I approached graduation once again, I took some photos with my parents. I posted one on my social media accounts that showed me standing in my cap and gown with them in the fields where they used to work. The post went viral. Our story made headlines all over the world. I was interviewed by different news channels, and my Toastmasters training kicked in. I was able to answer all the reporters' questions, thanks to Table Topics practice.

After the media attention, I was invited to be a keynote speaker at numerous events. Once again, I was prepared because of Toastmasters. I had always had the dream of one day sharing my story to help people with the same background as me, and now I am able to fulfill that dream through a career in public speaking. I travel across America, sharing my story in the hopes that I can inspire someone to work hard and achieve their dreams—for themselves and their loved ones. **T**

ERICA ALFARO is Vice President Education for the Carlsbad-Oceanside Club in Carlsbad, California.



Cultivating Club Leaders

How to find leaders and encourage members to jump in.

BY PEGGY BEACH, DTM

In the coming weeks, Toastmasters clubs all over the world will begin looking for officers for the 2020-2021 program year. The first question many nominating committees must answer is, “How do we convince members to begin a leadership journey?”

If the club experience is the heart of a Toastmasters member’s experience, then the club leaders are the pulse that keeps the heart beating. The roles vary in terms of time, experience, and skill sets. (Hint: Being President isn’t necessarily the most time-consuming role.) In addition to the President, clubs need a Vice President Education, Vice President Membership, Vice President Public Relations, Treasurer, Secretary, and Sergeant at Arms. The *Club Leadership Handbook* can help members and nominating committees have a better idea of what the roles entail.

There are many reasons members may be reluctant to become club leaders—some say they don’t have time; others don’t have interest. Many people join Toastmasters with an initial focus on becoming better public speakers rather than better leaders.

In reality, joining the club leadership team is one of the best ways to develop the confidence needed to become a better speaker.

Spotting Potential Leaders

Knowing what makes a good leader and unmasking that potential in others—particularly those who may not see themselves in that role—is a key skill current club officers would do well to develop.

In a June 2016 *Toastmaster* magazine article, World Champion Public Speaker Dana LaMon, DTM, points out that a potential club leader is someone who is in motion. He explains, “The member who sets and achieves goals, tries new projects, and/or takes on new roles is showing signs of leadership.”

“Openness to personal growth is vital for a club leader.”

—JOEL PALACHUVATTIL, DTM

Joel Palachuvattil, DTM, of Baltimore, Maryland, who started as Vice President Education for his club and is now involved at the District level, agrees, saying that club leaders need to *first and foremost* look for members who are open to personal growth.

“Other characteristics come to mind, such as being able to handle stress or being able to listen to people’s criticisms.

However, I think those are qualities that a leader can develop over time, so long as they are open to growth,” he says. “Openness to personal growth is vital for a club leader. I believe that this leads to a desire to help others grow.”

Charles S. Gates, DTM, of Toano, Virginia, has been a club Vice President Membership and Secretary. He feels being positive is an important goal for club officers. “Openness to new ideas and to criticism is important,” he says. “There will be days that deserve a do-over—when things didn’t quite go the way you hoped they would. However, when you walk into your Toastmasters meeting, no one needs to know this. Keep a positive, upbeat attitude and keep it moving. Negativity likes company. Don’t invite it to the club.”

Other signs to look for, says LaMon, are members who smile, show humility, and are inquisitive.

Encouraging Leaders

When talking to potential club leaders, point out how Toastmasters leadership can build confidence.

“For those who want to develop their leadership skills but don’t have an opportunity in other settings (e.g., the workplace), being a club leader is the

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU? THE BENEFITS OF BEING A CLUB OFFICER

Joining your club's leadership team doesn't have to mean a lifetime commitment to Toastmasters. Many people take on roles with no previous experience and are amazed at how their skills and confidence skyrocket.

"I encourage members to see club leadership as a way to develop skills that go beyond Toastmasters, not just doing it because 'someone has to do it,'" says Joel Palachuvattil, DTM, of Baltimore, Maryland.

"I also share my experience. I, too, said no at first [to being a club officer]. I didn't want to commit the time, and I didn't have any interest. I had excuses. But my club members had rebuttals. I ended up as VPE [Vice President Education] three months after joining only because I ran out of excuses before they ran out of rebuttals," he says, laughing.

Cindy Cannon, DTM, of Atlanta, Georgia, says she fell in love with Toastmasters when she became a club leader. She credits her first Toastmasters leadership position with helping her find her voice, and she eventually rose from Club President to District



Governor and Region Advisor. Yet her leadership trajectory was completely unexpected. "The best thing that happened to me was I missed a meeting. Elections were held that day, and I was elected President of my club having been a member for only three months!"

Former Club President and past Area Director Rosemary Hallberg, of Raleigh, North Carolina, says she is glad she initially took on the role of President despite her initial reluctance. "This past year, I was put in charge of our communications team at work.

Having been Club President helped me understand what *not* to do," she says. "I was able to get everyone involved, keep everyone motivated. I saw how I was as a leader."

The ripple effects of her club experience go far beyond Toastmasters and beyond what she could have originally imagined.

"The benefits are priceless. [The experience] helped me in my career as a recruiter,

as a leader. It made me a paid speaker and a paid coach, and it gave me opportunities I never would have had. I have my own business, and now I give back and give other Toastmasters what I have learned. Most of all, it gave me a community, a family."

perfect place. It is low-risk, and your club members are there to support you," says Palachuvattil.

Gates agrees, saying he believes in being transparent when explaining each club leadership role. "What I share about Toastmasters to a club prospect is the confidence-building benefit. I make it clear that the *only* way that your confidence is built is through participation. When recruiting leaders, I take it a step further by explaining the role in detail. I assure them that this journey can be life changing," he says.

One of the benefits of stepping into a club officer role is the amount of support you receive, from members and from World Headquarters. Districts offer club officer training twice a year to help with the transition, and there is an array of training resources online.

When Michael Notaro, Past International President, spoke about leadership at the 2019 Toastmasters International

Convention, he specifically addressed the level of support club leaders receive from fellow Toastmasters.

"In Toastmasters, every leadership position serves on a team," he said. "Every leader will have fellow members there to support them on their journey as they search for their calling. Remind members that their team wants to see them succeed and will be there to support them in their efforts.

Cindy Cannon, DTM, of Atlanta, Georgia, is a past Region 8 Advisor and says members are cheating themselves if they don't think they have time to become a club leader.

