

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | JULY 2021

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New Year**

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Why They Stay**

**You're a
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The *Toastmaster* magazine (ISSN 00408263) is published monthly by Toastmasters International, Inc., 9127 S. Jamaica St. #400, Englewood, Colorado, United States 80112.

Published to promote the ideas and goals of Toastmasters International, a nonprofit educational organization of clubs throughout the world dedicated to teaching skills in public speaking and leadership.

The official publication of Toastmasters International carries authorized notices and articles regarding the activities and interests of the organization, but responsibility is not assumed for the opinions of the authors of other articles. The *Toastmaster* magazine does not endorse or guarantee the products it advertises.

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Time to Look Toward the Future

Welcome to the 2021–2022 Toastmasters program year! Just like with any new year, this is a time to simultaneously look back on the previous year and make plans for the new one.

What goals did you set for yourself this past program year? Did you complete one or more paths in Pathways? Personally, I was able to complete two and have started a third. What did you learn about yourself—and about others—during this historic time? I have witnessed resilience, a desire to continue to grow personally, and a willingness to help others, despite the challenges. I have watched as the world became smaller, not in size but in the distance between us. All of this is a true testament to the heart of our members and to ourselves as an organization.

As we enter this new Toastmasters year, let's look forward with an optimistic eye.

We should also remember that the past is behind us, and it should serve more as a reminder than a focus. Now is the time to look toward the future and what is in front of us. Think of it this way: The rearview mirror of a car is very small—everything in that mirror is behind us and isn't meant to be focused on, whereas the windshield in front is large, allowing for greater focus on the road ahead.

If you weren't able to achieve all of your 2020–2021 goals, celebrate what you did accomplish and let those accomplishments be the steppingstones for a great year ahead. If you achieved your 2020–2021 goals, congratulations! What new goals will you set? Charter a new club? Become a mentor? Take on a leadership role? Whatever your goals, set them high enough to stretch yourself.

As we enter this new Toastmasters year, let's look forward with an optimistic eye: That all our clubs will soon be able to meet in person again; that we will be able to share in handshakes and high-fives. No matter how this year unfolds, I am confident, based on what I have seen and experienced, that we will continue to be there to support and encourage one another, to help mentor and guide one another, and to help others reach further than they think they can.

As T.S. Eliot said, "For last year's words belong to last year's language, and next year's words await another voice." How will you share your voice and stories with the Toastmasters community in the new year? How will your experiences change you ... and change others?

Happy New Year! Let's make the 2021–2022 Toastmasters year the best ever!

Richard E. Peck, DTM
International President



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Clubs keep spirits high and find ways to safely celebrate.



Members of Tampines Tamil Toastmasters Club of Tampines, Singapore, adhere to local COVID-19 guidelines and celebrate their 50th club meeting and Pongal—a four-day harvest festival during the solar equinox.



Scholars Malayalam Toastmasters Club of Ras Al Khaimah, United Arab Emirates, celebrates International Day of Happiness on March 20.



Members of Toastmasters Club of Dwarka in New Delhi, Delhi, India, enjoy their 500th meeting in person, their first chance to get together after the first pandemic lockdown.



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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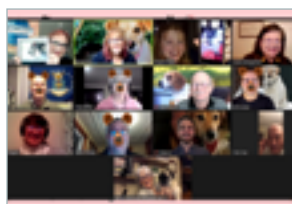
Capture Your Club Spirit

Does your club have something to celebrate? [Send us](#) your best club photos, videos, and stories for a chance to be featured in the magazine throughout the year.

Online Magazine Video Tutorial

Whether you're visiting the online magazine for the first time, or you're a dedicated digital reader, this video will help guide you to making the most of your online experience. Share it with members, guests, friends, and family—there are articles and online features for everyone!

Happy Toastmasters New Year!



Time to reflect and refresh those goals! In this article, find a helpful checklist to make sure your club is on track, ideas for themed meetings, and hyperlinks with valuable resources.



Island Time

Learn about the club growth happening in the country of Mauritius, and then read an accompanying article about a Rotary/Toastmasters cross-over experience during a hybrid meeting held on the island.

▶ Q&A

Chartering on a Small Island

Mauritius has one of the highest club growths per capita. Find out how they do it.

BY LAURA AMANN

The country of Mauritius, a small island in the Indian Ocean off the coast of eastern Africa, has seen incredible club growth recently, with 12 active clubs and five more chartered this year. That's impressive for an island of just over 1 million people and an area of only 788 square miles (1,268 square kilometers).

Ravin Lama, a Toastmaster of nearly 30 years, has been instrumental in Mauritius' club growth. After joining Toastmasters in 1992 in Nepal, chartering clubs and holding leadership positions, he saw the growth in that country take off. He moved to Mauritius in 2006 and joined Port Louis Toastmasters Club, and in 2017, he began trying to help Mauritius see the kind of growth he had seen possible in Nepal. Below, Lama reflects on that evolution.

How did clubs in Mauritius grow so quickly?

We've been working to expand and grow clubs for a while. The process started in 2011 when Bob Ward, DTM, a member of Mauritius Financial Toastmasters Club, began talking to District 74 leaders about Mauritius joining the District. He did so again in 2017, but we were turned down both times based on the number of clubs we had. That's when we decided to really challenge ourselves to grow the number of clubs in our country, something that is particularly hard to do when you're a small island.

Since I was in the newspaper business, I knew a lot of people in various corporations. I reached out to people I knew at the top and said, "Here is one of the best training programs in the world. You're not going to find another program like this at this cost."

Most members in Mauritius are young professionals, 20- to 35-year-olds. There are a lot of banks, financial institutions, and tourism industries in Mauritius so there's no difficulty in finding members. We go to these companies and tell employees, "It's absolutely essential for your career growth." We have corporate clubs in a variety of major organizations. Accenture (Mauritius) has just chartered its second corporate club. We also chartered the Mauritius Revenue Authority Toastmasters Club and are working toward opening a second club there.

We also realized that most of the Toastmasters clubs were in the central region of the country, and we knew we needed to expand. So right now we're looking at universities and the police. With them you could open one club in the north, south, east, and west, and start to get Toastmasters in these areas.



Mauritius Toastmasters Clubs Convention 2019
Photo credit: Saleem Sookia

What is your "recipe" for success?

I have always believed that if you want something in life, you ask for it. The way I see it, you need someone with connections, and then a backup team.

I meet with the higher-ups, explain Toastmasters, and get them interested. Then the backup team does a demo meeting and has all the sign-up information right there at the end of the meeting. As soon as I had one type of business signed up, I'd move on to similar businesses. So I would sign up one bank, then go to another bank and tell them about the first bank. It created a sense of competition.

It's been easier to open a club since we came up with this plan. Since part of the Distinguished Toastmaster project is sponsoring or chartering a club, I encourage using the demo meeting as a project.

What role do the current clubs play in growing other clubs?

We've created a fun sense of professional competition. We hold an annual conference that includes a friendly rivalry over who has the best speakers. But it's more than just a rivalry. Because of COVID, everyone has joined a common platform. The world has opened up.

When Toastmasters finally gave us the okay to join District 74, all the Club Presidents got together to see how to work together. We're really excited because being in a District allows us to have access to training, like Club Officer Training; it allows us to compete in speech contests alongside people in other countries; and it allows us to offer more leadership possibilities after Club President.

Once you join Toastmasters you have an instant sense of camaraderie. And it's not only within your own club, your own country, or your own District—there's also a fantastic network around the world.

Laura Amann is magazine supervisor and editor for the Toastmaster magazine.

► CLUB EXPERIENCE

5 Questions to Ask Before Adopting a Hybrid Format

For nearly 100 years, in-person meetings have been at the heart of Toastmasters. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many clubs have been unable to continue with in-person meetings. A hybrid club meeting combines online and in-person attendance. Before your club gets started, consider the five questions below, then download [this document](#) for helpful advice to ensure your club is equipped to hold successful hybrid meetings.

1. Are club leaders and members willing to commit to making the hybrid-format meeting work, resolving the challenges likely to arise along the way?
2. Does the meeting site offer reliable access to internet bandwidth and the equipment needed to conduct hybrid meetings?
3. Does the club have several people who can competently handle logistics and are willing to take the responsibility?
4. How does the club plan to ensure that both local and remote attendees can participate equally?



Soumendra Nath Bannerjee of Aster Toastmasters in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, participates in Table Topics™ at the club's first hybrid meeting.

