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Conferences, Contests, and Campaigns ... Oh My!



May is one of my favorite months of the year. In Connecticut, where I live, the weather is getting warmer, the flowers are starting to bloom, and my favorite activity, drag racing, is in full swing. While all those things make May special, they're not what make it one of my favorite months. What does? The flurry of activity that occurs within Toastmasters during this time. There is the annual District conference, the speech contests, and the election of District leaders. To borrow from a famous line in the movie *The Wizard of Oz*: "Conferences, contests, and campaigns ... Oh my!"

Admittedly, the District conference season this year will be quite different than in the past. Conferences are being conducted either online or as an in-person/hybrid event. Some are being held over multiple weekends. Whatever the conferences look like, the planning teams are doing everything they can to provide you with the best experience possible.

Although many of us would likely prefer that the conferences were all in person, there are many benefits to an online event, with safety being number one. Beyond that, if you have ever wondered what it would be like to take part in an educational session or witness a speech contest at a District conference beyond your home District or country, this year brings that possibility.

For this contest period, all District-level speech contests are required to be conducted 100% online. This means more members and guests than ever can watch your District's top speakers. And those speakers will have more members and guests encouraging them and cheering them on. Who will ultimately represent each District in the International Speech Contest Region Quarterfinals? Attend the speech contests and find out!

Use these District conferences to think ahead to next year. Who will lead your District during the 2021-2022 Toastmasters year? As we head toward our International Convention, I encourage you to read the candidate materials, attend the Candidate Showcase, and listen to each candidate's two-minute speech during the annual District Council meeting. Make sure your voice is heard and your vote counted by taking an active role in the election process. Attending District conferences is a great way to understand the process ahead of time.

It's a brave new world. We can choose to embrace it, or we can choose to ignore it. We can't do both! I kindly ask that you toss your preconceptions regarding online conferences, contests, and campaigns aside and approach them with an open mind. With a light beginning to appear at the end of the tunnel, we all just need to be patient a little while longer. I hope to see you at an upcoming conference.

Richard E. Peck, DTM
International President

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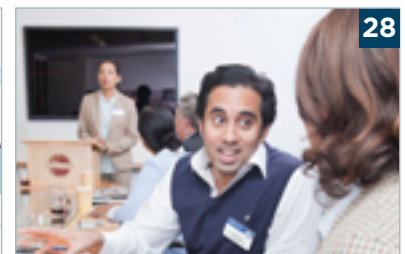
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Clubs gather safely for enhanced camaraderie.



Chua Chu Kang CC Mandarin club of Singapore, and Johor Bahru Mandarin Advanced Toastmasters Club of Johor Bahru, Johor, Malaysia, host their seventh annual joint meeting. The two clubs had 150 members in attendance for the event, designed to foster better understanding and communication among members.



Xi'an Hi-Tech Toastmasters Club of Xi'an, Shaanxi, China, gather for an in-person meeting in accordance with local COVID-19 guidelines.



Members of the Galaxy Toastmasters Club in Muscat, Oman, enjoy a meeting together in early January 2021.



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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TUNE IN



Hear the latest episodes from [The Toastmasters Podcast](#).



Listen for tips on helping members grow from the Toastmasters Toolbox author.



Instagram Influencers Engage

What makes an Instagram influencer influential? Meet five social media stars and learn how they use a visual platform to persuade and engage their followers. Don't miss the extra online features, including additional photos.

6 Club Leadership Tips

Are your club meetings the best they can be? Read six ways to create a better experience from Certified Speaking Professional Ruby Newell-Legner. Make sure to watch the video of her presenting this topic on the Toastmasters International stage.



Catch up on the latest [webinars](#).

Photo Contest Winners

View the winning images from the *Toastmaster* magazine photo contest! Click through a gallery to see all the creativity from your fellow members.



A Brand That Matters

Why is it important to have a personal brand? Learn more from YouTube sensation and 2020 Virtual Convention speaker Chris Thompson.

▶ MEMBER MOMENT

Like Mother, Like Daughter?

Despite different personalities, a mother-daughter duo grew closer and developed through Toastmasters.

BY MEGAN PRESTON MEYER

Whoever coined the phrase “like mother, like daughter” had never met Mish and Tanya Barad. The mother-daughter duo from Solihull, West Midlands, England, describe themselves as having completely opposite skill sets. While Mish is down-in-the-details, Tanya is more big-picture. “I collect facts,” says Mish. “Tanya is brilliant at ideas.” These complementary characteristics make them a great Toastmasters team.

The Barads, both DTMs, agree that they would not have come nearly as far in Toastmasters had it not been for each other. Tanya became a member first. “Long story short, my communications skills weren’t good, so I was sent by my job,” she says, “but then I started to really enjoy it.” She enjoyed it so much that she invited Mish to attend about six months later.

Mutual Support

For the past seven years, the women have been attending meetings together—sometimes visiting several clubs in a week. They are both members of the Heart of England club in Solihull, as well as Birmingham New Street Speakers in Birmingham, a club they sponsored.

A major factor in their Toastmasters success: the detailed, open evaluations they offer each other. Because they are so close, “we can be a bit more constructive and a bit more brutal” than they would be with others, Tanya says. Both are in Toastmasters to improve, and know growth requires honest feedback.

The women also know each other well enough to go into deep detail during their frequent feedback sessions. “We debrief constantly,” says Mish. They don’t limit their evaluations to speeches; during tense committee phone calls, for instance, Mish may message Tanya with real-time feedback on her tone of voice. “It’s like having an earpiece,” Mish laughs.

Both women have enjoyed, and put to good use, the leadership talents they’ve earned in Toastmasters. “To me, the leadership [element] is invaluable, and that’s what I really, really enjoy,” says Mish. She and Tanya have helped charter several clubs and have supported each other in club, Area, and District leadership roles. As partners, they welcome ambitious assignments. They have started two new clubs, mentored a third, and organized countless events.



Mish Barad, DTM (left), and her daughter, Tanya Barad, DTM

“We [can] take on quite large projects because we know we have backup,” Tanya says. Mish agrees, “It’s not double the capacity—it’s triple the capacity,” she says. “One plus one equals three.”