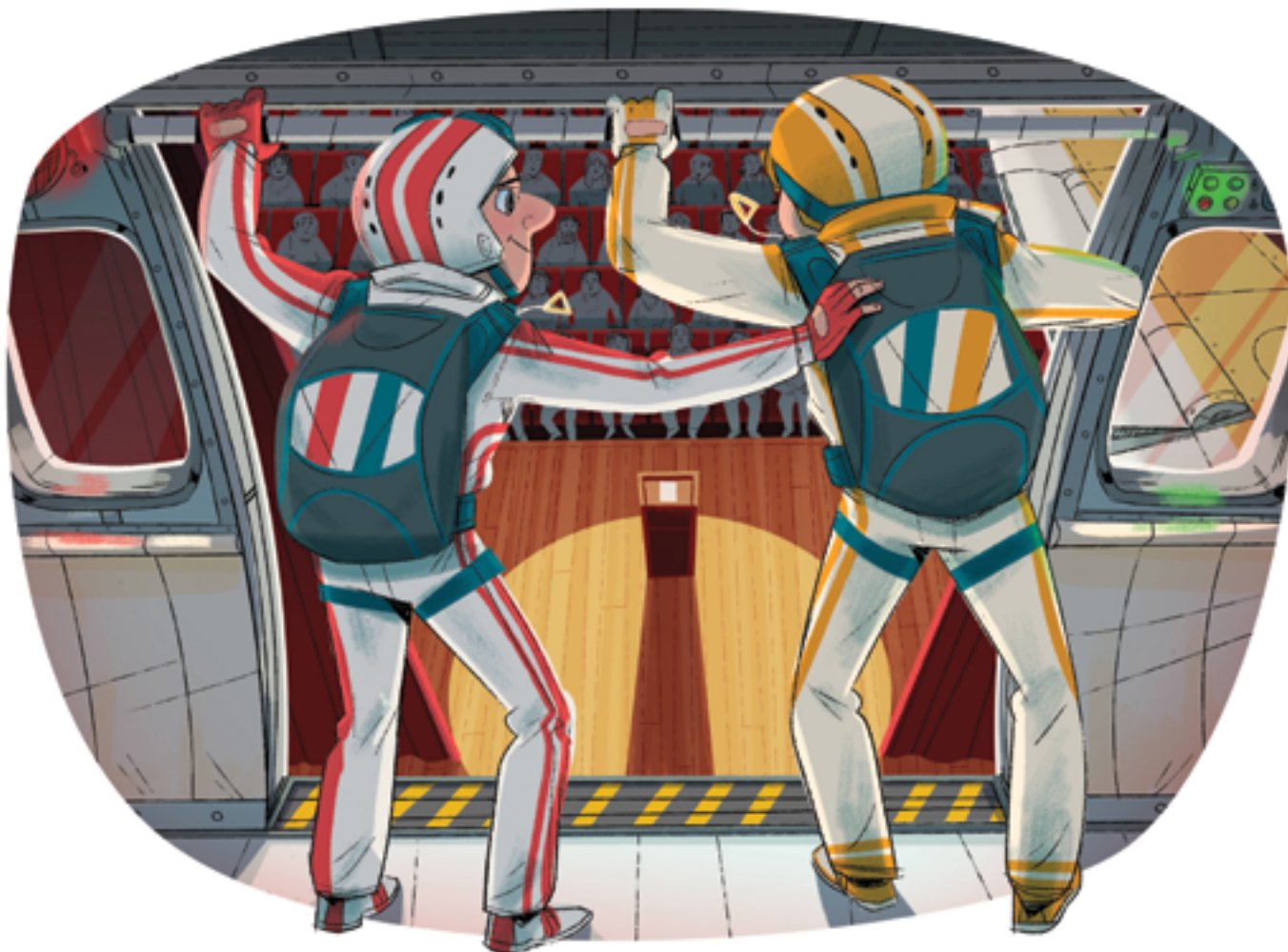
"[By taking on a leadership role], you enhance your skills and become an overall better person and a better leader, and it will change your career. It enhances your skills, and by learning time management, you are kicked up to a higher level."

Clubs have the ability to change people's lives, and Palachuvattil encourages

new club officers to ensure the club remains vibrant for others. "The club that I first joined existed because of all of the members before who took care of it and kept it going. That is a debt to my predecessors that I pay by being a good steward of the club in the present so that I can pass the club on to future members," he says. ■

Editor's Note: For more details on club officer roles and strategies for success, refer to the Club Leadership Handbook: www.toastmasters.org/ClubLeadershipHandbook.

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Leadership at 12,000 Feet

Are you a parachute packer? Do you know how to find one?

BY TAMMY A. MILLER, DTM, AS

In Toastmasters, we know that we can find inspiration, or at least speech topics, in almost all experiences in life. Maybe you had an experience with a new hobby, or going out on a limb (or wing) to try something new. For me, it came by way of skydiving. How are the topics of Toastmasters, leadership, and skydiving possibly related? It may not be as much of a stretch as you think.

Full Vision to Success—A person getting ready to jump out of a plane at 12,000 feet is thinking a lot of things,

and leadership is likely not one of them. However, during a recent skydiving experience, as I sat at the edge of the door ready to jump, it was obvious to me that my field of vision was very limited. When I was out of the plane and free falling, the view was expansive and breathtaking. Shortly after the jump, while working on a leadership presentation, that image came back to me, and I realized that leadership is directly related to the process of skydiving. Each of these two experiences depend greatly on having a vision, both figuratively and literally.

The skydiver needs to make sure the sky is clear enough to see the desired target for landing. They must be able to gauge their entire surroundings and not just the limited view from the side of the plane and the edge of the door. Likewise, a leader must have a vision of where the team is going and present that vision convincingly to their followers. The leader must know what success looks like and have a strategy for how to get there. Then they must share that vision.

Inviting the team to join the leader on the journey is key. As a leader in

Toastmasters, your community, or your workplace, are you inviting people to join you on the adventure? Or have you been the one invited along the path to success?

A Step-by-Step Process—Everything we learn in life, we learn step by step. learning to crawl, walk, talk, and become a great leader. The skydiver knows to follow a series of steps required for a successful jump. The airplane must be in safe condition and be flown by a competent pilot. The weather must be right. The parachute must be properly packed, and many other details must be confirmed.

In Toastmasters we understand that leaders are made. The step-by-step process to effective leadership, in many cases, can have a small beginning step. Maybe someone said, “I believe in you,” and that was the first time you started to see yourself as a leader. Often the best leaders come from someone seeing something in them that they didn’t see for themselves. Perhaps you took a small role in your club, and when that was successful, you looked to the next, slightly larger step. You repeated the process to a larger leadership role and found success. Maybe you are reading this article and starting to think about the steps to leadership in your club and beyond.

Are leaders successful every time they take a step? No, even the most successful leaders are not, but what they do know is that sometimes it is important to take a step back, review the situation, adjust the vision if needed, then take that next step forward.

Think back to where you were in your Toastmasters or work experience five years ago. Or one year ago. Is it different from where you stand today? It is surely different from where you will stand in five

years, if you choose to keep moving. What is your next step?

Who Is Packing Your Parachute?—In a solo jump, the skydiver must make sure the parachute is correctly packed, as their life depends on it. In a tandem jump, the jump master is generally the one who packs the parachute and is in total control of when the ripcord is pulled. The person who is jumping with the jump master may not even touch the parachute but knows the jump master has the expertise needed for success. Leadership is very much the same process, like when an effective leader delegates a project to a team member who may be a subject matter expert.

Often the best leaders come from someone seeing something in them that they didn’t see for themselves.

Many people have opportunities to step up to leadership but are afraid to take the chance. The opportunities may be in your club, District, community engagement, or the workplace as part of a team or management. What if you don’t know enough? What if you are asked a question and do not know how to respond? What if ... fill in the blank with a favorite reason for not taking that step toward leadership. You don’t have to know everything, you just need to know the people who do, or the places to find the answers.

Captain Charlie Plumb is a retired United States Navy fighter pilot who spent six years in a Vietnam prison camp after his plane was shot down. He tells his story about meeting the young man one day who packed his parachute for the fateful flight. Although he never really thought about his

parachute packer, he says that after he was shot down, he thought about that person quite often. Without the skill and dedication that young man had in packing the parachute, Plumb may not have survived to tell his story. He was the pilot, not the parachute packer, but both roles are vital for a successful mission, especially when something does not go as planned.

The parachute is worn on the back of the skydiver (or pilot) as they jump. Who do you depend on for your success as a leader? Who has your back and packs your parachute? And, maybe just as important, whose parachute do you pack?