5. If you are a community club, will you now accept members from outside your local area?

For more tips on how to make club meetings work when members are online and in person, read [“Hybrid Harmony,”](#) and for technology and setup advice, read [“Technology for Hybrid Meetings.”](#)

► MARKETING TIPS

WordPress Website Template

[New templates](#) are now available to help your club create a beautiful website. A website is a great tool for networking and recruitment of new members, so find a template that works for your club and let your personality shine.

The Club Marketing Guide Is Here!

Have you felt overwhelmed by the number of marketing tools in the Resource Library and you're not sure where to begin or how to use these important resources? [The Club Marketing Guide](#) is here to help—use it to strengthen your club marketing efforts; it was designed to be an easy place to find/understand all the tools you need.

Peruse Updated Fliers

Both [“Find Your Voice”](#) and [“Uncover Your Leadership Potential”](#) fliers have been updated in content and design. Use these great redesigned tools for club promotion.

New Way to Promote Toastmasters

Help spread the word about Toastmasters through our new Public Service Announcement (PSA). The PSA can be shared with your local TV and radio stations to inform, promote, and publicize the Toastmasters clubs in your area. The PSA is available for download in our [Media Center](#). Email



pr@toastmasters.org with any questions.

Speechcraft® Promotional Video

The Toastmasters Speechcraft program is an excellent membership-building tool, and now you can tell prospective Speechcrafters and members with [this new video](#) that quickly explains the Speechcraft

digital experience. The training workshop, aimed at nonmembers as well as new club members, teaches the basics of the Toastmasters experience.

The video highlights how Speechcraft practice can benefit people in professional and social scenarios. Speechcraft was modernized this year and now includes digital projects, forms, and resources. Participants' projects feature such interactive tools as videos, quizzes, and self-assessments.

[Speechcraft](#) can be presented in four, six, or eight sessions, typically for one to two hours each, and each session features a structured agenda, including Table Topics®, speeches, evaluations, educational presentations, and other meeting elements.

Promote the Speechcraft program and share the video today!

▶ **SNAPSHOT**



Former District leaders from Districts 51, 80, 87, 97P, and 102 in the Southeast Asia region met on Zoom for an online Chinese New Year celebration. Toastmasters held up oranges for this photo because giving mandarin oranges to loved ones during the Chinese New Year is a way of wishing happiness and prosperity.

▶ **TOASTMASTERS NEWS**

Toastmasters and Diversity

In these times, it's nice to know Toastmasters can represent a diverse group of people who respect and support each other on their journey to become better communicators. Get tips for creating an inclusive club for people with varied abilities in the article "[Helping All Members Succeed.](#)" For online club ideas, refer to "[Creating Inclusivity in Online Meetings.](#)" Learn about building a quality club culture in "[What's the Scoop on Your Group?](#)" Hear speaker and trainer Sarah Khan talk about diversity at Toastmasters [in this video.](#)



2021 International Speech Contest Semifinals

Root for your region's representatives in this year's International Speech Contest Semifinals! Two contestants from each region are randomly assigned to each of four semifinals, which will be held during Toastmasters' 2021 Virtual Convention. The regions for each semifinal have been determined, and in early July you can [see the names](#) of this



year's region quarterfinal winners.

Free Path

Members who submitted their renewal

dues earlier this year earned a free path in the Pathways learning experience. (The deadline to redeem it was March 31.) Remember that the free path belongs to you, and not your club. Also, you own that path until you have completed it. So if you are in multiple clubs and working on multiple paths (say, Effective Coaching and Engaging Humor), you can complete any speech for either path in any club you belong to and receive credit for that speech. Reach out to the Vice President Education of the club where you present your speech and identify which project you are completing and the path that you want to apply the speech for, so that you can receive credit in your desired path.

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 | SUSHMA HARISH of Doha, Qatar, keeps her spirits and positivity high while reading her *Toastmaster* in quarantine.

2 | CHAMIL MADUSANKA WICKRAMA ARACHCHI and PRARTHANA LIYANAARACHCHI of Kegalle, Sri Lanka, found a safe time in December 2020 to get married. The two met at *Toastmasters* events as members of neighboring clubs.

3 | ADA YAYA BOCOUM, DTM, of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, safely travels to Mauritania, Africa, in March 2021.

4 | GEORGE SHY of Cerritos, California, visits Cape Spartel near Tangier, Morocco, in 2019.



View additional **Traveling *Toastmaster*** photos in the [online magazine](#) for some extra inspiration.

Creating a Tribe

Foster a sense of belonging that leads to club vitality and enthusiastic renewals.

BY TALHA BIN HAMID, DTM

Cast your mind to your club's Tall Tales Speech Contest. If you're speaking and happen to be the Vice President Membership, instead of spinning a tale about schmoozing with superheroes, or becoming the world's richest person, you might end your speech like this: "And then, by the renewal date, all 35 club members filed renewals for the next two terms!"

Would this be a tall tale in your club? Member retention is a constant challenge that has been even more difficult in recent years. While many reasons beyond our control affect renewals, every club has a core of members, or a core "tribe" as my Toastmaster friend Erum Rizvi so aptly puts it. The tribe may be eight to 12 members; their renewals are a given. These members make up the soul of every club. One way to create a tribe, with its implied fierce loyalty, is to celebrate members. As a club leader, you need to find excuses to celebrate everything. Anniversaries. Contests. Celebrate *normal* meetings for being *normal!* Most importantly, celebrate member achievements.

Since we started this practice in our club, Karachi Toastmasters Club, in Karachi, Pakistan, renewals have been much easier to obtain. We regularly have 40-plus members at the end of renewals. I constantly encouraged other clubs to adopt this practice. They did, and it played a huge role in our District achieving Smedley Distinguished status in our very first year. We attained Distinguished Status again in 2021. So we must be doing something right.

With Pathways, members have shorter intervals between certifications compared to the traditional education program. This can be a boon, as you can celebrate every respective certification during club meetings. Find ways to extend member recognition at every opportunity.



Talha Bin Hamid, DTM

For example, combine member achievements with the club's ongoing public relations activities. Find a reason to post (useful) content every other day on social media. Member honors are easy to share. What could be better than posting an image of a certificate celebrating a member's Pathways level completion?

Foster a sense of belonging that makes renewals not a chore for the Executive Committee but a necessity for members.

We announce member achievements at every meeting and repeat that announcement during the business portion of the next meeting. We also distribute meeting minutes in a colorful bulletin and share member successes one more time.

If your club features several speeches every meeting, you will likely have at least one or two Pathways certifications, on average. That means you can post two

announcements on social media, tagging the respective members. You know what is better than people liking your social media photos? Someone *else* posting your photo with a certificate and people liking *that!*

Posting achievements promotes camaraderie among members. It also motivates those members who are lagging or shying away from speeches. Recognition is a win-win situation for everyone.

In these socially and economically uncertain times, the mere promise of education and leadership skills may not be enough to retain members; every Toastmasters club provides that. It is time to foster a sense of belonging that makes renewals not a chore for the Executive Committee but a necessity for the members. In other words, the unique selling proposition of a Toastmasters club should be built around its culture, rather than mere procedure.

So go ahead, celebrate. Extol the virtues of members. Highlight their talent. Throw an online party when they go to another club and win a certificate. In my opinion, an extra 10 minutes (of recognition) from the Vice President Public Relations prevents 10 hours of chasing after renewals for the Treasurer.

You have a tribe. Identify it and celebrate it. And add to it, one member at a time. All it takes is a little extra attention. You will find that if you go the extra mile every week, in no time you will find your club much further ahead than you could ever imagine! **T**

TALHA BIN HAMID, DTM, is District Director for the District 122 Territorial Council (Pakistan) and former Vice President Education of Karachi Toastmasters Club. He is a chartered accountant, an author, poet, trainer, and above all, an improving human being thanks to Toastmasters.



An Important Meeting Ingredient

Pump up your performance to motivate attendees.

BY BILL BROWN, DTM

Nobody likes to sit through a boring meeting, yet all too often that's exactly where we find ourselves. Hopefully, you're not the one at the front of the room at the time. Yet it is easy to let it happen when leading meetings, especially when you are online. How do we avoid it?

One surefire recipe for a boring meeting is when the person running it views their task as merely passing on information or getting through an agenda.

The biggest problem with this recipe is that an important ingredient is missing—motivating the attendees, even if they are required to be there.

A meeting can take many forms. It can be a team meeting in a conference room, whether in person or online. It can be a larger meeting where the speakers are educating the attendees on a topic of interest, such as a bill coming before the local city council. It can be a meeting of members in an organization, such as Toastmasters, where adding to membership is vital to the future of the organization.