Professional and Personal Development

Observing each other in action at club meetings has helped Mish and Tanya see each other in a business-like environment, which is an unusual perspective for both. “I wouldn’t get to see Mum at work, and she wouldn’t get to see me,” says Tanya, an IT project manager. Club meetings allow her to see the “more mature, formal side” of her mother, a driving instructor.

Mish is equally admiring of her daughter’s professionalism. “[Tanya] can just flick a switch,” she says. “Up on stage, she’s like, ‘That’s it, I’m President now,’” Mish laughs. This shift in perspective goes both ways; Mish has taken on multiple club roles and has served as Area Director. “[Tanya has] seen me become professional when I’ve never been professional in my life,” Mish quips.

Toastmasters *usually* brings out the professional side of the pair. Sometimes, though, they “fall into mother-daughter mode,” says Tanya. Most of their fellow Toastmasters know that they are related, but some people are surprised by their interactions. “People look at us funny when we banter,” Mish says. “But we just say, ‘It’s okay, we’re family.’”

Both women agree that sharing the Toastmasters experience with a loved one can help double the benefit for each of you, especially when it comes to continual support. “Having someone to push you all the time” is extremely valuable, says Mish. “That’s probably the biggest thing we’ve learned.”

And they plan to keep learning. “We’re constantly thinking Toastmasters,” says Tanya, “and we’re constantly looking to push ourselves forward and to improve things.”

Like mother, like daughter.

Megan Preston Meyer is a member of TM International Club Zug in Zug, Switzerland, and a regular contributor to the Toastmaster magazine. She is an avid collector of jargon and the founder of [Corporatery](#), a website that exposes the hidden logic of the workplace.

► FROM THE ARCHIVES

Travel Back to the Past With the *Toastmaster*

Do stories stand the test of time?

When future readers look back at the *Toastmaster* of 2020 and 2021, they're going to see a shift in the narrative of the content and photos that were published. Topics these days are focused on virtual meetings, online conferences, and how to look your best on camera. Do you think Toastmasters International founder Dr. Ralph C. Smedley ever thought he'd be writing about Zoom etiquette and virtually visiting clubs around the world?

When you flip through past issues of the magazine, the topics are similar, but provide varying advice depending on the time. A September 1940 article offers tips on how to treat a new member; in February 1958, an author chronicles his experience of giving speeches in Saudi Arabia; a January 1977 article guides members on how to find great speech topics.

Now it's your turn! Take a journey through nearly nine decades of content in the [Toastmasters Gallery](#).

Toastmaster Online Magazine

The [online edition](#) is another way to stay informed and inspired with articles on a variety of topics going back to 2016. Access the



online magazine anytime on any device and share articles instantly with people on your social media pages or by email.

Still not seeing what you're looking for? [Fill out this form](#) with your story ideas or topics you'd like to read about in the magazine.

► PRESENTATION SKILLS

Give a Sales Pitch With Purpose

A sales pitch or proposal seeks to persuade. The objective of the presentation is to sell a product, concept, or idea. The ability to present sales pitches and proposals effectively can open the door to professional opportunities.

To organize ideas into a successful sales pitch or proposal, use the "inverted pyramid" approach, which gives an audience the most important information in the first few sentences (how much money might be saved, how lives might be improved, etc.). Support claims with logic and evidence, and end every sales pitch or proposal with a call to action. If an audience agrees with the initial message or point, the supporting material that follows will reinforce that agreement. If an audience disagrees, logic and evidence may win them over.

Use high-quality yet simple visual aids, such as charts or slides, to help clarify the presentation. Make sure the visual aids can be seen by every person in the audience, and limit each chart or slide to a single main point.

Offer a [question-and-answer period](#) following a sales pitch or proposal, which can supply you with valuable feedback about the effectiveness of the pitch. It also gives an audience the

opportunity to further clarify specific points or data that was presented. Below are a few ways to effectively answer questions from an audience:

- Anticipate possible questions by rehearsing with colleagues or friends.
- Provide answers that support the sales pitch or proposal.
- Disarm loaded questions (those based on false premises or irrelevant assumptions) by being polite and asking the questioner to further explain his or her question.
- Divide complicated questions into several parts before answering them.



Want to learn more about the art of influence? Read about five Instagram standouts on [page 16](#). These current and former Toastmasters use their skills on the social networking app to communicate ideas, tell visual stories, and influence people around the world.

▶ **SNAPSHOT** 



Members of The Maine Thing Advanced Toastmasters Club in Augusta, Maine, don silly hats to celebrate the birthday of 87-year-old Jeanie G. Davis, pictured in the top row, third from left. Davis first joined Kennebec Valley Toastmasters in 2015, and both her clubs are inspired by her dedication to continual growth. Davis says, “As a retiree, I feel one is never too old to learn something new. I am forever thankful that I walked into my first meeting.”

▶ **TOASTMASTERS NEWS**

Promote Your Club

Add your club’s information to this [Promotional Poster](#) for advertising around your community! The marketing material features a contemporary design and comes in two sizes for your convenience.

Convert Prospective Members

Did you know that every month an average of 10,000 prospective members attempt to contact a club via [Find a Club](#)? Follow the helpful tips in the [Find a Club Best Practices](#) document to grow your club’s membership.

Get Excited for 2021 Online Convention!

The Board of Directors decided to conduct an online convention August 23-28, 2021; as a result, the previously announced in-person convention in Nashville, Tennessee, will not be taking place. Last year’s first-ever online convention brought together more than 59,000 registrants from 203 countries; astonishingly, nearly 90% of last year’s online convention-goers were first-time attendees. [Stay tuned](#) for upcoming 2021 convention details.

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Club name: _____
 Date: _____
 Time: _____
 Location: _____
 Contact: _____

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Resilience in Times of Uncertainty Webinar

Watch this [special webinar](#) co-hosted by the American Psychological Association and Toastmasters International to get tips for finding work/life balance, maintaining mechanisms for camaraderie and community, and how best to practice self-care and gratitude. Please share on your club social media channels to spread the resilience.

Speechcraft Promotional Video

Now you can point prospective Speechcrafters and members to [this new video](#) that quickly explains the Speechcraft

digital experience, highlighting real-life scenarios where people could benefit from the practice. Promote the program and share it today!