Finding Your Voice and Inspiring Others to Find Theirs—Skydiving jump masters may or may not train others to succeed in jumping. They may or may not train to do tandem jumps with people who want to leave the parachute packing to them. But for leaders, helping others to succeed plays a pivotal role.

A leader must know who they are, what they stand for, and what they believe in. Not everyone wants to lead, but a good leader will help someone find their voice and potential for leadership within the team, and help them develop their skills.

What about your role in Toastmasters leadership? Do you see the vision? Have you taken the first step, or the next step to leadership? Are you a parachute packer? Do you know how to find one? Have you found your voice in leadership? Congratulations if you have and are already serving or have served in Toastmasters leadership. If not, what’s stopping you? **T**

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GOING GOOD COMPANY

How corporate clubs help employees find the confidence and skills to spark their careers.

BY BETH BLACK

"It's all about putting yourself out there, becoming uncomfortable and just honing those skills."

—Feon Ang, LinkedIn's Vice President for Talent and Learning Solutions in Asia Pacific

While recovering from an injury in 2015, Deutsche Bank (DB) employee Mahi Sall studied books and podcasts on personal development and entrepreneurship. "I realized that excellent communication skills drive success in life and business," he says. Determined to improve his skills, Sall joined Mercury Toastmasters, a club in Berlin, Germany, where he advanced rapidly.

But as an employee of a leading financial institution, he yearned to join a club that focused on the specific culture and competencies essential for financial sector employees. Sall, the senior analyst at the Chief Digital Office of Deutsche Bank AG, dreamed of a Toastmasters club that could help his coworkers build their skills while he achieved his personal leadership goals. He was excited to learn that

his employer hosted an award-winning network of Toastmasters clubs in the United Kingdom. But there was a challenge: Deutsche Bank had no corporate clubs in Berlin.

An immigrant from Guinea, West Africa, Sall set out to charter the first Deutsche Bank club in Germany. After assembling a team from diverse backgrounds, he contacted Joerg Eigendorf, sponsor of Deutsche Bank's network of Toastmasters clubs globally. Serving as the bank's global head of communications and corporate social responsibility, he is based at the bank's headquarters in Frankfurt, Germany.

Eigendorf responded enthusiastically. "The in-house Toastmasters clubs support our colleagues all over the world to gain confidence and improve their communication skills," Eigendorf says. "As our employees are our ambassadors, this is essential to building and maintaining our bank's reputation and brand."

Valuable Training for Employees

Deutsche Bank is one of many companies worldwide that see the value of Toastmasters training for its employees, sponsoring at least 14 Toastmasters clubs in different locations. In fact, more than half of Fortune 500 companies—including Google, Bank of America, and Microsoft—have sponsored a Toastmasters club. Nearly 30%, or 4,500, of all active Toastmasters clubs are company clubs.

In 2018, Toastmasters Chief Executive Officer Daniel Rex presented a Corporate Recognition Award to executives at Deutsche Bank's London offices. The award is given to companies that sponsor a club for more than two years, provide meeting locations, or pay membership dues to encourage employees to join.



Mahi Sall (left), Immediate Past President of the first Deutsche Bank Toastmasters club in Germany, with Joerg Eigendorf (right), sponsor of the bank's global network of 14 Toastmasters clubs. Eigendorf is Deutsche Bank's global head of communications and corporate social responsibility.

As part of the startup process, Sall and fellow employees held a demonstration meeting to attract more people to join. The results were exhilarating. “I was blown away to see my line manager show up at the meeting, sit down, listen, and take notes,” said Sall. “Later, the manager wrote me a ‘well-done’ note and added that I should not hesitate to ask if I needed anything.”

“The in-house Toastmasters clubs support our colleagues all over the world to gain confidence and improve their communication skills.”

—JOERG EIGENDORF, DEUTSCHE BANK

Now Sall serves as Immediate Past President of the first Deutsche Bank Toastmasters club in Germany. DB Toastmasters-Berlin chartered on January 2, 2019. Sall's efforts paid off, and the Toastmasters training helped him thrive at work. “Getting accepted into a selective talent development program at

DB, Germany, was due, in part, to the skills I acquired in Toastmasters that I put to use in my daily interactions at work,” he says.

“I have become more visible within the organization and my confidence has soared.”

What Companies Want

An increasing number of studies show that skills in leadership and communication are highly valued by employers. You could be the best in the world at any job, from accountant to zoologist, but if you lack confidence or skills to lead others toward your vision, your career could suffer. LinkedIn's 2020 Emerging Jobs Report (bit.ly/TI_EmergingJobs) notes that soft skills will increase in value as automation becomes more widespread. Machines and technology can't compete with the powerful blend of people skills developed in Toastmasters. The report states, “Skills like communication, creativity, and collaboration are all virtually impossible to automate, which means if you have these skills, you'll be even more valuable to organizations in the future.”

Most companies are already searching for people who've developed their soft skills ... and their confidence.

A Professional Community of Practice

Elizabeth Carter, DTM, Ph.D., is a member of four Toastmasters clubs, serving as the President of ProMasters club, in Cranberry Township, Pennsylvania. The Immediate Past District Director for District 18 credits Toastmasters with providing a supportive community that helped her build the skills and confidence necessary for a successful career. In fact, she was so intrigued by Toastmasters that she chose to focus on the organization for her doctoral dissertation. To her knowledge, no one has previously published this level of scientific assessments of Toastmasters' effectiveness for workers who want to advance in their careers.

Carter earned her doctorate in philosophy from Capella University in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 2018. Her dissertation examined how Toastmasters activities conform to a concept developed by educational theorist Etienne Wenger about the benefits of joining a "community of practice" to expand skills and expertise, enhance professional reputation, gain a sense of professional identity, and increase employability.

She also determined that earlier research on Wenger's idea had focused more on the benefits to employers, such as improved profits and sales. "The research about 'communities of practice' did not have a lot of details about what the members described as value from participating," Carter says. So she addressed the results in relation to employees.

"A tenured employee needs to be confident to communicate upward to a supervisor, which may include the need to influence (such as asking for a raise)."

—ELIZABETH CARTER, DTM, PH.D.

A Toastmaster since 2011, Carter found her longtime Toastmasters involvement helpful in setting up and finding participants for her study. She was able to ask perceptive questions based on her own experiences and rely on fellow members for insightful answers regarding their experiences.

It helped that Carter had ample background in the business world: She has been the director of financial operations at 21st Century as well as Farmers Insurance companies. She is currently based in Pennsylvania as the director of finance at Highmark, Inc. in Pittsburgh and the chief executive officer of AAPPEAL in Cranberry Township, which provides solutions to improve organizational and employee performance.

Carter's study found that Toastmasters develop an intangible sense of confidence that's valuable at work, in particular benefiting from practical skill-building experiences and supportive evaluations in an engaging community.



Past District 18 Director Elizabeth Carter, DTM, Ph.D.

Camaraderie, Connections, and Confidence ... Everywhere!

Ted Finlay, director of external manager research at Fifth Third Bank, in Cincinnati, Ohio, makes investments for a living, and credits Toastmasters with being one of the best he has made. "The return on investment for that \$90 [USD] a year is astronomical, because it has done so much to help my career," he notes in an article published in *CityWire* in 2018. He is an advocate for Toastmasters in the workplace and seeks that sense of confidence in any potential investment managers he hires for his company.

Dr. Carter agrees with Finlay that confidence is important at any level in a company's culture. "A person who is junior in his or her career needs confidence to effectively communicate ideas during an interview," Carter explains. "A tenured employee needs to be confident to communicate upward to a supervisor, which may include the need to influence (such as asking for a raise)." At the top, a senior-level employee needs absolute confidence to communicate good or bad news to shareholders, board members, and all employees." At every level in the company, confidence is key, she says, using her personal experience and doctoral research as evidence.