Whether the attendees are required to attend, committed to the cause, or just checking things out, they are all asking themselves questions. Questions like, “Does the leader have their act together? Do I want to follow or work for them if they don’t?” or “Why is this taking so long? Just because the leader has all day doesn’t mean that I do.” Or, perhaps, “I don’t see any passion here. If they don’t care about their topic, why should I?”

In other words, as meeting leader you are communicating far more than just information. You are creating in the participants the desire to pay attention and to take action.

As you plan your meeting, I suggest that you think of it as a performance. You are not just running a meeting. You are not just giving a report. You are a performer practicing your craft.

Three practices are key in the success of how you run a meeting.

First, keep it smooth. Imagine that you are watching the news on television and the talking heads are rambling and halting. Perhaps their favorite word is the dreaded “um.” What would you do? Probably reach for the remote and change the channel, right?

If they are nonresponsive, call the paramedics—not for them—for your performance.

You are just like a talking head, especially if you are online. If you sound like a smooth presenter, the audience will view you as interesting and worth listening to. If you don’t, they could switch their attention elsewhere, just like clicking the remote.

Second, keep it lively. Attendees gain their enthusiasm for your cause in part from the vibe they get from their fellow attendees. If the leader is dull, the audience’s energy level will be low. And if the meeting is online, especially if everyone is on mute, the vibe from the attendees is virtually nonexistent (pun intended). Watch your energy level. Keep it high. I am not talking about wild enthusiasm. Just keep a bounce in your voice. If you have a strong energy level, that will transfer to your audience.

Third, keep it moving. If there are papers or other information that you need to read or announce, make sure they are readily available. You don’t want to be seen fumbling around looking for them. Prior to the meeting, anticipate what information you might need. Have it out and in order. If you are fed information during the meeting, especially in email form, keep it at hand. Remember, a long period of searching is not your friend.

Of the three points, the third is the most important. It shows that you are in control. And it shows that you respect the listener’s time, and, hence, that you respect them.

How do you know if you are doing well? Watch the audience members to see how intently they are listening. If they are checking their email, that may indicate a problem. If they look impatient, that most definitely indicates a problem. And if they are nonresponsive, call the paramedics—not for them—for your performance.

When you lead a meeting, you wear many hats, even if your only official task is to pass on information. And one of the most important hats is keeping the audience members on board with your purpose. As you get ready to run a meeting, remember—you are not just a facilitator. You are a performer, and as a Toastmaster, an experienced one at that. **T**

Bill Brown, DTM, is a speech delivery coach in Gillette, Wyoming. He is a member of Energy Capital Toastmasters in Gillette. Learn more at www.billbrownspeechcoach.com.

Club Speakers Have the Opportunity to Shine

This meeting role involves much more than meets the ear and eye.

BY GREG LEWIS, DTM

The speaker role is the lifeblood of all club meetings. Learning to present confidently and professionally is why most of us joined Toastmasters in the first place.

Regularly presenting club speeches allows us to polish our self-confidence, time management, and writing and speaking skills. For the club, having a robust speaker roster builds energy and enthusiasm, as well as learning opportunities for fellow members watching the speeches.

While you might think the speaker's role is simply to deliver a club speech on an assigned date, there are specific tasks to do before and after the speech, as well as things to do or remember on the day of the speech, in order to make the most of the experience.

Before the Speech

Before deciding on a topic or writing a speech, thoroughly review your speech assignment in Pathways. Be sure to read every digital page and click on all tabs/hyperlinks. Incorporate any feedback from previous speech evaluations that is applicable to your current assignment.

For excellent tips on preparing and presenting a speech, visit this [resource page](#). But before you stand in front of the crowd or camera, there are a few more steps to take.

1 Ask the Vice President Education (VPE) to assign you a speech date.

Allow yourself enough time to properly prepare, but don't make it too far away—having a date acts as a powerful incentive to work on your speech.

2 Write your speech and then practice, practice, practice.

Present to friends, family members, or even your pet. Record yourself, then play it back and observe areas for improvement. If you are using presentation software such as PowerPoint, practice in advance so you become comfortable incorporating it into your speech.

3 Complete the [speaker introduction form](#) and give or send it ahead of time to the person introducing you in the club meeting.

4 Download your speech evaluation form from Base Camp and send it to your evaluator. Arrange to speak with them prior to the meeting to review your speech, its purpose, and your objectives. Ask the evaluator to watch for any specific areas of weakness you feel you have.

The success of your speech is a direct reflection of your preparation. By putting the effort in ahead of time, you build confidence, which results in a better speech.

Speech Day

Arrive early. For in-person meetings, inspect the lectern, microphone, lights, etc., to ensure everything is functioning properly. Discuss any visual aids or props with the Sergeant at Arms to confirm where these items will be during your speech. Make sure you can see the entire audience and they can see you. Bring paper copies of your evaluation form and speaker introduction as a backup.

For online meetings, log in to the meeting early and test your audio and video



with the Toastmaster of the Day or Sergeant at Arms. To ensure the best internet connection, close other programs and limit internet use in your household during your speech. Make sure you can clearly see the timer and can see/hear the timing signals.

If you are speaking to a hybrid group—a combination of in-person and online attendees—don't forget to greet and speak to both audiences.

After the Speech

Finally, listen carefully to the feedback offered by your speech evaluator and other members. If you want to follow up with your evaluator, connect with them after the meeting. Use the speaker-evaluator interaction to enhance your critical-thinking abilities and apply the useful input to future speeches.

Have your club's VPE update your Pathways progress in Base Camp and then start planning your next speech! **T**

Greg Lewis, DTM, is a retired marketing and management professional with years of experience giving and evaluating speeches. He is Vice President Education of Rose City Toastmasters in Welland, Ontario, Canada.

Make a World of Difference

Attendees are invited to learn, engage, and lead at this year's online convention, which has been fine-tuned for 2021.

BY RENÉE COVINO

Last year marked a thrilling time in Toastmasters' history—it was the first time the Toastmasters International Convention was held online. At a time when fellowship was most needed, the 2020 Virtual Convention brought together more than 59,000 registrants from 203 countries; nearly 90% of last year's online convention-goers were first-time attendees. The online experience returns August 23-28, 2021. With the

slogan "Make a World of Difference," attendees are invited to make a difference in themselves individually and collectively through the featured education tracks, diverse education sessions, global networking opportunities, and the World Championship of Public Speaking®.

Get a sneak peek at the four education tracks and a highlighted session from each track below.

Public Speaking/Stage Presence

Polish your speaking and stage presence skills using time-honored techniques, such as humor, powerful body language, and memorable storytelling. Make your presentation stand out, whether to a small or large group, online or in person. You'll also learn what *not* to do when presenting. This track will help you elevate the energy in the room so you can more effectively deliver your message—and have fun while doing it!

Self-Improvement

Uncertain times bring the opportunity for greater self-improvement. Get valuable advice to prepare for your next job interview and learn more about the power of emotional intelligence. Hear from an expert panel on finding the balance to better practice self-care, and discover how to build your personal brand. This track focuses on what is often neglected and matters most in times of chaos: YOU. And your well-being.

Dynamic Communication

Powerful communication capabilities can make an exceptional difference in life. Learn proven strategies to become a more persuasive speaker; find out how to bridge the communication gap between generations; and hear from an industry thought leader with in-depth experience in the area of unconscious bias. This track will leave you with new and necessary knowledge to make your interactions with others more enlightened and energetic.

Leadership/Professional Development

You're a professional who wants to power up your career and/or leadership skills. Learn the secret to giving great feedback; hear a panel of corporate professionals discuss how Toastmasters can advance careers; and discover how to lead. This track will re-energize you with the motivation and ambition to move forward on your professional path.



1 Public Speaking/Stage Presence Track Highlighted Session

Session: Laugh & Learn: The Magic Power of Humor

Moderator: Stephan Dyer, comedian, corporate trainer, and keynote speaker

Panelists:

- ▶ Mark Brown, professional speaker, 1995 World Champion of Public Speaking
- ▶ Veronica Dangerfield, comedienne, financial educator, international speaker, and published poet
- ▶ Andrew “Drew” Tarvin, engineer, author, and comedian

This panel mines the fundamental value of humor as an effective communication tool. Learn real-life, practical, and engaging methods to use humor often. because it's important to all of us!

3 Self-Improvement Track Highlighted Session

Session: Find the Balance: Work, Life, and Self-Care

Moderator: Dilip Abayasekara, Ph.D., Past International President of Toastmasters, AS, professional speaker, trainer, consultant and pastor

Speakers:

- ▶ Lisa M. Brown, Ph.D., professor, adjunct clinical professor, and researcher
- ▶ Mana K. Ali Carter, Ph.D., psychologist, adjunct professor, assistant professor, and researcher
- ▶ Charles S. Gates, entrepreneur, coach, trainer, emcee, and transformational speaker

Take a front-row seat as a panel of psychologists and Toastmasters leaders discuss how to navigate a balance between work and life, using evidence-based strategies and anecdotal advice. The panelists will also talk through how best to practice self-care and gratitude.