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 | CV CHON of Johor Bahru, Johor, Malaysia, poses in front of Lichtenstein Castle in the Swabian Jura region of Germany, in December 2019.

2 | TERRI MORRIS of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, stands at the base of the Chacchoben Mayan temple in Mexico, prior to the pandemic.

3 | BENNY TANG of Ningbo, Zhejiang, China, enjoys the fresh air and sunshine near his home after two months of quarantine.

4 | BALAKRISHNAN SUBRAMANIAM of Frisco, Texas, poses in his front yard after a historic Texas winter storm in February 2021.



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

Finding Camaraderie in a New Country

How I took the plunge and moved from New Zealand to Germany during a pandemic.

BY ALEXANDER KUCH

After taking a crazy opportunity to move for a new job, then traveling for over 36 hours from New Zealand to Germany, I arrived safely in the frigid Frankfurt winter. A new adventure awaited me—and Toastmasters would be a big part of the experience.

I had been a member for five years with the Hibiscus Coast Club in Auckland, New Zealand. The support from my mentor, [Bjørn W. Simonsen, DTM](#), a Toastmaster of 25 years, along with that of the club, has really helped me grow as a speaker, both personally and professionally. A bit about my background: At 2 years old I was adopted in Romania by a German family, and after living in Germany for nine years, we immigrated to New Zealand. I've used my personal story and adoption experience to share my message through various platforms, including the nonprofit I'm Adopted, as well as through a [TEDx Talk](#).

While I was quite familiar with Germany, I still faced a number of challenges during my move. First, it was hard to deal with the constantly changing health guidelines in Germany because of COVID-19. But then I realized I should focus on what I can control instead and enjoy the transition process. The move had happened very suddenly; however, my new colleagues went above and beyond to help me find a place to live in Heilbronn, where I work.

It was also very helpful that I had lived in Germany as a child and still have some relatives there. When I arrived, I spent three days with my family in a town called Dagersheim. What also made my arrival in the country easier is that I am fluent in German.

My advice for anyone moving to another country is to take the time to look for and reach out to Toastmasters clubs well in advance, so when you arrive in a new place you will already have a community



With suitcase in hand at the Auckland International Airport, Alexander is ready to start his new adventure.

to connect with straight away. For me, this was very helpful to my well-being, as being in a lockdown in a new environment can be quite challenging. After connecting with the Rhetorik-Club Heilbronn Toastmasters—a club I found by doing an online search—I was invited to take part in Christmas festivities. I was first attracted to the club because of their openness, and my initial impression was confirmed at their Zoom Christmas party. While I wasn't able to join in with the mulled wine at 7 a.m. New Zealand time, I still had a great time celebrating with the group. They were so welcoming, and it was immensely helpful to have a club I already felt comfortable with by the time I actually arrived in Germany.

I have since become an official member. I am lucky to have found a mentor, Alex Kufner, DTM, who is an author, educator, and adventurer with extensive global Toastmasters experience. I can't wait to meet all the members in person once we are out of lockdown in Germany. It's been interesting getting to know the different personalities, and the club support has been amazing—from introducing me to their meeting format to providing critical feedback. Although my public speaking abilities are stronger in English, practicing in German proves very valuable for my work, where I have already had to make a few online presentations.

I am now in a traineeship with the International Business Development team at Theo FÖRCH GmbH & Co. KG, a German product supplier for the automotive and construction industry. I'm involved in helping to structure pricing and commission models for Switzerland, conduct preliminary market research in Australia, and provide a holistic sustainability evaluation and key recommendations. I aspire to use the experience I gain in international business development to make a positive impact on the holistic well-being of children and communities.

Being a member of Toastmasters International has been an enormous help, made my job transition a lot smoother, and provided me with the chance to connect with like-minded people. If you have an opportunity, even under the circumstances of a pandemic, take the plunge, enjoy the adventure, and use Toastmasters to support yourself in the process. **T**

ALEXANDER KUCH is a member of Rhetorik-Club Heilbronn Toastmasters in Heilbronn, Germany. He speaks globally on the topics of adoption and children's rights.



Pointing the Way to Member Growth

How the 10 goals of the Distinguished Club Program benefit individuals.

BY BILL BROWN, DTM

It's that time again. The time when we finish out the old year and get ready for the new—the new Toastmasters year, of course. If you have been around for a while, you know this leads to a club discussion on the Distinguished Club Program, or DCP.

In short, the DCP measures a club's success in meeting Toastmasters goals. If you are relatively new to the organization, you might be wondering what the fuss is all about. Then again, if you have been around for some time, you might be wondering the same thing.

It is easy to look at the program as something for Toastmasters International's benefit, and nothing more—a management tool for the District leaders.

Or do the requirements primarily benefit the individual member? I believe they do.

The club's primary qualifying requirement of the program is that a club needs to have 20 members or a net growth of five members on the club's roster as of July 1 (see page 6 of the [Distinguished Club Program and Club Success Plan manual](#) for more detail). While 20 may seem like an arbitrary number, I noticed something interesting when I was President of a club with 15 to 25 people attending any given meeting. When we had 20 or more attendees, the meeting was livelier. The energy level of the group was noticeably higher than when we had fewer than 20. That meant that the meetings were more fun and, as a result, the speakers did better. As it turns out, 20 members is a good minimum target.

The DCP is made up of 10 goals. Six of them focus on education achievements in the Pathways learning experience. The various award targets encourage newer members to get started in the education program (that is, Pathways) quickly, and longer-term members to continue to grow.

This isn't just about club goals. We all have our own personal objectives with Toastmasters. Those are primarily achieved by progressing through Pathways. The DCP criteria incentivize the club to have members achieving in the five levels of a path, but it is the individual members who advance in those levels. Thus, we encourage one another to grow when we work toward the DCP goals.

The next two goals pertain to membership. Both involve adding new, dual, or reinstated club members to the roster. This is primarily to replace any member attrition. It keeps us focused on growth. There is nothing like a new face and perspective to energize everyone.

The remaining two goals have to do with leadership activities. One involves leadership training. Every six months, at least four of a club's seven officers need to attend training. If you are new to a position, it is good to know your responsibilities. If you are continuing in your same position, you might pick up something you missed the first time.