Camaraderie in corporate clubs also builds job knowledge. As the LinkedIn report shows, soft skills are critical for the ability to collaborate with colleagues and develop relationships across silos in order to complete projects. Terry Black is a technical writer at Panasonic Avionics in Lake Forest, California, who has made many friends in his company club, the Flying Toasters. Technical writers can understand and write about technology. But these hard skills are only part of the job. "Our company Toastmasters group helps me make personal connections in a professional setting and to communicate clearly about complex concepts," he says.



Members of Oracle Málaga Toastmasters club in Málaga, Spain, present the value of Toastmasters membership in a demonstration meeting to 120 employees from many different companies in Oracle's business park..

Carter also says her doctoral research confirmed what most Toastmasters already know: that evaluations in the club are particularly beneficial in how they guide speakers toward successful presentations later, at work, when career advancement is on the line.

Selling (and More) in Spain: Oracle Málaga

As a technology sales representative at Oracle Digital in Málaga, Spain, Antonio Sanicola knows the value of effective communication. But his membership in the company's corporate Toastmasters club, Oracle Málaga, has given him the opportunity to gain additional leadership skills. "Now that I am the Club President, I like to remind my team that they don't work for me, I work for them," he quips.

Previously, while serving as the club's Vice President Public Relations (VPPR), Sanicola organized the first "Toastmasters Summit" held by Oracle Digital in Andalusia. His club provided a demonstration meeting for 120 employees from more than 600 neighboring companies in Oracle's business park. Sanicola had barely met any of the guests beforehand. "At Toastmasters you learn from people," he says of the experience. His confidence was fueled by paying attention when people spoke about their needs and their desire to grow. "I can better see other peoples' potential now that I had the chance to lead activities, thanks to Toastmasters."

Oracle Málaga is one of 33 Toastmasters clubs Oracle hosts around the globe. This company supports the club by offering free meeting space and paying part of the annual membership fee for employees. Like Deutsche Bank, Oracle has earned a Corporate Recognition Award from Toastmasters International. The company

encourages participation in the club, which builds specific skills members find beneficial in Oracle's corporate culture.

Sanicola's coworker, Chabname Shahrjerdy, senior CX account manager, joined the Oracle Málaga club a year ago and took over the VPPR role after a few months. "The club really helps me improve my leadership skills..." she says. "To my mind, Toastmasters offers a complete way of learning, practicing, and improving our skills for teamwork, which is helpful in our careers." Shahrjerdy wants to share the expertise she's gained by mentoring fellow club members and other coworkers at the office.

Empowering the Workforce

When workers participate in a corporate Toastmasters club, they see it as a message from executives that they have value. They gain opportunities to master competencies essential to career growth. They benefit from convenient onsite club meetings where camaraderie grows between members of various departments. With Toastmasters in-house, and recognition of club member achievements, any company can empower its workforce with the communication and leadership skills so in demand in today's marketplace. **T**

Editor's Note: For more information on starting a club at your place of employment, visit www.toastmasters.org/Start-A-Club or email newclubs@toastmasters.org.

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

Increase the Value of Your Membership

Attend your District conference to learn, connect, and gain inspiration. **BY BILL BROWN, DTM**

Toastmasters offers a lot of value at an affordable price, doesn't it? And that is just at the club level.

While the club is the hub of the Toastmasters experience, and the Pathways learning experience is the primary training vehicle, many other training opportunities exist that further enhance the value of your membership.

One event you will hear a great deal about in the next few months is the 2020 Toastmasters International Convention, scheduled for August 5–8 in Paris, France. It provides the chance to hear world-class speakers and meet fellow members from around the world. It is certainly an event worth experiencing. But not everyone can attend, at least not every year.

There is, however, a smaller-scale version that provides many of the same benefits as the convention, and that is the District conference. All Districts hold an annual conference, usually in April or May. You can visit your District's website to learn about the conference, including where and when it will be held and what speakers and events will be featured.

The District conference has a special meaning for me. It was here that I made a connection that revealed a talent I didn't know I had. It opened up a whole new dimension to my professional pursuits. More on that later.

So, what can you expect to get out of the experience?

Key Takeaways

As I view it, the conferences have four main benefits.

1 Education

One major advantage is the additional, high-level training provided. The training might focus on speaking skills. Or leadership skills. Or the mechanics of the Toastmasters system, as evidenced by programs like Pathways.

District conferences combine the International Convention's learning opportunities with the chance to talk with and actually get to know the key speakers.

Rose Kirland, DTM, Past District 49 Director in Hawaii, says the first District conference she attended was a revelation. "I learned from one speaker the value of listening. The tip helped me make gainful strides in my business and personal life. It literally changed the way I looked at things. It changed my life."

The educational benefits alone are reason enough to attend the conference.

2 Inspiration

I see this as the "vertical aspect" of the conference. As we work to improve our speaking and leadership skills in Toastmasters, we reach upward to a higher standard. But how high do we reach? If our experience is limited, our reach is, likewise, limited. The District conference provides a higher-level experience.

First of all, it features a keynote speaker, frequently a high-profile one, either from Toastmasters or from the local community. This, in and of itself, can show you a much higher caliber of speaking than you may have previously encountered.

The conference also features your District's leaders. It is, after all, their event and responsibility. Here you see members who, through years of service, have honed their leadership skills—the same ones you may aspire to develop.

Then there are the Toastmasters speech contests. All contests at the District level have to be held at the District conference. That includes the International Speech Contest and may include others, like the Table Topics and Evaluation contests. All these contests advance through the club, Area, Division, and District levels. That means only the best of the best speakers in your District make it this far in a speech contest. And when it comes to the International Speech Contest, the winner here advances to the region quarterfinals.

"The level of contestants is something to be experienced," says Steve Goldstein, DTM, District 115 Director in southern Nevada.

If you want to see what good speakers look and sound like, you need to attend this event.

3 Vision

I see this as the "horizontal aspect" of the conference. If we never venture outside our club, we may have the perception that Toastmasters is a group



District conferences are an opportunity for Toastmasters to meet and share ideas with members from other clubs, as well as learn from experienced leaders. Here, member volunteers check in attendees at the District 49 (Hawaii) conference in 2019.

PHOTO CREDIT: TOASTMASTER SLAVA SLAVIK

of small, independent enclaves. Yes, we see Pathways. Yes, we receive a monthly magazine. But we may not see much beyond that. When you attend a District conference, you get a much bigger picture of the organization and the possibilities, especially if you are interested in building your leadership skills.

“One needs to step outside your own club’s comfort, be open to the big picture, the global world of Toastmasters,” says Kirland, the Past District 49 Director. “The conference is ideal to learn more than what your club may offer. It’s a happy place to learn and grow!”

Be sure to attend the District Council Meeting. This is technically the reason the conference is held in the first place. The Council is the District’s governing body and consists of the Presidents and Vice Presidents Education of all the clubs in the District; all District officers; the Division Directors and Area Directors; and any other members of the District leadership team.

At the conference, the Council conducts District business and makes decisions that affect all clubs in the District. The group votes on items that can include electing District officers, changing District bylaws and procedures, approving budgets, and more. There is no better place to watch your District leaders in action. Who

knows? You might just find yourself wanting to serve in that role. Go for it.

How can you apply what you observe and learn to your job and your club? And where can that lead you?