2 Dynamic Communication Track Highlighted Session

Session: The Leader's Guide to Unconscious Bias

Speaker: Pamela Fuller, MBA, thought leader, inclusion and bias professional, speaker, and author

Hear how your teams can achieve its highest performance rate once you start to overcome biases and allow people to fully engage with others, knowing that unconscious bias affects everyone.

4 Leadership/Professional Development Track Highlighted Session

Session: Following a Leader Is Voluntary

Speaker: Jennifer Jones, Rotary International's president for 2022–23

Individuals make conscious, voluntary decisions to follow those they perceive as leaders. Hear Jennifer Jones share her extensive experience in leading and completing global initiatives with the support of volunteers. Learn how she effectively motivates a diverse team to accomplish a common goal.



2021 VIRTUAL CONVENTION

[The 2021 convention](#) will feature all the event favorites, and a few surprises too. No need to pack a bag, just find your perfect spot and soak in the learning and camaraderie.

Renée Covino is senior copywriter, Toastmasters Marketing and Communications Department.

You're a Club Officer—



Now What?

Tips and tricks to help you lead and serve.

BY DIANE WINDINGLAND, DTM

Whether you competed in a hotly contested club election or volunteered for your role (or maybe were “voluntold”), you are now a club officer, ready to lead and serve your club members—in person, online, or in a hybrid club.

Read ahead for a round-up of advice from past club officers, inspiration, and strategies to help you along your leadership journey this program year.

Your Success Cycle: Learn. Plan. Execute. Repeat.

LEARN

“Learning and innovation go hand in hand. The arrogance of success is to think that what you did yesterday will be sufficient for tomorrow.” –William Pollard, American physicist

■ **Meet with your predecessor.** Find out how the outgoing club officer handled the position, and learn best practices, ongoing issues, projects, and resources. Are there documents or passwords that you need? Ideally, the outgoing officer will mentor you in your new role.

■ **Attend Club Officer Training.** Even if you have done the role before, you may learn something new. You can also share your experience and network with other Toastmasters, who may give you additional insights.

■ **Read the *Club Leadership Handbook*.** Read the entire handbook so you can understand how a club should operate, the roles (including your role), the timelines, and the resources available.

■ **Learn how to navigate Club Central and your own club’s website.**

PLAN

“Our goals can only be reached through a vehicle of a plan, in which we must fervently believe, and upon which we must vigorously act. There is no other route to success.” —Pablo Picasso, Spanish painter

■ **Attend your club’s Executive Committee meetings** (club officer meetings). Make sure everyone knows what is expected, figure out the Distinguished Club Plan (DCP) for the year, and



review and consider revising the processes of the club, from how meetings are conducted, to guest processes, to new member orientation, to recognition, and more.

■ **Put important dates on your calendar and set up task reminders.** These might include club meeting dates, club officer training, deadlines, and/or recurring tasks. (Some examples: The Vice President Education [VPE] might create a recurring task to contact the meeting Toastmaster a week prior to the meeting. The Vice President Public Relations [VPPR] might create a recurring task to promote the meeting on social media a few days prior to the meeting.)

■ **Set goals.** Not only can your club have goals, but you also can have goals for your role, too. But be careful about setting too many goals, because it’s easy to lose focus and a motivation to act if you have too many goals.

“Take a breath and remember that this is a learning and leadership opportunity. You do not have to be perfect. You do not have to do every task yourself.”

—CAROLYN CURLEY, DTM
NORTH POLE, ALASKA
FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH CLUB

EXECUTE

“Have a bias toward action—let’s see something happen now. You can break that big plan into small steps and take the first step right away.” —Indira Gandhi, former Prime Minister of India

Be willing to experiment. Toastmasters is a safe place to fail, whether it be in speaking or in leading.

“You can do a fair amount of experimenting, as long as you don’t destroy friendships in the process. You can experiment with the website, the agenda, or allowing members to try new things. Experiment, learn, and improve.” —Dennis Olsen, Minnetonka, Minnesota, Tri-Dynamics Club

Apply the 4 Ds: Do it, Defer it, Delegate it, Delete it

You only have so much time in a day, so how do you manage your time wisely? Consistently focus on important and urgent tasks. Try the 4 Ds method, a productivity strategy in which you separate your actions based on urgency and importance. This strategy was famously used by Dwight Eisenhower, the 34th president of the United States, and popularized by others including authors Stephen Covey and Jack Canfield.

1. Do it: Urgent and important (tasks you will do immediately).
2. Defer it: Important, but not urgent (tasks you will schedule to do later).
3. Delegate it: Urgent, but not important (tasks you will delegate to someone else).
4. Delete it: Neither urgent nor important (tasks that you will eliminate).

Additional Tips for Each Officer

“Underpromise. Overdeliver. Create a safe space. Clubs are the heart of Toastmasters.”

Andy Hammond, DTM
Littlehampton, England, Arun Speakers

President

“Having regular Executive Committee meetings where we evaluate our performance against the Club Success Plan helps us stay on top of things.”

Ruchira Singh
Kolkata, West Bengal, India, TCS
Maitree Kolkata Toastmasters Club

- Schedule regular Executive Committee meetings (at least once a month) and follow an agenda (see the [Club Leadership Handbook](#) for an example agenda).

- Recognize member achievements at club meetings. People appreciate being recognized, and guests are encouraged by a positive atmosphere.

- While members often pride themselves in their abilities to be flexible and improvise, you should still prepare, plan, and adjust early. Arrive at meetings before everyone else, review the agenda, work with others to fill in roles, get guest information (especially name pronunciation) to introduce guests, and plan out any business portion of the meeting.

- Build relationships outside of the meetings. This could even be right before or after meetings.

“At the end of the meeting, we ask for guest feedback, then close the formal meeting and invite everyone to stay, if they want, for some social time. We catch up on each other’s lives, answer questions about Toastmasters that our guests ask, and generally just talk. Even though we are online and most haven’t ever met in person, it does feel like a brick-and-mortar club going out for food and drinks after a meeting.”

Michelle Rich, DTM
Clarington, Ontario, Canada, Great White North Online



“Be excited and happy to be at the meetings. If the officers lead by example, the other members and guests catch that contagious excitement. When club meetings are something people look forward to, the club thrives!”

—MIKE GIARDINA, DTM
CHANDLER, ARIZONA
VALUED VOICES

Vice President Education

“Be the change you want to see. I’ve scheduled myself as the meeting Toastmaster two weeks in a row to model some changes.”

Lucas Roberts
River Falls, Wisconsin,
Ordway Orators Club

- It’s not a meeting. It’s an event. You are the event planner for your club. Treat every meeting like an open house, making sure roles are filled in advance and members are educated in fulfilling their roles (the Vice

President Membership [VPM] can also help with orienting new members to the meeting roles). Help the [Toastmaster of the Day](#) put on a good show.

- Speech contests are also an event. Schedule them early and have a rehearsal “script talk-through” with the contest Toastmaster and chief judge.

- Ask members what educational goals they have and then strategically schedule the goals so that members can meet them. Communicate any goal achievements to the Club President for announcement at meetings.

Vice President Membership

“A good cadence is as follows: Assign a guest guide for each meeting (to walk the guest through the meeting, sitting next to the guest if an in-person meeting), personally follow up with guests within 48 hours, and once a guest has expressed a desire to join, set up a phone call

or Zoom meeting to walk the guest through completing the membership application.”

Keith Hardy
St. Paul, Minnesota, St. Paul Speakers Toastmasters Club

- Implement a process for converting [guests to members](#). If you only have one or two guests at a meeting you can work with them yourself (in an online meeting, you can use the chat

WHAT NOT TO DO:

- ▶ **Assume you know everything.** Do not make assumptions that your goals for the club match what the members want. Listen to and learn from others. [Be open to suggestions.](#)
- ▶ **Make drastic changes without discussion.** Consult first with the club's Executive Committee.
- ▶ **Do too many things at once.** Start with a few simple goals and a plan to execute them. Later, consider adding additional goals.
- ▶ **Wait to do something until asked.** Be proactive and communicate regularly with the Club President to review expectations.
- ▶ **Never ask for help.** [Avoid burnout](#) by asking for help before you get overwhelmed. Encourage others to be part of the team.
- ▶ **Skip meetings.** Be a good example. Keep giving speeches. Be present and show members that you care.

feature, or even a breakout room). Have other members trained in your process too.