The final goal is to submit your dues renewal and officer roster on time. If you don't submit the roster, your officers will not have access to the officers section in Club Central on the Toastmasters website. This means that, among other tasks, your club

won't be able to log new awards and sign up new members. Although this looks merely like a paperwork task, it is vital to make sure that your club can operate smoothly.

When you fulfill these various goals, your club can achieve specific Distinguished award levels—Distinguished, Select Distinguished, or President's Distinguished. That, again, gives the club targets to shoot for. Achieving five of the 10 goals makes you a Distinguished club, while achieving seven makes you Select Distinguished; meeting nine goals qualifies you as President's Distinguished.

But what if, as you approach the end of the program year, you already have your nine, and a member is about to enable you to achieve your 10th? It won't change your club's status. But while it may be tempting to hold back "excess" awards until a new program year, I believe you should submit all awards right away so that the members get immediate recognition for their achievement. If that means that you have to stretch yourselves the next year, good! Challenge yourself and your fellow club members to grow beyond your initial objectives. After all, we are in Toastmasters to grow.

The DCP is not a task. It is encouragement to each individual member to continue growing. It is a ladder to greater success. ■

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.

Speech Topics Are Everywhere

Pay attention to your life and the ideas will come.

BY RAY ENGAN



Where do you find speech topics? A simple answer comes from 2003 World Champion of Public Speaking Jim Key: “I live life, and I pay attention.”

Here are three words to help you use that advice, which in turn can lead you to develop hundreds of speech topics.

1 Reflect. Great stories lead us to reflect. Fairy tales begin “Once upon a time ...” The movie classic *Star Wars* starts with the words “A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away ...” Reflect on your life, and feel the stories flow. Your childhood is a wonderful place to start. Use your older, wiser eyes to look back at your youth, and reflect on the memories and how they’ve changed you.

Live life, pay attention. When I was 4, my brother convinced me to steal a piece of candy. As I grabbed it, he screamed, “Mom! Ray’s stealing candy!” She instantly busted me. Reflecting on that moment, I now understand, no matter who says otherwise, wrong is wrong. Twenty-five years later, that moment led me to return \$1,263 USD that I had found and could easily have kept. It’s a story I now use in my speeches. It’s relatable because all children have people who influence them. What we take from those people defines us.

2 Connect. Your story needs to connect with your audience. I had a client talk about taking his driving test in a Porsche. My first car was a \$100 Ford automobile with huge windows. I couldn’t relate to my client’s “Porsche pain,” but I found that many loved to hear about my

“terrarium on wheels.” People relate to challenges and adversity—like not being able to buy a better car.

We have all seen odd things. People connect to those as well. What stories of the strange do you have? Live life, pay attention. In a grocery store once, a well-dressed man picked up a mini-watermelon and held it to his ear.

Who taught you the greatest lessons of your life? Share those.

I asked my only possible question. “Are you a Watermelon Whisperer?”

He stared down at me with an uppity raised nose, declaring, “If they speak to me, I take them home.”

I turned this into a story about how leadership shouldn’t be difficult, because there are people waiting for watermelons to guide them. Strange is good when you can connect it to a life lesson.

3 Resonate. The story or the message *must* resonate with your audience. Speeches work wonderfully when they include some combination of leadership, laughter, and influence.

What actions routinely make people laugh? When have you purposely, or not, led a group? When have you been talked into doing something? What unique things have you witnessed in your life? These are all stories! Who has taught you a lesson? That’s a story!

Mark Brown, the 1995 World Champion of Public Speaking, talked about creating characters out of inanimate objects. I presented that lesson to my club, and it turned into a District-winning humorous speech about my luggage (now named Jack) mistakenly being sent to Paris while my plane landed in Kentucky. Jack wound up explaining turbulence to me and having a fling with a French handbag named Chanel. He returned to America wearing a beret ... and now wants to be called Jacques!

What business mistakes have you lived through and how did you overcome them? That’s another topic.

Your story can be lighthearted, and deliver a meaningful message. For example, what would it be like if people were as faithful as dogs? That might lead to an interesting speech on loyalty.

Or this: The spider web you walk through outside *every morning* means there’s a spider unwilling to give up on catching you. A speech on persistence?

Stories are everywhere. If you reflect, connect, and make your speech resonate, then the phrase “I live life, and I pay attention” won’t just be speaking champion Jim Key’s advice—it will be the key to let your stories flow. **T**

Ray Engan is a member of Toast of Petaluma Club in Petaluma, California. A former stand-up comedian and inventor of *The Humor Algorithm*, he is currently Chief Charisma Officer at *Leadership Through Laughter*. Learn more at www.leadershipthroughlaughter.com.

What Does Toastmasters Mean to You?

Announcing the winners of the *Toastmaster* magazine photo contest.

A powerful photo can tell a story just as an eloquent orator does when delivering a speech.

To that end, the magazine launched a photo contest with the theme: What Does Toastmasters Mean to You? Photos had to be taken by the entrants and shot within the one-month timeframe of February 1–28, 2021.

All entries were judged by the Magazine Team at World Headquarters, with Toastmasters International President Richard E. Peck, DTM, being the final judge.

Peck has been a photography enthusiast and amateur photographer since his early teens. He was a sports photographer for his high school, and has had two photos published in *Best of College Photography*. These days he takes photographs for personal enjoyment and for “the solitude that it often affords me, for the ability to look at things a little differently, and to hold on to the memories of those moments in time.”

Here are the winners:



First Place Winner

Nor Diana Md Ashar • Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Entrant: The one thing that has been constant during this tough time has been my Toastmasters journey. With the support from my team, I managed to complete my Level 1 and Level 2 while working from home! My kids were also caught up in my Toastmasters fever and demanded an opportunity to deliver a one-minute speech to dear Mommy.

Richard Peck: This photo captures the importance of support beyond the club level, which is something we often speak about. There is a dichotomy: the laughing image on the *Toastmaster* magazine and the young child in the background who appears to be speaking dramatically while her sister enjoys the show. The Level 1 ribbon ties in nicely with the magazine article “Reviewing Your Life’s Achievements” [headlined on the magazine cover].

From a technical standpoint the focus and depth of field is great. The background is blurred just enough to keep it from being distracting while still allowing the viewer to draw a story from it. The subtle lighting variant creates a nice contrast between the mother and daughters, with the mother (the Toastmaster) being highlighted. The colors are also vibrant and well balanced.