4 Connection

Plenty of opportunities exist to meet people—in sessions, at meals, in the hallways. George Jarosik, DTM, Past District 39 Director, has been to 19 District conferences and says, “I learn so much from connecting with fellow Toastmasters and meeting new members.” His advice: “Attend everything, meet everybody.”

I have developed good friendships with my fellow contestants in the speech contests. Competition might not be your interest, but there are so many other possibilities. Focus on your core interests, and you are sure to meet others with similar interests.

If you want to become a better speaker, get to know the keynoters and trainers. Strike up a conversation with your favorite contestants. A conference highlight for Jarosik was meeting the 2012 Toastmasters World Champion of Public Speaking, Ryan Avery, DTM, and asking him what it took to win the prestigious contest.

Or introduce yourself to the District leaders. Although they will be busy running the event, they will be happy to meet

you and to explain the value of Toastmasters leadership.

Some contacts, however, are not planned. My most memorable moment came one year when I was what is now an Area Director. I sat down at a luncheon table and introduced myself to the person to my right. It turns out that she was a member of one of the clubs in my Area. She was also an editor at the *Toastmaster* magazine.

During our conversation, she asked my advice on an issue related to the Toastmasters education program. As a club Vice President Education, I had this conversation frequently with my club members, so I had a ready answer.

About two months later I received an email from her. She had pitched my thoughts to the magazine team, and her email offered me an opportunity to write an article for the magazine. That led to several more articles, and ultimately, my own monthly column (Toastmasters Toolbox). This still amazes me, because writing was my worst subject in high school. I discovered a new skill that I never knew I had, and, through it, I have made contacts throughout the world, all because I attended a District conference.

What will you gain by attending your District conference? Education, inspiration, vision, connection, and many other possible benefits. Who will you hear? Who will you meet? What will you see that will challenge you to reach higher, to go bigger, or to move in a whole new direction?

There is only one way to find out. Attend your conference. It just may be an experience you will never forget. **T**

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

YOUTH BOOST

Leadership program for young people helps anchor one club's rejuvenation.

BY SHARON SULLIVAN

About a decade ago, the Grand Junction Toastmasters Club in Colorado struggled with declining membership as older, seasoned speakers passed away and younger members accomplished their goals and moved on. With only a few people regularly attending meetings, members juggled multiple meeting roles to keep the weekly club moving forward.



The club, located in a largely rural part of western Colorado, celebrated its 65th anniversary in November 2019, and is once again a strong, vibrant club, with 20-plus active members. Membership is diverse, ranging from college students to entrepreneurs, retirees, professionals, and stay-at-home parents. For the past three years, the early-morning club has earned the President's Distinguished award.

So what changed?

Grand Junction Toastmasters began offering community outreach programs, which have helped publicize the benefits of Toastmasters and sparked energy and excitement in the club.

In February 2012, the club hosted its first Speechcraft program—a six-week course where community members are introduced to Toastmasters and the fundamentals of public speaking. The club has held the program occasionally over the years and it has attracted new members to the group.

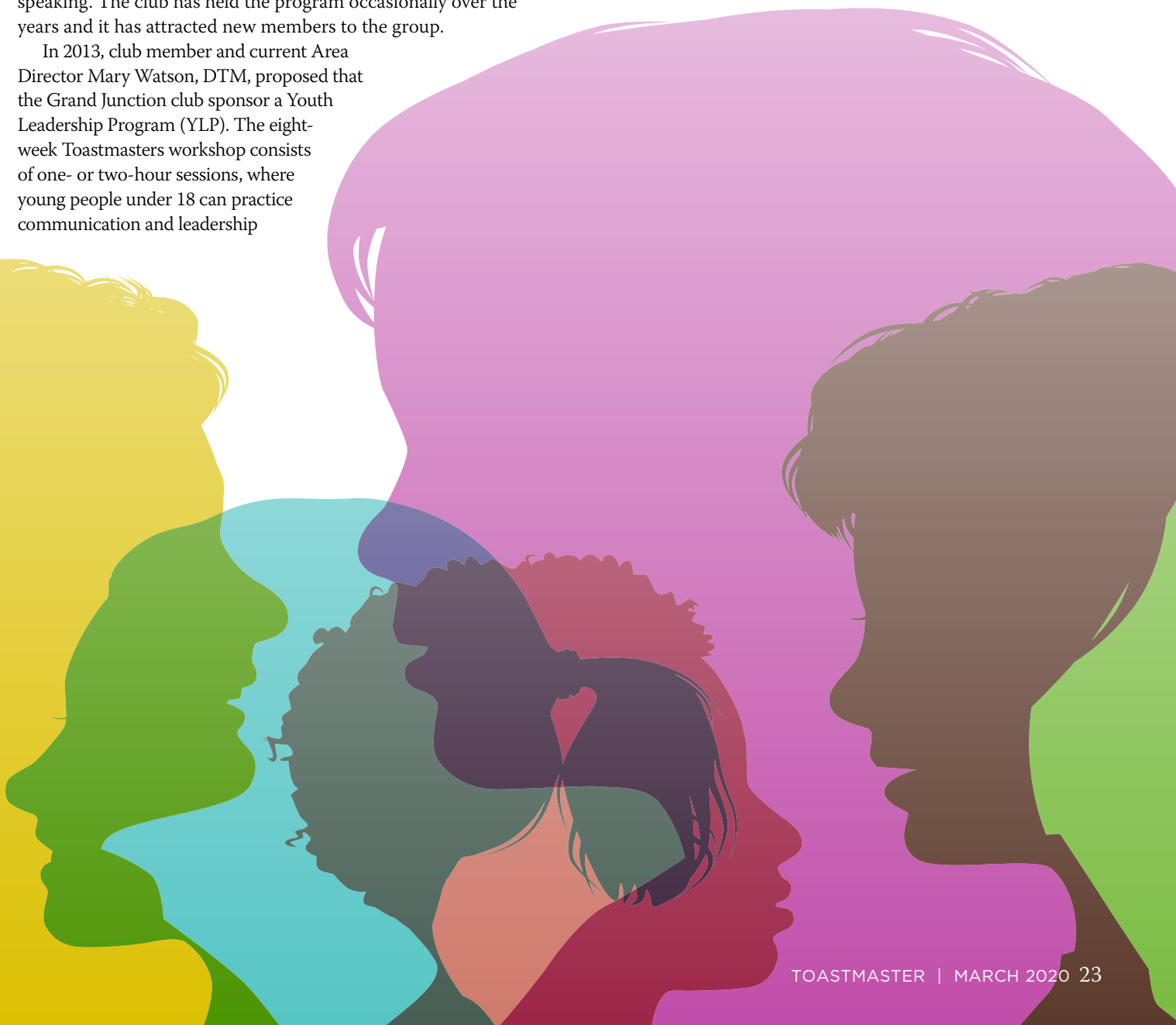
In 2013, club member and current Area Director Mary Watson, DTM, proposed that the Grand Junction club sponsor a Youth Leadership Program (YLP). The eight-week Toastmasters workshop consists of one- or two-hour sessions, where young people under 18 can practice communication and leadership

skills. The club held the workshop that year and has been hosting successful YLPs ever since, finding that the program benefits both young participants and the club itself.

An Opportunity to Help

Mary Watson also volunteered at a mentoring program for at-risk children, called Mesa County Partners. As a Toastmaster, she recognized an opportunity to further help kids.

“When we started the Youth Leadership Program, it was inspiring—we wanted to include all kids,” Watson says. “We contacted [Mesa County] Partners, homeschooled kids, private and public schoolchildren, and teens who worked for the Colorado Conservation Corps. It was a good mix of kids. It’s what I wanted—to be inclusive and diverse.”