- Work with the VPE and VPPR to create and promote membership-building meetings at least once a quarter. These meetings are also an ideal time to reach out to former members and previous guests and invite them to visit again.



Vice President Public Relations

- Keep your club website up to date (or work with your website administrator to do so). Plan on updating the website at least once a month. Add pictures of your smiling members and consider adding video testimonials.
- Don't overwhelm yourself with trying to use every social media channel, especially if they aren't already established for your club. Pick one or two to start, such as Facebook and LinkedIn.
- Ask guests how they heard about your club. Spend more time on promotional efforts that yield results.

Secretary

- Update the club's officer list immediately after elections and confirm submission to World Headquarters. Communications from Toastmasters International and the District need to go to the right officers.

- Type minutes during the meeting and send/post them immediately after the meeting. The most critical items to note are decisions and action items.

Treasurer

- Collect dues early and make it easy for members to pay. Many Club Treasurers send a link (and have the link on the club website) to an online payment processor, such as PayPal.

Sergeant at Arms

- Arrive early (both in person and online) to prepare the meeting space (host or co-host online meetings) and admit/greet members and guests.

Immediate Past President

- Mentor and help the President be successful.
- Chair the Club Leadership Committee to seek out and nominate club officer candidates.

RESOURCES FOR CLUB OFFICERS

- ▶ [Club Officer Tools](#)
- ▶ [Club Leadership Handbook](#)
- ▶ [Distinguished Club Program and Club Success Plan](#)
- ▶ [Moments of Truth](#)
- ▶ [Moments of Truth Evaluation Chart](#)
- ▶ [Club Central](#)

Attitude Makes the Difference

You can see challenges, or you can see opportunities for growth. Accept that there will be mistakes and lessons learned. Show compassion and empathy toward members and fellow officers, as they probably are more stressed due to the pandemic. And remember that fundamentals still matter.

A final note: Don't let technology get in the way of delivering value and a quality experience to the members and guests of your club. The member experience is largely created by the club

officer team, by each officer's dedication to learn their role, plan together as a team, execute effectively, and then learn and adjust along the way.

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

Giving to Gavel Clubs

Veteran Toastmaster helps inmates gain confidence and communication skills.

BY ANDREW MILLER

Earlier this year, Chuck Rabaut, DTM, and I drove from Tallahassee, Florida, 30 miles to attend a meeting of the Driven by Destiny Toastmasters. This isn't your typical Toastmasters club. These members reside in Gadsden Correctional Facility, a women's prison.

Chuck isn't your typical Toastmaster, either. He's 88 years old, has been a member since 1974, and has made it his mission to help imprisoned men and women improve their lives through Toastmasters.

I heard about Chuck in 2019 while searching for local volunteer opportunities. During our first meeting, I learned that he oversaw 25 Gavel Clubs in prisons throughout northwest Florida. Gavel Clubs are groups who may be ineligible for regular membership in Toastmasters but through this type of club can still participate in the Toastmasters experience. Participants run the clubs themselves, and those who oversee the groups are called counselors. In some weeks, Chuck volunteered 80 hours and drove 1,000 miles. Occasionally he visited five clubs in a single day. When I asked what motivated him, his answer was simple:

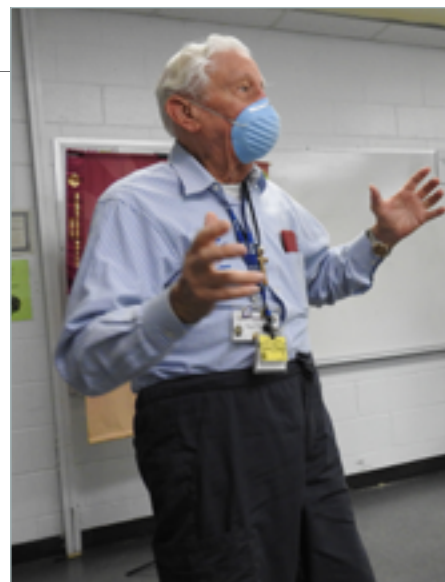
"It has to be done," he said. "Inmates need to be able to think on their feet, speak well, and work cooperatively. This will help them get out of prison and stay out."

I was impressed and decided to volunteer alongside Chuck. A few months later,

I joined the PMI Tallahassee Toastmasters Club. After Chuck and I arrived at Gadsden Correctional Facility for our visit earlier this year, we made our way to a small, well-lit classroom with white, cinder block walls and a gray linoleum floor. At the front of the room was a long whiteboard, covered with neatly printed math problems and rows of vocabulary words. Chuck and I sat at long tables with eight inmates, dressed in identical blue jumpsuits.

Chuck is 88 years old, has been a member since 1974, and has made it his mission to help imprisoned men and women improve their lives through Toastmasters.

Driven by Destiny Toastmasters remained open amid COVID-19 restrictions by separating the club into four groups that met separately. Everyone wore a mask and maintained social distancing. A club member named Kylee was the afternoon's Table Topicsmaster. She was about one-third Chuck's age. The Table Topics® theme was: "Book Titles"—members had to speak about



Chuck Rabaut, a Toastmaster since 1974, addresses a group of inmates in a Florida correctional facility, wearing a mask due to COVID restrictions. Photos by Andrew Miller

various titles selected by Kylee. Responses were snappy and entertaining. The last title was: *The Only Woman in the Room*. Apparently, there was one person in particular Kylee wanted to respond to this one. She allowed the suspense to build, then pointed to Chuck.

Chuck hadn't read the book, but when he heard "woman" he was reminded of an old country and western hit song. He jumped to his feet and began to dance and sing:

*"Well, why don't you love me like you used to do
How come you treat me like a worn-out shoe ..."*

When the applause subsided, Kylee said, "Chuck, I want to be just like you when I grow up."

Bringing Toastmasters to Prisons

Chuck came from a broken home and spent most of his early life in orphanages. He quit high school then joined the Air Force where he received his diploma. Once he returned to civilian life, he earned a bachelor's degree and then a master's degree in management. In 1973 he was hired by the state of Florida to train prison staff on methods to deal with problem employees.

Chuck joined Toastmasters to improve his speaking skills. He quickly realized



that inmates would also benefit from the Toastmasters experience, and to that end he wanted to set up a prison club, but he never had the chance. In 1999 he retired but continued to work for the state of Florida part time. In 2011, while he worked part time at the Wakulla Correctional Institution in Florida, a group of inmates asked Chuck to set up a Gavel Club for them. This was the chance he had been waiting for and on September 4, 2012, the first meeting of the Northern Lights Gavel Club was held. “Once this idea caught fire, chaplains were beseeching me to set up clubs at their prisons,” said Chuck. Within several years he was overseeing more than a dozen clubs and the numbers kept growing.

Some of Their Stories

Toastmasters speeches given by inmates can be more poignant and evocative than those delivered in clubs on the outside. As a volunteer, I have listened to stories of poverty and domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol, child abuse, and almost always, hopes and dreams for women and their children.

What we heard from the women in Driven by Destiny was no exception.

The first prepared speech was “That’s So Taboo,” by a club member named Cynthia. She pointed out that even during these divisive times, we shouldn’t hesitate to engage with family and friends on topics such as sex, religion, and politics. Everyone should stay informed on important issues.

The next speech was “Scars,” delivered by Kylee, who had earlier served as Topicsmaster. She reminded the group that scars can be physical or emotional and always tell a story—usually of pain, stupidity, or lessons learned. Kylee said people shouldn’t be afraid to show their scars to others. “Your courage,” she said, “will give others permission to show theirs.”

Chuck provided names of previous members of prison clubs so I could learn about their experiences in Toastmasters. I contacted Jennifer Daniels, who is now the sole owner of a small trucking company in south Florida. She said that skills

learned during her two-year membership in Driven by Destiny helped her to set up and maintain her company.

Anna (not her real name) was born in a Middle Eastern country and came to America as an adult. When she was incarcerated soon after arriving in the United States, she had to quickly learn a new culture and adjust to life behind bars. In one of her early speeches, she described this adjustment. She was a member of Driven by Destiny for three years and in the club she learned to express her opinions in front of others, something she hadn’t done in her native country. “Toastmasters gave me my voice,” she said. “And Chuck was my mentor.”

When Jerod Powers went to prison, he had no education or job skills. All he knew was “guns and drugs.” He had been in crime since age 14. In his early 20s, he was incarcerated in the Central Florida Reception Center in Orlando. He credits the End of Sentence Gavel Club,

where he was a member for two years, with teaching him team building and networking. He is now a Distinguished Toastmaster and runs Faith for Freedom Ministries in Jacksonville.