Most Creative

Jerry Damian • Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Entrant: This self-portrait was taken in Al Ain desert near Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, while practicing hard for a prepared speech.

Richard Peck: This photograph represents both the isolation that we are feeling during these times, as well as this time for reflecting on who we are and where we are. There is the vastness of the world around us and occasionally we don't see anybody but ourselves.



Most Inspirational

Nilesh Arun Patankar • Pune, Maharashtra, India

Entrant: Toastmasters to me is nurturing, caring, and the biggest support for growth.

Richard Peck: This image represents the nurturing aspect of Toastmasters. Just as a plant can't grow on its own, as individuals and Toastmasters we need the support from others to help us grow.



Best Use of Branding

Martha Sojka • Joliet, Illinois

Entrant: Toastmasters is a safe space for personal growth and an opportunity to let my inner light shine. Just as stained glass is a collection of unique pieces of various colorful shades, shapes, and sizes, Toastmasters is equally diverse and inclusive of all.

Richard Peck: I really like the Toastmasters logo on the deep blue (Loyal Blue!) background. We can also see hints of the maroon, gray, and yellow from our branding palette.



Most Original

Michelle Carter • Waldorf, Maryland

Entrant: Toastmasters brings out the "I" in CONFIDENCE. Since joining Toastmasters, I have not only gained more confidence in my public speaking, but in myself. I have been given the opportunity to reinvent myself and I am loving the path I am on. I can stand out as a leader and stand in confidence of my abilities.

Richard Peck: The Wonder Woman accessories and CONFIDENCE sign are clever and highlight the power that many of us feel upon reaching our Toastmasters goals. She also did a nice job incorporating our logo and branding. **T**



Instagram Influencers

in the Spotlight

Meet five social media stars who use their personal brand to connect with followers around the world.

BY SHANNON DEWEY AND LAURA MISHKIND

They find their niche and build a reputation. They post alluring photos and share personal stories and advice. They have thousands of people following them, and companies that want to partner with them. So, what's the big deal about Instagram influencers?

Influencers can persuade others by being authentic, relevant, and trustworthy in their dedicated subject area or expertise. They have established their credibility with a captive audience who follows their every post. With more than 1 billion monthly active users, Instagram is a social networking app that has helped influencers skyrocket their careers, connect globally, and communicate with a visual platform.

While you may not be looking to become “instafamous” any time soon, you can learn some important takeaways on personal branding and how to make an impact with your message. Read about five current and former Toastmasters who used their skills to boost their credibility and confidence on Instagram.

Andy Proudman

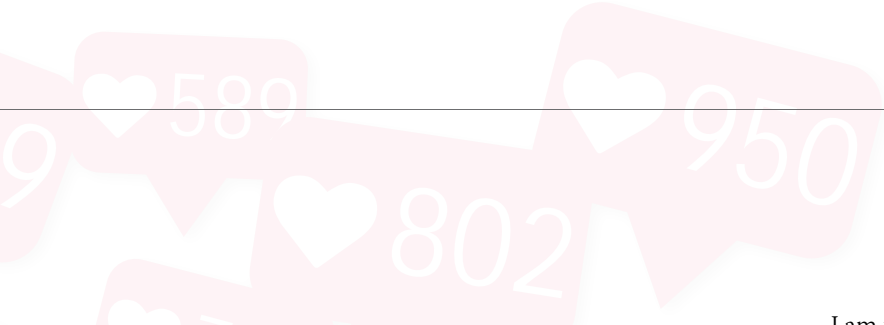
- ▶ Wolverhampton, England
- ▶ Age: 39
- ▶ First joined Instagram: 2016
- ▶ 20,400 followers
- ▶ [@andyproudman](#)

Tell us about your personal brand and the content you post.

My posts vary from mindset to personal growth, business, fitness, and travel. My strategy is to share my experiences and document my journey. I also use it as a tool to deepen my learning. Every time I post quotes and messages, I am actually speaking to myself as well as my followers.

I also promote my company, Me and My Golf. Our mission is to help grow the game of golf and help golfers all over the world to improve their game. We saw an opportunity to use social media to spread our message and knowledge to the world to educate golfers and create better golf and more enjoyment in the game. Social media is a tool to show how great this game is—anyone can play and it's amazing for health and relationships.





What do you think attracts followers to you?

I think by showing followers what I am doing rather than just telling them, it provides some real value in showing that you can do great things, but nothing comes easy. I hope to portray the importance of great work ethic.



Every time I post quotes and messages, I am actually speaking to myself as well as my followers.

—ANDY PROUDMAN

Why did you join Toastmasters?

I joined because I didn't have the confidence in speaking to large groups, and I realized that if I want to impact a lot of people then this was a skill I needed to work on. It's also important to me that

I am putting myself in uncomfortable situations, as I know this is where the growth happens. [The Toastmasters training] was hugely valuable in a keynote speech I had to deliver to 250 PGA golf professionals, on how to build a business online, at the 2019 Teaching and Coaching Summit in Australia.

What advice do you have for others looking to influence people?

I would say get comfortable being uncomfortable. Be yourself as much as possible and focus on what you can give to others. So many people hold themselves back due to the fear of what others say and think. Don't let other people's opinions stop you from doing something you love, just focus on how it can help others.

Figure out why you are doing what you are doing. This is what will drive you and what is personal to you. We all have different reasons for why we do things but getting clear on yours will help motivate you to keep going.

Understand who your audience is. This is crucial; you need to create content that relates to that specific audience and to understand the problems and challenges they have so you can provide solutions.

Samantha Mogwe

- ▶ Gaborone, Botswana
- ▶ Age: 32
- ▶ First joined Instagram: 2014
- ▶ 61,400 followers
- ▶ [@samanthamogwe](#)

Tell us about your personal brand and the content you post.

My personal brand is really an extension of who I am. I have been very deliberate in terms of not fabricating what I post, and anyone who knows me, knows that I don't have the energy to project something that I am not. I guess in short, I would say that my personal brand is authentic and that's the inspiration behind it.