Megan Rubalcaba, now 19, began participating in the Grand Junction Toastmasters Youth Leadership Program when she was 13.

Club members have held the YLPs—which continue to serve the area’s same youth populations—at the local public library every year. The youth librarian helps promote the program in visits to local schools and homeschooling groups.

Palmer Meyers was 12 when he signed up for the club’s YLP for the first time. Now 19, he attended the program every year until graduating from high school, when he left the area to start college. “It helped me be a leader,” Meyers, who studies aviation, says of the program. “It helped me be more confident in front of my classmates, giving presentations. And it’s helping now with my public speaking class in college.”

Taking the Lead

Megan Rubalcaba was 13 and experiencing difficulty adjusting to a new school when a school counselor recommended she attend Grand Junction’s YLP. “I was really nervous walking in,” Rubalcaba recalls. “I didn’t know it was public speaking, but it’s what I needed. I didn’t know I needed it. It turned out to be good for me in the long run. Everyone was so kind, open, and vulnerable.”

She says her mom listened to all her speeches and gave her tips. “I remember my dad telling me how brave he thought I was, how proud he was of me,” says Rubalcaba. “It brought us closer together.”

After attending the YLP for a couple of years, Rubalcaba asked Watson if she and Meyers could direct the program, which the two teens did for the next three years. Watson and Toastmaster Debbie Kemp—a member of the nearby Talk of the Town Toastmasters—helped facilitate the meetings.

Rubalcaba says she recognized herself in the new students and had ideas on how to help them break through their shyness. She initiated warmup exercises to help students loosen up and become acquainted with one another. She and Meyers delivered demonstration speeches and helped students form ideas for writing their own speeches, which participants presented weekly.

Currently a 19-year-old sophomore at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, where she’s studying to become a math teacher, Rubalcaba says she plans to seek out a Toastmasters club in that city to join later in the school year. She also says she’d like to start a YLP in Texas when her schedule allows.

HOW TO START A YLP

Toastmasters know just how valuable communication and leadership skills are. Imagine honing those skills as a youth—and the kind of head start it would give you in life.

If your club would like to sponsor a YLP, here are some details about the program:

- ▶ The sponsoring club, or a cooperating organization (such as a school), selects the participants for the eight-session workshop.
- ▶ Each session is typically one or two hours—like Toastmasters club meetings.
- ▶ The workshop is presented during or after school, or on weekends.
- ▶ The club supplies a coordinator as well as experienced members to present the program.
- ▶ The youth group selects officers. Sessions essentially replicate a typical Toastmasters meeting, with an agenda, a meeting leader, impromptu and prepared speeches, and evaluations.
- ▶ Workshop presenters must follow the guidelines of YLP materials, which can be purchased through the Toastmasters online store, www.toastmasters.org/Shop.

If you are *looking* for a YLP, contact Toastmasters clubs in your area to ask if any of them plan to present the program or have an interest in doing so. (Because YLPs are sponsored voluntarily, Toastmasters World Headquarters does not have official information on available programs or which clubs offer it.)

To search for local club listings, go to the Find a Club section on the Toastmasters website: www.toastmasters.org/Find-a-Club.

A Team Effort

As a YLP organizer, Kemp says giving students feedback is a key part of the program. They draw on the “sandwich” method used in Toastmasters evaluations. “Our philosophy is to tell students two things they did well, and give just one thing to work on,” Kemp notes. Parents, friends, and other family members are invited to attend the final YLP session to help celebrate their children’s accomplishments.

Without question, leading youth program outreach has inspired many members of the Grand Junction Toastmasters. Club member Rebecca Mullen, who became involved with the YLP after observing a session, says, “It was wonderful to watch the young people come out of their shells, and to watch a very shy and nearly wordless young woman begin to tell more and more of



Alejandro Huerta (left) shakes hands with Alex Warren, while Joyce Jones looks on. The teens attended a recent Youth Leadership Program sponsored by Grand Junction Toastmasters in Colorado.

her story. For me personally, the more activities like YLP I became involved with, the bigger my vision became of Toastmasters.

“The only way to grow as a leader is to take on leadership roles. That’s what gave me the confidence to put together my own TED Talk,” she says.

Mullen and Watson have combined efforts to provide additional community public speaking opportunities, such as

Ignite Grand Junction—an event where community members deliver five-minute talks, accompanied by slides that advance automatically every 15 seconds. Ignite Talks were founded in Seattle, Washington, in 2006, with events now taking place in cities worldwide.

The club has also helped organize TEDx Grand Junction annually for the past several years. In addition, the group organized its second annual TED-Ed Club—for youths ages 13-18—in October 2019. TED-Ed is TEDx’s youth and education initiative, aimed “to spark and celebrate the ideas of teachers and students around the world.”

The Grand Junction club is clearly poised to inspire new leaders for the foreseeable future, especially as it continues to participate in community-based Toastmasters programs such as YLP. Megan Rubalcaba can testify to that.

“Youth Leadership has shown me a part of myself that I didn’t know I had,” she says. “I’m normally a reserved person, but in Youth Leadership I came alive, like I was a different person—still me, but more outgoing and creative.” **T**

Sharon Sullivan is a freelance writer based in western Colorado. She was introduced to Toastmasters 20 years ago after attending a Speechcraft course.

COMMUNITY PROGRAM OPTIONS

Go With a Gavel Club

If you are looking for a long-term environment for those under 18 that is similar to a Toastmasters club with regular meetings, consider forming a youth Gavel Club. Gavel Clubs are for groups not eligible for regular Toastmasters membership and are hosted by an organization or regular Toastmasters club.

To learn more, go to www.toastmasters.org/Gavel-Clubs. You can also contact the New Clubs team at World Headquarters (newclubs@toastmasters.org) with any questions.

Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal Communication is a community-based program, but unlike the YLP, it doesn’t need to be presented by Toastmasters members.

The program helps teenagers build stronger listening and communication skills while understanding their own communication style. Materials are designed to be used by teachers or other adults who mentor teens, such as youth program administrators, guidance counselors, community religious leaders, and others.

Program leader and participant manuals can be purchased through the Toastmasters online store.

The manuals cover effective listening, effective expression, and effective communication. Activities,

which include role-playing, are designed to be accessible and realistic to teens.

One section encourages young people to discuss shared experiences—and how they felt, thought, and behaved in such situations. The goal is to practice empathy. Suggested scenarios include:

- ▶ Finishing a big project
- ▶ Losing a friend
- ▶ Visiting a foreign country
- ▶ Moving away
- ▶ Being left out

Teens also learn that effective communication includes body language, voice control, and using appropriate words to defuse conflicts.

Speechcraft

Another Toastmasters outreach program is Speechcraft, which is aimed at adults and is an excellent membership-building tool. Through that six-week course, clubs can introduce community members to Toastmasters and the fundamentals of public speaking. To learn more about the community-based programs, visit www.toastmasters.org/Membership/Community-Based-Programs.

MY TOASTMASTERS TRANSFORMATION

I grew from a shy girl in the corner to a self-assured student in the center of the crowd.

BY RACHITA IYER

Imagine a girl who shuffled her feet every time she stood in front of a crowd and stared at the floor as she presented to a room. That was me a few years ago, when I was just entering my teenage years. I struggled to confidently speak to a room full of people, and when I did, it would look like I was ready to cry—or so I've been told!

But Toastmasters has definitely changed my life for the better.

My initial exposure to the organization came when I was in the fifth grade. My dad had recently joined the Kennesaw North Metro Toastmasters club near Atlanta, Georgia, in hopes of improving his presentation skills. He asked me to tag along for a meeting since I was so curious about where he went every weekend.