Future Considerations

Chuck will soon reduce his involvement with prison clubs. He has implemented a succession plan that will enable his work to continue with other volunteers.

I wanted to know how he has been able to run such a complex program. “It’s more than just me,” he replied. He gets help from about 10 volunteers. Slightly more than half are Toastmasters. Chuck raises \$3,000 annually to cover membership fees and educational materials.

As we parted company after our meeting at the prison, he had one final comment. “You should realize that for inmates there’s lots more to Toastmasters than speeches. For some, this is the first time they have been complimented or heard kind words.” 📺

Andrew Miller lives in Tallahassee, Florida, and belongs to PMI Tallahassee Toastmasters. He is a retired biologist who now devotes his time to creative writing, volunteering, and environmental consulting. His website is www.andrewcmiller.com.





Do Your Due Diligence

Is what you're saying accurate?

BY CRAIG HARRISON, DTM

As speakers, our credibility is key. How can we hope to inspire an audience if they question whether we're believable?

When we misquote a source or misrepresent facts or statistics in a speech, even unintentionally, our credibility takes a hit. The damage is magnified, and we shed doubt on the rest of the facts in our speech. As speakers, we have to be able to stand behind our words.

You want to be believed. Errors, misrepresentations, or embellishments will undercut your credibility—in the present and future.

Naomi Rhode, a past president of both the National Speakers Association and the Global Speakers Federation, speaks passionately about the privilege of the platform. Rhode explains that



when we present a speech, the focus should not be on ourselves but on benefiting our audience, who will in turn use the information to shape their world.

“We all have platforms,” Rhode says. “Parents have an immense platform ... molding the next generation.” Whether you speak from a podium or lectern, on a factory floor room, or kindergarten classroom, you have a platform. As Rhode notes, “With this privilege of the platform comes a responsibility. We can deeply impact our audience for positive change.”

Build Your Credibility

It happens in courtrooms: Expert witnesses arrive with titles and credentials that establish their credibility. Yet if inaccuracies are uncovered in their testimony, their integrity is called into question. If a jury finds that an expert witness has misspoken the truth in some regard, the jury can completely reject and disregard

all the testimony given. Attorney and Toastmaster John Zimmer is a professional speaker from Canada now based in Switzerland. Over a 25-year career at one of Canada’s largest law firms, and as a lawyer at the United Nations and the World Health Organization, Zimmer has represented many clients. He takes seriously his duty to the truth and the integrity of the judicial process. “If lawyers didn’t respect the truth, the legal system would buckle and collapse.”

There’s a reason you should be able to discern reliable sources, only quote experts, and give proper attribution when needed. Doing so helps bolster your integrity.

Zimmer reminds us, “As a speaker, you owe the same duty of care to your audiences. Be scrupulous when checking your facts and statistics. Furthermore, if you are trying to persuade your audience with regard to a particular argument, acknowledging the weaknesses in your argument—while, of course, stressing the strengths—can actually enhance your credibility. It shows that you have thought about the issue and are not hiding from the truth. It also ‘steals the thunder’ from anyone who might ask about the issue because you will have already mentioned it.”

Do Your Homework

All Level 1 projects in the Pathways learning experience include information about how to conduct successful research. There’s a reason you should be able to discern reliable sources, only quote experts, and give proper attribution when needed. Doing so helps bolster your integrity.

If you’re quoting someone, citing a statistic, or referring to a historical incident, you should research what you’re saying, corroborate stories you’ve heard secondhand, and check your facts before speaking from the platform. It’s *your* responsibility to know that everything in your speech is factually correct. All it takes is one person in your audience who recognizes the error to

call the credibility of your entire speech into question. (See the sidebar for helpful fact-checking sources.)

Do these quotes attributed to Gandhi, Machiavelli, and Voltaire sound familiar?

- ▶ “Be the change you wish to see in the world.”
- ▶ “The ends justify the means.”
- ▶ “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.”

The actual quotes are different:

- ▶ Gandhi: “If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him. ...We need not wait to see what others do.”
- ▶ Machiavelli: “One must consider the final result.”
- ▶ Voltaire didn’t speak these exact words, rather author Evelyn Beatrice Hall, in her 1906 biography, *The Friends of Voltaire*, summarized Voltaire’s perspective when he spoke these words about freedom of speech.

When you quote someone, confirm the words are accurate by verifying them with not just one but at least two reputable

sources (a quick online search can often uncover the original voice). For example, take the quote: “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond

measure.” This remark is often attributed to Nelson Mandela, the late South African president, who allegedly spoke these words during his 1994 inaugural address. In reality, the words were first written by American writer Marianne Williamson in her 1992 book *A Return to Love*.

Avoid Intellectual Complacency

Professional speakers who fact-check know from experience to seek the original source of facts and stats. If you read a statistic online or in an article, strive to find the original source that conducted the research and verify it’s accurate.

For professional speaker Alfred Poor, veracity derives from finding the primary source, that is, the original document, and it may take some digging. “If you want to quote Shakespeare about ‘gilding the lily,’ you will not find it in *King John*. The actual line is about redundancy, and reads ‘to gild refined gold, to paint the lily ... is wasteful and ridiculous excess.’”

All it takes is one person in your audience who recognizes the error to call the credibility of your entire speech into question.

Poor continues, “As speakers, we ask our audiences to trust us to speak the truth. That trust is extremely fragile, and if we open the door to doubt by stating as fact something the audience knows (or thinks) is not true, it can call into question everything else we say. That is too high a price to pay for intellectual complacency.”

Review your speeches and writing for ambiguities that could lead to misunderstandings or misimpressions, and strive to communicate so listeners and readers don’t draw erroneous impressions or conclusions from your communication. Does your claim pass the “smell test”? Have a club member or friend read your speech with a critical eye. If something smells funny to them, that’s an indication your facts or your speech needs more clarification, refinement, or research.

Another way to bolster your pieces is to cite studies, cases, laws, or other established and generally accepted findings. These will strengthen your own arguments, claims, or assertions. But conduct your due diligence, even when quoting commonly cited findings; be sure your information comes from a reputable, nonbiased source.

Learn to State Statistics

Statistics are one of the easiest ways to bolster your case—whether you cite them in a research speech, a persuasive presentation, or a sales pitch. Yet they are also the trickiest to use as they can often be spun to favor one side simply by changing, or omitting, certain words.

AS A MATTER OF FACT

Where to go for facts? And where do you go to check those facts? Many websites that present “factual” information are actually owned by groups with a specific agenda or platform. You want to get information from nonbiased, vetted institutions. Here are some suggested sites for various kinds of fact-checking:

- ▶ Academic or university and college websites.
- ▶ Government sites.
- ▶ Wire services, also known as news agencies, are organizations that sell news reports to subscribing news organizations. Since they provide news to subscribers on both ends of any political spectrum, they strive for complete objectivity and neutrality. The best-known services include:
 - Associated Press (U.S.)
 - Reuters (U.K.)
 - Press Association (U.K.)
 - United Press International (U.S.)
 - Agence France Presse (France)
 - Canadian Press (Canada)
 - Deutsche Press-Agentur (Germany)
- ▶ Snopes.com—an independently owned, fact-checking resource.
- ▶ Google Scholar—allows you to search articles, theses, book abstracts, and court opinions from academic publishers, professional societies, online repositories, universities, and other websites.
- ▶ Library reference desks are staffed by professional researchers and can compile amazing results related to fact-checking a historical event or saying.

Medical information:

- ▶ World Health Organization

Quotation verification:

- ▶ *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* (book and website)
- ▶ *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*

Speaker and consultant Janet L. Crawford, founder and CEO of Cascadance Inc., runs across misused statistics all the time. Recently, a professionally edited book proclaimed that “mothers are the sole wage earner in 40% of American families.” The real statistic, misquoted from the Pew Research Center, is that “mothers are the sole or *primary* wage earner in 40% of American families.”

What Toastmaster hasn't heard about the findings that only 7% of communication is derived from the words spoken, while 38% is intuited from voice and tone, and 55% from body language? The “7-38-55%” rule has been quoted near and far over the last five decades. However, this statistic is inaccurate. The “rule” comes from the research of Dr. Albert Mehrabian at the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1967. His findings contained a number of caveats: 1) they apply to personal (one-on-one) communication; 2) they apply specifically to conversations about feelings and attitudes; 3) they address only the expressing of positive versus negative emotions; and 4) the original research only relates to women as no men participated in these two studies. While it's fair to say that body language is an important aspect of communication, it's not accurate that body language accounts for 55% of your messaging.