I post about my work as a singer, and videos and photos from my music-related work so that people can follow my career. I also post about my radio work, specifically to my Instagram stories, interviews done on the "The Midday Fix" (a radio show hosted on Gabz-FM). I also post about my healthy lifestyle, which includes fitness, eating healthy, and taking care of myself.



PHOTO CREDIT: DOPS24 PICTURES

Follow
Toastmasters
International
on *Instagram!*

What do you think attracts followers to you?

My audience seems to be quite broad. I have young people following me, people who listen to my music and my radio show. I'm followed by young mothers, aspiring artists, industry colleagues, brands that have worked with me, and brands that would want to work with me.

My goal is to attract followers who value the efforts I bring to my work, and I'm glad that the interactions I get are genuine ones with people who enjoy how I bring my true self to this platform.

Why did you join Toastmasters?

I joined Toastmasters at the beginning of 2017 to become a better public speaker. My career as a singer/songwriter seemed to go hand in hand with speaking at events, interviews, and panel discussions, which I often turned down because I was petrified and felt ill-equipped to construct sentences properly. Little did I know that it would also prepare me for my radio job, which started at the beginning of 2018. This was one big benefit.

Radio requires a lot of talking and an ability to be able to tell stories that paint a picture for the listener. Toastmasters helped me relish the importance of being descriptive in my dialogue. It also helped me learn how to deal with last-minute changes while on the job, which happens more often than not, but I was trained to deal with unexpected dialogue being thrown my way and not panicking or freezing up.

Let your authentic story speak for itself if you want to attract a high-quality audience who will engage with you and follow your journey.

—SAMANTHA MOGWE

What advice do you have for others looking to influence people?

Let your authentic story speak for itself if you want to attract a high-quality audience who will engage with you and follow your journey. Once you have a narrative for that story, take amazing images because Instagram is a visual platform.

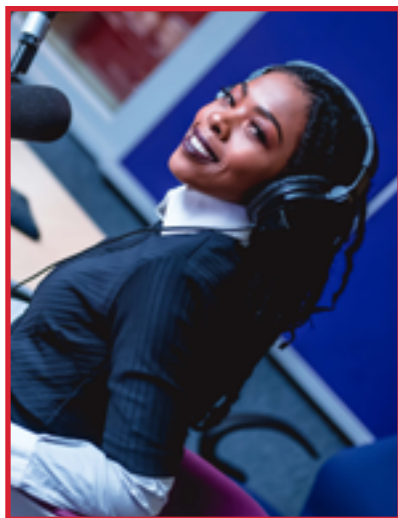


PHOTO CREDIT: GONNA ELVIS

China Jones

- ▶ Santa Barbara, California
- ▶ Age: 34
- ▶ First joined Instagram: 2015
- ▶ 12,300 followers
- ▶ [@coachchinajones](#)



Tell us about your personal brand and the content you post.

I'm a big believer in finding what lights you up inside and doing more of that so you can share your light with others. I hope to inspire others to eat nourishing foods, move their bodies often, and live with intention.

I'm a lover of all things personal and professional development. You'll see a lot of posts around health and wellness, as most of my clients come to me for help in this area. I'm currently working on how to stay authentic and keep sharing content valuable to my audience (which has also shifted) without just posting photos of my adorable son.

What do you think attracts followers to you?

The majority of my followers have come my way for health and fitness tips—from recipes to workouts to wellness. But I'd like to think my clever humor keeps them engaged and has helped them stay. As I've transitioned to motherhood, I've lost some followers. But I'm okay with that because it's more important to have the right followers who are interested in your content and the value you have to offer. On the flip side I now have a lot more moms who reach out to me in my DMs [direct messages] for advice.

Why did you join Toastmasters?

In 2019 my business partner Randee Brookins and I brought a passion project to reality and created the Women Who Warrior Retreat. The whole event got me interested in bringing more speaking opportunities into my own life. I wanted to be a more confident speaker at our retreats and speak on other people's stages. I had heard of Toastmasters from a few acquaintances over the years and decided to give it a go.



I joined in the fall of 2019 (pregnant at the time!), and not too long after our meetings transitioned to Zoom calls. So, while I didn't have much experience giving in-person speeches, I did get quite a bit of experience on Zoom. I really enjoy the connections I have made in the Whitehatters Club and have gotten much more comfortable on camera.



Show your own face and let your personality shine.

—CHINA JONES

and well-being must be built on a rock-solid foundation of health, and that a sustainable healthy lifestyle is possible for anyone.

Often what I share is based on my life experiences. I find myself reflecting on the things that I am grateful for while aiming to share the takeaways from the knowledge I've gained. Self-awareness is key to leading a life that allows us to maximize our sense of happiness, joy, and fulfillment.

Get crystal clear on your vision, mission, and values, then determine how you want to serve, support, and share with your audiences.

—DAI MANUEL, DTM

What advice do you have for others looking to influence people?

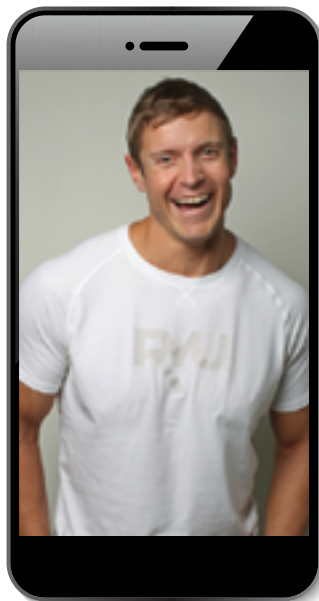
Get really clear on what your brand is and make sure it aligns with your inner values. Then think about who your audience is and what kind of challenges they face. Mix in educational posts with entertainment and inspiration. Show your own face and let your personality shine. Remember that you won't be the right fit for everyone and that's okay! You'll be the right fit for the right audience, and that's what counts.

Dai Manuel, DTM

- ▶ Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
- ▶ Age: 44
- ▶ First joined Instagram: 2011
- ▶ 33,200 followers
- ▶ [@daimanuel](#)

Tell us about your personal brand and the content you post.

My brand is accessible, fun, and engaging. After overcoming obesity as a teenager, I became committed to helping as many people as possible in living healthier, more active lives. I believe that life-long happiness



What do you think attracts followers to you?