It didn't take me long at my dad's club meeting to realize I was the only person under the age of 30, and when I asked him where all the kids were, he said, "This club is only for adults, it's not for kids." "But why not?" I quickly asked.

That question prompted the beginning of my journey with Toastmasters youth programs in the Atlanta area. It led to my earning awards in many speech contests as a member of a youth Gavel Club, which was supervised by Victoria Noethling, DTM, a member of three Toastmasters clubs in the Atlanta area. It led to my election as the Gavel Club's Vice President Education (VPE). It eventually led to me assisting Ms. Noethling in a YLP at my high school so my fellow students could benefit from Toastmasters practice.

Toastmasters has taught me invaluable life lessons that have shaped who I am as a person. Through these youth programs, I learned the importance of perseverance, planning, and confidence.

The skills I



Rachita Iyer and Victoria Noethling

developed in Toastmasters have also impacted my experience in other organizations. I have become a more confident presenter in the Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA), a youth organization centered around presentation and marketing skills. I have excelled in various public speaking contests, winning multiple awards at the regional levels of the National Optimist Club Oratorical Competition (Optimist International is a service organization), and the National High School Mock Trial Competition.

In mock trial, which I have competed in for three years, students split into plaintiff and defendant teams and prepare for months to argue a case in a real courtroom. As a competitive attorney in mock trial, I have been able to present concise and powerful legal arguments. I couldn't have succeeded in this without my Toastmasters experience.

As VPE of my Gavel Club, I have also greatly improved my organizational skills. Planning meetings and coordinating speakers have given me organizational and communication abilities that will help me in many other areas.

I have been able to engrave the basic Toastmasters ideals of communication, leadership, and confidence through public speaking into my everyday life. I can proudly say that I am no longer the shy girl shuffling her feet in the corner of the room. Instead, I'm the girl in the center of a crowd speaking her voice with confidence.

Rachita Iyer is a high school senior and lives with her family in the Atlanta, Georgia, area.

Write, Edit, Practice. Repeat.

Tips for turning your thoughts into a speech.



Evan Esar, an American humorist, once said, “Public speaking is the art of diluting a two-minute idea with a two-hour vocabulary.” The idea of standing in front of a room and delivering a prepared speech, complete with appropriate pauses and humorous phrases, may seem an insurmountable feat to newcomers. Good speakers make it seem so easy. But they have a secret: They prepare ahead of time and craft their speeches on paper and in their heads before delivering it to a group. I call it the “Write, Edit, Practice” method.

Write, Write, Write

Good speeches begin with a thought. Go pour all your thoughts on paper. As you start putting those thoughts into words, your first draft will start taking shape. First drafts don’t have to be perfect; they just have to be written. As you write, you will find new ideas and angles popping up. Write them down. Just the process of writing has a way of clarifying an issue. Worry about paring down later.

Edit and Sharpen

Having zeroed in on the topic and exhausted all your thoughts, begin to focus on the objectives of the speech.

Evaluate your words. A good rule of thumb is that a five- to seven-minute speech should be around 800 words. Like a great sculptor who chisels on a block of marble until a beautiful shape is created, you now need to take that rough block of written ideas and give it some form. Think of your central idea and then reread what you’ve written. Cut whatever isn’t necessary to what you are trying to say. Be ruthless. Break up long sentences and use simple words to make it easier to internalize and deliver.

Use visual reminders to guide your delivery. Having pared down your speech to the right amount of words, read it as you would like to deliver it. Tailor your fonts or use symbols to give you visual cues on your speaking tone in different spots in the script. Decide where you want to speak *~softly~* and where you want to speak **loudly**. Leave some space ... if you want to give a pause. Use question marks or exclamation points for further reminders.

Be aware of time constraints. One aspect of a good speech is adhering to time limits, so pay close attention as you practice. While it is important to convey what you wish to say, it is equally important to say it within the allotted time. Respect the agenda. If you’re allotted 10 minutes for a presentation, people will grow annoyed if you go on for 20 minutes. On the Toastmasters side, it can be devastating to deliver a great speech in a contest but get disqualified because you exceeded the time limit by a few seconds. I once witnessed the disqualification of an otherwise outstanding speech when the speaker went too long over the allotted time.

First drafts don’t have to be perfect. They just have to be written.

When I went over my time limit on a speech, my mentor, Vincent De Tholath, reminded me that while it’s important to get your message across, time is also important. He told me to simply “focus on the objectives.” You may have four points to make, but if you don’t have time, it’s better to take the two main points and convey them meaningfully.

Practice

Practice your speech until you are comfortable with it. Once you have the words in place, you can add the desired expressions and emphasis on particular words. Mix in pauses and eye contact as you imagine an audience in front of you.

It’s best to practice your speech out loud in a place where you’re comfortable and have some privacy—the car, your bedroom, even the shower or bathtub. You must speak loudly enough to be heard, clearly enough to be understood, and slowly enough for your audience to keep up.

Finally, internalize your speech—get so comfortable with it that when you are actually in front of your audience, you only have to focus on them rather than on your speech. Let it flow from your heart and your head.

Internalizing doesn’t mean memorizing. Ed Tate, Toastmasters’ 2000 World Champion of Public Speaking, in his book *Speaker’s Edge* said, “Internalizing means that you own the material and it’s a part of you—it’s in your head and your heart. It’s visceral. It’s in your gut. As a result, you come across as real, authentic, and genuine.”

Although at first it may seem overwhelming, the “Write, Edit, Practice” method will soon become simply a part of any speech you prepare. Before you know it, you’ll feel comfortable and confident delivering a speech to any audience. **T**

Gangadhar Krishna, DTM, lives in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. He is a member of the City of Gold Toastmasters and HR Connexions Toastmasters clubs, both in Dubai. He is the author of *Delighting Customers Is ... Find out more at www.delightingcustomers.com*.



Key Pointers on Pathways

As the education transition takes hold, these tips will help you thrive.

BY PAUL STERMAN

The countdown continues. It's now about four months until the Toastmasters traditional education program expires and the Pathways learning experience becomes the sole program available to members. If you are already well into your Pathways journey, keep going! If not, don't fret—there are many resources to help.

Below is a guide to useful information and tips for this transition period.

Traditional Awards Deadline

To earn any final education awards in the traditional program, you must submit your completed award applications to World Headquarters, and they must be received by June 30, 2020. For leadership awards (in which members must serve as a club officer, District leader, or club coach), you can submit your applications to be received by World Headquarters between June 1 and June 30, 2020.

Don't wait until the last minute, because application deadlines won't be extended. If you have questions, email educationprogram@toastmasters.org.

Easier Access to Base Camp

Base Camp, the online gateway to Pathways, contains everything you need to navigate through the program. Pathways, which is also available in print, consists of 11 paths and a mix of projects in each path's five progressive levels. It is now easier to access Base Camp and to select a new path from your Toastmasters Profile. To view the new selection process, log in to your Toastmasters Profile and select the "Choose a Path" button or watch a video at bit.ly/TI_PathSelection.

In addition, last year the Toastmasters Pathways team at World Headquarters unlocked all levels in the program's 11 paths. In the past, you could only access a project within a level once you had finished the previous levels. Pathways users can now open and view any project in any of the five levels. Being able to view what's available in a path's higher levels may help you plan your projects and chart your learning.

Despite this access, it is still highly recommended you complete your projects in

sequential order, since they build in complexity, with each one designed to build on the content of the previous projects.

Pathways Resources

If you are looking for a general overview of Pathways and how the program works, go to the Pathways webpage on the Toastmasters website: www.toastmasters.org/Pathways.