Avoid the Stain of Plagiarism

Plagiarism abounds. Politicians, musicians, authors, and students present others' words and ideas as their own. While it may be easier than ever to pass off another's work as your own, it's wrong, unethical, and in many countries illegal to do so. It's also easier to be found out. There are numerous resources that make it easy to spot plagiarism (any high school teacher or college professor will attest to how easy it is).

Plagiarism is one of the fastest ways to lose all credibility. By all means, use sources in your speeches, just be sure to cite them, and give credit where credit is due.

Understand the Power of Words

Like the careful carpenter who measures twice but cuts once, make sure you take the time to double-check your facts, quotes, and other key parts of your communication—whether in print or in speech. And do so from the point of view of your readers and listeners on the receiving end. “Never give an order that can be understood; always give orders that cannot be misunderstood,” U.S. General Douglas MacArthur instructed.

Truthfully, what standards will you apply to your speaking and writing? In an era of claims of “false news” let's be voracious in our appetite for veracity!

Craig Harrison, DTM, is a professional speaker, published author, consultant, coach, and a charter member of Silicon Valley Improvmasters in San Jose, California. Visit www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com for more information.

Ring in the New Year

It's a new Toastmasters program year! Take time to reflect and recharge.

BY TOASTMASTER
MAGAZINE STAFF

As Toastmasters International turns the page and starts a new chapter for the 2021–2022 program year, it's important to look back and remember the reason it all began. After all, as Toastmasters founder Dr. Ralph C. Smedley said, "The past prepares us to meet the challenges of the future."

An article from the 75th anniversary edition of the *Toastmaster* shines a light

on Smedley's approach to learning—one that continues to resonate in 2021:

The concept of adult education was largely unheard of at the beginning of the 20th century. It took the vision of a scholarly young man, just graduated from Illinois Wesleyan University, to recognize the importance of lifelong learning—not only for adults at that time, but also to future generations. Today ... people throughout the world have the chance to pursue their



personal and professional goals—even after other avenues of education may be closed.

While we say goodbye to what was an unprecedented year of change and milestones, it is now time to look forward. What will the new program year bring for you and your club? Keep reading for helpful resources to put your club on track, inspiring quotes from members, and tips to get the most out of your meetings this month.

Evaluate Your Club With Ease

We all have ideas on what a perfect Toastmasters club is like. It involves enjoyable meetings, unlimited learning opportunities, friendly members ... and what else? This checklist offers you the chance to rate your club's strengths and weaknesses against the "ideal." [Download the full checklist here](#), then give it to your Club President, who will discuss the answers with the club's officers.

Here are a few questions about club meetings to get you thinking:

- ▶ Is your meeting location conveniently located, accessible, and user-friendly?
 Yes No
- ▶ Are the program and agenda publicized, via email or a club website, in advance?
 Yes No
- ▶ Do club meetings start and end on time?
 Yes No
- ▶ Does the meeting follow an agenda?
 Yes No
- ▶ Are all guests and members warmly greeted and welcomed?
 Yes No

Celebrate in Style

If you're looking to add some excitement to your club meetings this month, try using the new Toastmasters year as an overall theme. Some ideas include:

- ▶ Ask everyone to dress their best or wear a certain color, put on a funny hat, or show off a ribbon, certificate, or plaque to celebrate the past year's achievements.
- ▶ Pick a Word of the Day that fits in with talking about the past or future:
 - **Ameliorate (v):** to make better; improve
 - **Auspicious (adj):** showing or suggesting that future success is likely
 - **Ebullient (adj):** having or showing liveliness and enthusiasm
 - **Retrospective (adj):** concerned with or related to the past
 - **Verity (n):** truth, fact, reality
- ▶ Provide Table Topics® questions that incorporate the new year theme:
 - What was the best lesson you learned over the last year, and how will you apply it to this year?
 - If you traveled back in time and met Dr. Ralph C. Smedley, how would you describe what online club meetings are like?
 - Tell us about a goal you have for your professional or personal development this year.
- ▶ If you signed up to be the speaker at a meeting, give a speech about something you're proud of from the last program year, or something you look forward to this year.
- ▶ Take photos with your club to celebrate. You can send them to the *Toastmaster* at photos@toastmasters.org or post them on your club's social media pages so others can see how much fun you have.



Made to Order for You

Need an idea, an example, a valuable tool, or peer perspective on how to improve club practices and support members? Here are just a few resources to help energize your new program year.

Find Magazine Articles Faster—Want a quick way to search for magazine articles? Check out this new [Helpful Articles section](#) on the *Toastmaster* magazine webpage! Here you'll find a drop-down menu of categories to help you easily locate the content you're looking for. This page also includes Article Indexes from 2003 to 2020. These PDFs will assist you in your search for past articles by topic, title, author, month, or page number.

Speechcraft®—This [digital refresh](#) of a time-honored Toastmasters program allows experienced members to teach speaking skills to new audiences who may want to learn more as a new member of your club!

Webinars On-Demand—Created on the cusp of the pandemic, [these popular webinars](#) have drawn thousands of general viewers and members. Hear what the experts, including leading Toastmasters, say about the world of public speaking.

Brand Portal—[Find all the details](#) and beautiful materials you need to continue sharing the Toastmasters brand with the world.

YouTube Channel—[Discover helpful videos](#) on a variety of topics, including Pathways tips, member testimonials, webinars, and more.

New Member Survey—You've worked hard to recruit excellent new members. [Use this survey](#) to learn about and champion their goals.

Club and District Leader

Self-Evaluations—Are you growing as a leader? [Gain invaluable perspectives](#) from your club colleagues.

Toastmasters Online Store—Don't forget to [check for products](#) like meeting supplies, recognition gifts, and marketing materials.



Beast Toastmasters Club of Taichung, Taiwan

New Moves

- ▶ In the 2021–2022 program year, you will see an array of changes to the *Speech Contest Rulebook*. Rulebook sections that will feature changes include Eligibility, General Procedure, and Video Speech Contest. You can access the new 2021–2022 *Speech Contest Rulebook* [here](#), read why the changes were made [here](#), and get more information about speech contests in general [here](#).
- ▶ In the new program year, more clubs will benefit from District support: Almost all undistricted in-person clubs (nearly 100) will now be aligned to a nearby District.

Heard on Social Media

Whether your new year's goals involve your club, District, or just focusing on personal development, Toastmasters around the world can relate to striving to achieve in the 2021–2022 program year. The following members commented on a post in the Official Members Facebook Group asking Toastmasters to share their goals with fellow members.

Hoping to lead my District to Distinguished!

George Marshall, DTM • Fremont, California

- Engage every member of the District to contribute to District success.
- Create a pool of champions who will represent the District at the World Championship of Public Speaking®.

Sagnik Biswas, DTM • Kolkata, West Bengal, India

Since my club is already President's Distinguished, I am now focusing on conducting online Speechcraft and preparing for hybrid meetings. Managing club growth could be a challenge. So many people are waiting to join Toastmasters until we do live meetings again.

Ronald Creemers • Beek, Netherlands

Implement, as a Distinguished Toastmaster project, a leadership development program in my District, as noted as an initiative in our strategic plan.

Kathy Murray Reynolds, DTM • Roanoke, Virginia

Editor's Note: Share your new year club success with us, all year! Send [photos](#) or [story ideas](#). You can also keep the conversation going on social media using [#talkingtoastmasters](#). 📷



Stay Awhile

Growth, diversity, and relationships keep some Toastmasters in for the long run.

BY JENNIFER L. BLANCK, DTM

If you're like many of the members around the world, you joined Toastmasters to improve your public speaking skills. Once you were a member, you learned about leadership development opportunities.

When people first join Toastmasters, they concentrate on achieving their initial goals. Members who remain involved for a while start to see that the organization and its learning opportunities exist far beyond the club. The name *Toastmasters International* doesn't just mean there are thousands of clubs around the world—actually more than 16,000 at the moment—it also means the growth and connection opportunities are as vast as the organization's global network.

I joined Toastmasters in June 1995 to understand how to infuse creativity into my speeches. I attained that goal long ago. I'm still a member because of

the ongoing and unexpected benefits and learning opportunities, a motivation to help others, and the relationships I continue to develop.

If you stay in Toastmasters, you will see that your journey doesn't end when you finish an educational milestone. In fact, these long-term members will tell you it's just a first step.

Focusing on Mentoring and Leadership

Françoise Le Reste, DTM, of Eloquence 45 Club in Orléans, France, joined Toastmasters in March 1991. She wanted to feel at ease speaking in front of people. After she finished the first manual in the former education program, she achieved that goal. She remains a member 30 years later because of mentoring and leadership opportunities.