My audience spans different continents, countries, and cultures. I believe they appreciate that I'm someone who speaks openly and honestly about the challenges we all endure relating to our mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health. But I'd rather be a mentor than a coach, opting to show, not tell, what I observe and experience as I try to live my values and beliefs.



Why did you join Toastmasters?

In my early 30s, I was part of a mastermind group [peers who help each other achieve goals] of professionals and we'd often invite guest speakers to join our monthly meeting. One such speaker joined to tell us about the art of public speaking. We hung on each of his words—he commanded our attention, our energy, and took us on a journey with his stories, examples, and teachings.

As soon as the meeting was over, I approached him and asked, "What do I need to do to be like you in front of an audience?" He looked at me and said one word: Toastmasters. When I went home and searched for clubs in White Rock [a city in British Columbia], I discovered Early Edition Toastmasters.

Through Toastmasters, I've gained the clarity, confidence, and ability to take action in areas that I otherwise would have never anticipated. I have increased confidence in my speaking and leadership abilities, allowing me to effectively grow my company and teams. [Toastmasters] has also provided me the ability to speak on stages around the world while also showcasing my expertise, teachings, and mentorship on live TV, radio, and events. None of this would have been possible without the support of my Toastmasters tribe.

What advice do you have for others looking to influence people?

First and foremost, ask yourself "Why am I choosing to lean into building a personal brand?" If your answer is hard to articulate, then you have some more digging to do. Get crystal clear on your vision, mission, and values, then determine how you want to serve, support, and share with your audiences. Enjoy the process of discovering your voice, your message, and being someone who is a result of living their own beliefs ... be the best role model you can be!

Yvette Blaess

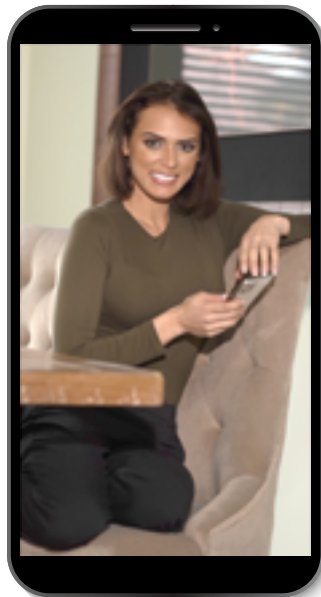
- ▶ Las Vegas, Nevada
- ▶ Age: 29
- ▶ First joined Instagram: 2014
- ▶ 16,900 followers
- ▶ [@yvetteblaess](#)

Tell us about your personal brand and the content you post.

Because I aim to influence, educate, and inspire the community, my personal brand shows multiple highlights of my life and what I am doing within the community. I always work to get public support and teach others about dyslexia.

Dyslexia Studio has been a dream of mine for a very long time. I am so grateful to have the opportunity to launch this [fashion] line and be able to start giving back to the dyslexia community in fall 2021! As a person with dyslexia, I am aware of the struggles our community faces. I am also aware of what it takes to overcome the fears and insecurities that come with this "hidden disability."

My respect for fashion and how it has influenced culture over the years has now led me to create a comfortable line of luxury wear that comes with a message, support for the dyslexia community, and a functional way for those affected and those who want to support to join together. This journey is not just for me, it is for



so many who feel they are suffering alone, and I would like them to know, I see you.

What do you think attracts followers to you?

I personally never know what attracts my followers to me, but I absolutely love getting messages about those who are dyslexic and feel a sense of normalcy when looking at my page, or those who simply send me a message of how organic my page is. I try to always stay in the now and not make it so "influenced."



I aim to influence, educate, and inspire the community.

—YVETTE BLAESS

Why did you join Toastmasters?

I did not start speaking until I was 4 and because my brain is wired differently, my communication skills have extremely low moments depending on the topic. I wanted to improve the way I gave interviews, presented myself onstage, and how I conducted speeches. I appreciate the people in the club for the endless help on pretty much anything. Toastmasters offers all these benefits and so much more!

What advice do you have for others looking to influence people?

The advice I would give others is to be true to themselves, work hard, and have a great team. When you have all of these attributes, you can shine. By being yourself and authentic, people can feel the confidence and love you have for yourself and others. I work with a public relations and marketing agency and they are a huge help with organizing, scheduling, and getting my message across on all my platforms. A great team helps you to reach goals and show your influence on the world.

How do you influence others? Use #talkingtoastmasters and join the conversation online!

Shannon Dewey is the digital content editor and Laura Mishkind is the assistant editor for the Toastmaster magazine.

Build Your Brand to Last

Social media expert breaks down the basics of creating your personal brand.

BY CHRIS THOMPSON

When I started posting videos on YouTube in 2006, I had no idea what YouTube was or what it would become. Sixteen years later social media is my full-time job and I absolutely love it. I did what a lot of early creators did—I winged it. There was no one to teach us because we were the first to create social media content, so we created a lot of the strategies that people use to this day. One of the most important parts of those strategies is branding.

What Is Branding?

Branding is a logo, clothing style, editing style, or type of messaging, but ultimately, branding is a connection and a message. You can have all the strategy in the world but if people don't get it, connect with it, or connect with you, it matters not.

The biggest mistake I see people make when building a social media footprint is “analysis paralysis,” which is overthinking a situation, such as trying to become as good as another person before even starting. When you are new, no one is watching. This is your time to experiment and figure out what you want your brand to be. Sharing this process with your audience also endears you to them, and they feel like they are part of your growth. These people are at the core of your brand and will follow you everywhere. With social media being so mercurial, you will want to maintain that core for your success, regardless of platform.

Hone Your Message

The next step in building your brand is to hone your message. You have about three seconds to grab the attention of someone

on the internet and if they don't understand who you are right away ... they leave.

My content is based around empowerment and advocacy. The large platform I have allows me a real chance to make an impact. The reason I chose this direction is because I legitimately have a passion for it. That's one of the most important parts of messaging. You have to be passionate or you will not repeat your message enough to build an audience around it. Too often I see people chasing trends instead of creating them, or focusing on the money and numbers instead of the impact on their audience. Audiences can sense when you don't truly believe in what you are saying or doing.