- ▶ For a list of all projects in each path, the Paths and Core Competencies document is a great resource: www.toastmasters.org/Paths-and-Core-Competencies. Descriptions of Pathways projects are available on Base Camp, including future projects in your path or projects in the path of a member whom you will be evaluating.
- ▶ *The Navigator* is your guide to Toastmasters and the Pathways learning experience. You can explore this resource online via www.toastmasters.org/The-Navigator.



- ▶ For general questions about Pathways or Base Camp, you can contact the Club and Member Support Department at World Headquarters. Email: membership@toastmasters.org; phone: +1 720-439-5050.
- ▶ For general questions about navigating Base Camp, you can contact the Club and Member Support Department. Email: membership@toastmasters.org; phone: +1 720-439-5050 ext. 402.
- ▶ For Pathways tools, like the achievement chart and tracker and recognition pins, visit www.toastmasters.org/PathwaysStrong.

Questions and Answers

How do I get credit for serving in a club meeting role?

In Pathways there are several projects that include serving in a meeting role. For example, in the “Evaluation and Feedback” project, in Level 1 of every path, members must serve as a speech evaluator. Completing Level 3 in a path requires you to fulfill the roles of evaluator, meeting Toastmaster, and Table Topicsmaster.

You can record your meeting roles on your Base Camp profile page. When you record your meeting role, it’s helpful to indicate the date you performed that function. Your club’s Vice President Education (VPE) then must verify that you fulfilled the meeting roles required to complete Level 3. The VPE must confirm—either by their presence at the meeting or through confirmation from a club officer who was present—that a member served in a role.

How do I mark my entire path as complete?

Even though all levels in a path are now unlocked, meaning you can work through them in nonsequential order, you still need to complete Levels 1 through 5 and have each level approved by your Base Camp manager before you can mark a path complete.

Once these levels are marked complete, you will have access to view and complete the final project, “Reflect On Your Path.” (This project is the only one that is locked. It can only be accessed once you finish all five levels.)

FACTS & FIGURES

As of December 31, 2019:

- ▶ Nearly 4,000 paths have been completed by members.
- ▶ More than 145,000 path levels have been completed—including 80,000 Level 1’s.
- ▶ More than 99% of all paths being done by members are being done online.
- ▶ Presentation Mastery is the most-completed path, followed by Dynamic Leadership.
- ▶ The most popular Pathways elective project is “Connect with Storytelling,” followed by “Deliver Social Speeches,” and “Inspire Your Audience.”

After finishing this project, you will submit a Path Completion Approval request to your Base Camp manager, who must approve the request in Base Camp and submit your final level completion in Club Central. Once both of those steps have been taken, your path will be complete, your club could receive credit for the Distinguished Club Program, and your education credentials will change.

Don’t wait until the last minute to submit your award applications for the traditional education program. Applications won’t be extended beyond the June 30 deadline.

I am done with my project, but the project is not marking complete—what’s wrong?

It’s likely you didn’t complete the second of two skill assessments. Before you start a project, complete Assess Your

Skills—Before. Then finish the project and launch it from Base Camp. (The project will open into a new tab in the browser.)

Use the drop-down to choose Assess Your Skills—After. Once you’ve finished, the project will be marked as complete. You must take the pre- and post-assessments every time you complete a project. These help you gain a better understanding of the new competencies you have developed in the project.

Some of the evaluation forms I download from my projects are fillable and others are not. Why? How can I always be sure to have a fillable form?

The evaluation resource you download from your project may not be fillable, meaning you can fill them out by typing your comments right on your computer or other device. However, you can access a fillable version of any Pathways evaluation resource from the Speech Evaluations page on Base Camp. Simply select the Speech Evaluations page tile from the Base Camp home page, and you will find an alphabetical list of evaluation resources.

What are a Base Camp manager’s duties and tools?

The Base Camp manager’s primary responsibility is to track member progress and verify that members have completed all requirements in each level of their path. Because this role is focused on education, it primarily falls to the club’s VPE; however, the President and Secretary of each club also have access to the Base Camp manager page for their club.

To approve a level completion, Base Camp managers should use the project descriptions to help them understand the requirements for each project in the level and verify that the member fulfilled all requirements. If you are a Base Camp manager new to the role, be sure to go through the tutorials on the Base Camp manager home page, which will also help you understand your duties and how to fulfill them. **T**

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

Signs of the Times

I know what you said. The question is, do *you* know what you said?

BY JOHN CADLEY



Hesitate to write this column for fear of the effect it may have on my readers. Toastmasters prize, in both the written and the spoken word, clarity, precision, brevity, and eloquence. I have no doubt that when they see someone violate those qualities it sends a shudder up their spines, as it does mine. And yet I feel it is my duty to call out some of the most egregious examples of lacerated verbiage I have come across so that you, the guardians of effective communication, can see what you're up against and remain ever vigilant in your dedication to The Cause. Hence, I apologize ahead of time for any uncomfortable tingling you may feel in your vertebrae but remember—it only shows that *you* would never commit such a gaffe.

I cite first a sign written on the side of a van, which read: **Antiquing the Way It Was Before the Web**. What does *that* mean? “Antiquing,” as I understand it, means going into an antique store to look for antiques, which people still do, web or no web. I can only guess that “antiquing” implies old and “web” evokes new, and the author feels the two are somehow incompatible. I can see where browsing inventories on a high-tech computer might not be as much fun as poking around in quaint, musty shops, and I might even agree ... were it not for the line appearing directly under **Antiquing the Way It Was Before the Web**, which was—ironically—a web address.

Next up is the theme line for an American insurance company, Excellus BlueCross BlueShield, which states: **Live**

Fearless. Never mind that, grammatically, it should be **Live Fearlessly**. The point is that this is an *insurance company* that has to pay large sums of money to people who get injured ... and they're telling us to ignore the one instinct—fear!—which stops humans from doing the things that *could* get them injured! If that doesn't rattle your linguistic lumbar, I don't know what would.

I apologize ahead of time for any uncomfortable tingling you may feel in your vertebrae but remember—it only shows that *you* would never commit such a gaffe.

We can now move on to Great Britain where we find a park sign that is not so great: **Please Do Not Empty Your Dog Here**. Words fail me, as they apparently did the author of the sign. It is, of course, the dog that does the emptying and I've never seen one that needed any help whatsoever in that regard, especially on my lawn.

Living only a few hours from Canada, I visit that wonderful country often. I love the people. They're just so darn nice. Where else would you see a woman holding a sign at a protest rally that says **I'm Generally Displeased With the Current State of Affairs?** That,

my friends, is the definition of civilized public discourse.

Back in the United States, I took a road trip recently and came upon a highway sign outside a restaurant that was meant to entice drivers to stop in for a bite by informing them that the establishment was air-conditioned and the featured entrée was meat loaf. The sign, unfortunately, was rather small, without enough room for even a little punctuation. Hence, what prospective customers actually saw was **Air-Conditioned Meat Loaf**. I prefer mine hot, so I'll see if there's something a little farther down the road.

I am also forever irritated by the road signs telling drivers to **Stay Alert in Work Zone**. Just the work zone? Great! As soon as I drive out of it, I'll go back to reading the paper.

And finally, there are the signs written in a foreign language that lose something in translation. Unlike my other examples, this is *not* a criticism. I'm sure I would misspeak just as easily in other languages. But one can't resist mentioning the sign in a Norwegian pub that, when translated into English, comes out as **Ladies Are Requested Not to Have Children in the Bar**. In the back of a taxi, yes, but please, not the bar. There's a dart game going on. **T**

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