Le Reste credits her past mentor—former District 59 Director and longtime

member Odile Petillot, DTM—for expanding her understanding of the Toastmasters universe. Based on Petillot's encouragement, Le Reste attended a Toastmasters conference in Paris. "My eyes opened ... members from all countries of Europe sharing the same vision in an atmosphere full of kindness, gentleness, and real friendship."

Because of the mentoring she received, Le Reste was inspired to pay it forward. Among numerous other roles, she has served as a mentor to many young members and as a club coach. Toastmasters also increased her self-confidence and range of skills. She now enjoys speaking to audiences of all sizes and leading teams to organize conferences and other large-scale events. She even gained some unexpected skills. "I have managed to avoid or solve conflicts that I would not have dreamed of had I not been a Toastmaster," says Le Reste.

Achieving Beyond Expectations

Karen Levy Strauss, DTM, from the Standard Bank Operations Club in Johannesburg, South Africa, has also grown in unexpected ways. When she joined Toastmasters in April 2000, she was leaving a verbally abusive marriage, parenting two young children, and working in a demanding job. She wanted to strengthen her communications skills in a safe and fun environment.

Initially, Levy Strauss focused on the public speaking educational track. She relished the club environment, which felt like a family. Her first club—Gold Reef Toastmasters, also in Johannesburg—hosted social events like cookout contests and wine tours.

After two years, Levy Strauss completed the first communications educational milestone and started to volunteer for Speechcraft® and Youth Leadership programs and many other club development activities. She says what's surprised her the most is "how vast the learning experience is at all levels and how willing others are to share their expertise, networks, and knowledge so freely."

Along the way, she boosted her self-confidence and self-esteem. "Throughout my Toastmaster's experience, the encouragement, constructive feedback, and people believing in my potential pushed me way beyond what I believed I could ever achieve within Toastmasters and my professional and personal life," says Levy Strauss. She was promoted twice in a three-year period at work and credits the confidence and skills she built in Toastmasters.

Similar to Le Reste, Levy Strauss remains a member to keep her skills sharp and pay it forward. She loves giving back and watching people grow to their full potential. She also maintains friendships, including those she built more than 20 years ago at her first club.

Learning Unexpected Skills

Strong relationships have inspired Jenny Au, DTM, from Anchorvale CC club in

Singapore, to stay in Toastmasters too. Au joined in July 2005 to conquer stage fright and instead gained "stage pride." She wanted to improve her communications and leadership skills for her training and consulting career.

I'm still a member because of the ongoing and unexpected benefits and learning opportunities, a motivation to help others, and the relationships I continue to develop.

She met those goals by completing the education program. With increased confidence, she volunteered for a wide range of club and District leadership positions. Those experiences gave her more than she expected. "I did not anticipate that the Toastmasters platform provides an avenue in which I could learn a lot about teamwork and coordination, including the value of relationship building," says Au.

She attributes her success in club and District programming to effective cooperation and strong relationships within her Toastmasters teams, which resulted in respect and trust. She continues to apply the lessons she's learned and skills she developed to her Toastmasters activities, professional projects, and daily life.

Making Lifetime Friends

Skill-building and relationships have also kept Graham Cairns, DTM, connected to Toastmasters. A self-described "Toastmasters addict," Cairns is a member of six clubs: Forex and Leading Edge Toastmasters, both in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, and four online clubs.

When he first joined, he was solely focused on his club. "I didn't see the incredible diversity that Toastmasters offers," he says. "Now, I try to visit new

clubs on a regular basis—especially when traveling. I have adopted the principle that if I can't visit my own clubs due to distance, I will visit someone else's."

He joined Toastmasters in September 1981 when he was a young radio announcer. He was comfortable behind the microphone, but not in front of a live audience. "I just wanted my tongue to stop flopping around in my mouth like a killer whale's fluke," he says. He quickly achieved that goal and began competing in Toastmasters speech contests and volunteering for leadership roles.

In 1995, Cairns and his family moved half a continent away, and he stepped away from Toastmasters. When he changed jobs in September 2015, he rejoined to continue strengthening his skills and pay it forward.

The relationships he built at the start of his Toastmasters journey were still there. In fact, more than 40 years later, the person who convinced him to attend his first Toastmasters meeting is still a mentor and friend.

I have benefited from Toastmasters relationships too. When I moved from the Washington, D.C., area to Budapest, Hungary, for a new job, I didn't know the culture, the language, or anyone who lived there. But when I walked into the Budapest Toastmasters club meeting, I felt at home. I also obtained a short-term consulting project in Azerbaijan because of a Toastmasters connection. And it was the *Toastmaster* magazine that gave me my first byline.

The power of Toastmasters is the extent of the growth, opportunities, and experiences it offers and the diversity of its worldwide membership. The longer you're involved, the more you will tap into it.

So, stay awhile. The whole wide world of Toastmasters awaits. **T**

Jennifer L. Blanck, DTM, is a member of AAMC Toastmasters in Washington, D.C., and a regular contributor to the *Toastmaster* magazine. Learn more at www.jenniferlblank.com.

Making Conversation

Yes, you're a master at the lectern. But how good are you going at it one-on-one?

BY JOHN CADLEY

You have given a speech. The audience applause is of a duration and decibel level to indicate it was a good one. You silently congratulate yourself and leave the stage to mingle with individual members of that audience, at which time you will engage in conversation—a different form of public speaking altogether. A speech to a crowd is a full-out assault; making conversation in a small group is hand-to-hand combat. Are you good at it? Can you introduce yourself without sounding like you're selling time-shares in Costa Rica? Can you ask a person about themselves without being told it's none of your &#%#@! business?

This is important. True, great public speakers are oft remembered by history ... just not always favorably. The chronicles of the famous are replete with those who would have left a far more palatable legacy if they'd just kept their big, fat mouths shut. Not so with a great conversationalist. Someone who can crack the dreaded "awkward silence" and keep the ball rolling sits forever in the Pantheon of the Well-Regarded.

Socrates, for instance, lived over 2,500 years ago, but the Socratic method of conversation endures. The sage of Athens didn't talk; he asked questions—lots of them—forcing his subject to examine his or her reasons for holding a certain belief, until, in many cases, they reasoned to the conclusion that they had no real reason at all. This is an excellent way to find the truth. Just don't use it with your spouse. There are times when the truth isn't nearly as important as keeping your head on your shoulders.

The English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge was another famed

conversationalist. He was also an opium addict and a sponger—which proves my point that if you can keep the party hopping, people won't care if you ask them for money. They may even give you some.

How does all this apply to you? How can you join the all-time great conversationalists? Let's begin with how *not* to begin. Politics and religion are obvious nonstarters. The merest hint of these topics will cause the same reaction as if you'd walked in with a skunk on a leash. So, too, are relationships, socio-economic status, and anyone's physical appearance. People don't want to know about your marriage, your swimming pool, or your opinion of the host's comically ill-fitting suit. One of them could be his tailor.

Don't judge. This is a conversation, not a debate.

Best to start with something innocuous, such as your conversation partner's connection to the event, or how they came to be in their line of work—anything that's about them. As with most of us, "them" is their favorite topic, unless they're in the Witness Protection Program. And when they talk, listen. This is different from the far more common practice of pretending to listen. Real listening is an acquired skill. People want to know you're genuinely interested in them. So pay attention. Don't let your mind wander, or you may wake from your reverie to hear, "What do you think, Carol?" The only honest answer is, "I wasn't listening." Are you honest? Are

you *that* honest? If not, bend over, say your appendix burst, and leave the room.

Don't judge. This is a conversation, not a debate. Be complimentary, look for commonalities, ask pertinent follow-up questions to keep the ball rolling, and gauge the depth of your conversation by the environment. Bringing up Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* might be appropriate for a convention of college professors, not so much for the bowling league summer picnic.

Don't be a Prove It. That's what Socrates did and you're not Socrates. Don't be a Me-Myself-I. When somebody says they climbed a mountain, don't say you climbed a bigger one. Don't be Captain Oblivious. When someone says they're ready to go home, don't nag them to stay. They want to go home, and now, thanks to you, more than ever.

Remember, too, that being a good conversationalist doesn't mandate that you be as well-read as a scholar or as entertaining as an African gray parrot that speaks four languages. People would much prefer that you just be interested in them. You don't have to be fawning or obsequious (*Are you sure I haven't seen you in the Miss Universe pageant?*). Just be sincerely attentive ... which will make them feel good ... which will make you look good ... which will offer you the best chance of being remembered as a Socrates or even a Coleridge—as long as you don't ask to borrow money. **T**

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



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CLIENT SPOTLIGHT - BO BENNETT, DTM

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

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

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

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

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