Get the Clicks

Once you have built the skills and honed the messaging it's time to figure out how to get the clicks. People will teach you all the tips and tricks—i.e., Instagram posts with more blue in them will garner more likes because people like blue (this actually works)—but the most important thing is to understand that everything you post uses metadata. Metadata is all the keywords people use to find what they are looking for online. Titles and hashtags are examples of metadata. The higher in the online search you are, the better your platform will do. This doesn't mean you should find and use the most popular hashtags or clickbait titles. Just think to yourself, *What are words people would type to find what I am posting about?* What I found works best for getting my brand out there is carving out my own niche



and focusing on expanding slowly and with intention. I use Google AdWords to see the competition for certain search terms and use the less competitive ones. Finding less saturated searches

will give you more views.

One way to make sure that you stay fresh and relevant on the YouTube platform is by evolving your content style with shifts in the platform. YouTube is constantly changing what works and what doesn't, so make sure you don't get left behind. For example, I saw people doing story style content, and the YouTube algorithm was rewarding that. I wanted to make sure my messaging was similar, but packaged in a different way. This is a way of rebranding in the content creation world. I was rewarded for this by having a surge of new followers while maintaining my desire to create positivity on the platform. Keeping your finger on the ever-changing pulse of YouTube is essential for longevity.

All of the tips and tricks and trends can give you success in the short term and can be valuable. However, if you want to last in the industry, your branding and your product should be you. You will be the only constant throughout your journey to building an online brand. If you truly love what you do and stay consistent with your messaging, you will find your audience. **T**

Chris Thompson has 400,000 followers on YouTube and presented at the Toastmasters 2020 Virtual Convention. Follow him on social media, where he goes by “Supdaily,” and watch his 2020 TEDx Talk, “[Influencer is a Verb.](#)”



The Art of Argument

How dueling debaters sharpen speaking skills in a fun, fast-paced activity.

BY GREG GLASGOW

Debates can offer an entertaining variation to the traditional club meeting format, while stressing familiar competencies: logic, quick thinking, vocal variety, and persuasive delivery skills, to name a few.

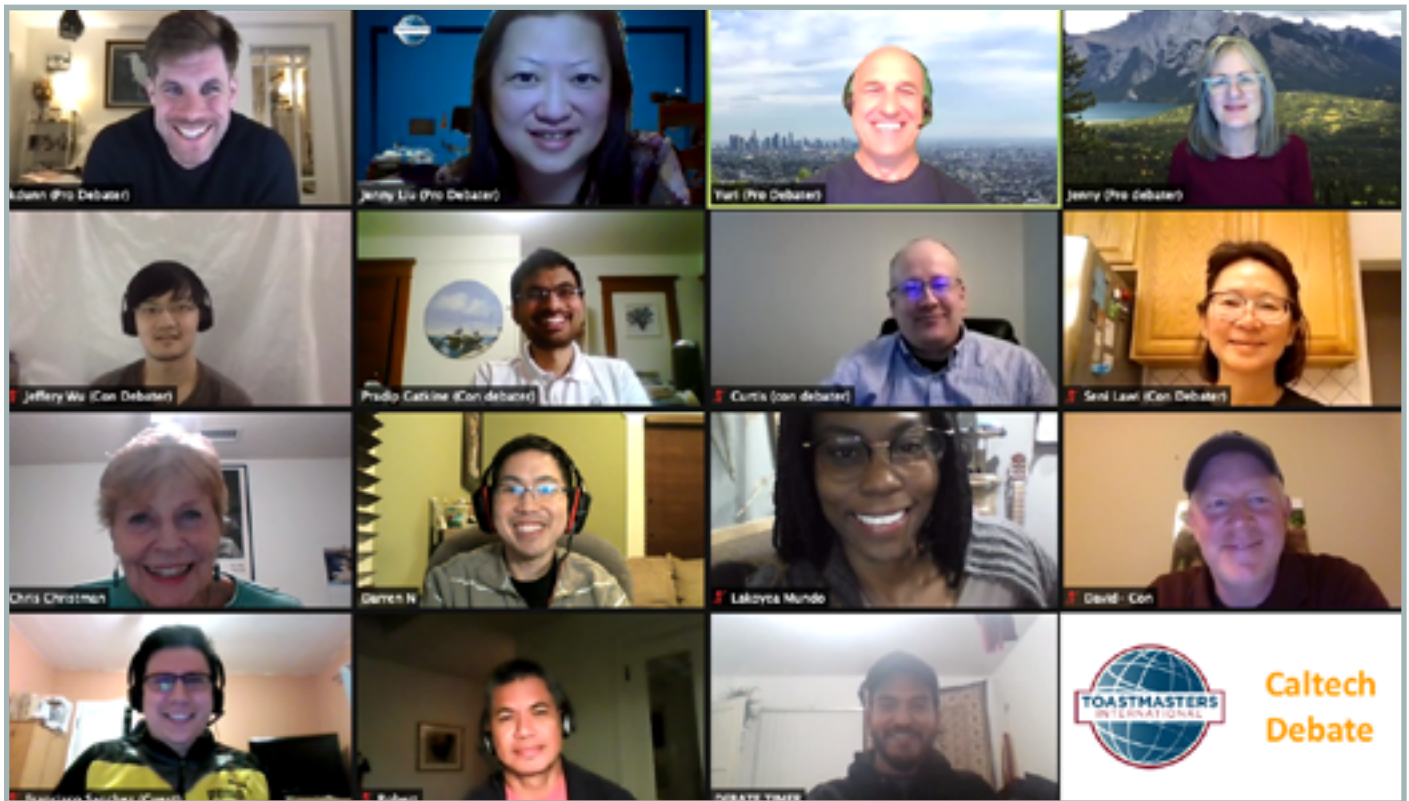
When you think about how much of everyday experience involves debate—from political discussions with friends to analyzing a work project, defending your favorite movie, or even deciding where the family will go out to eat—it only makes sense that improving debate skills can help in nearly every aspect of life.

There are many forms of debate, all of which rely on the ability to craft a concise point and convincingly defend or debunk its merit. In one of debate's most common forms, two teams take turns attacking or defending an issue. It's an intriguing

communicative challenge, which is why a number of Toastmasters clubs have adopted either a full-time or half-time debate meeting format. In fact, the elements of great debates so complement speaking skills that Toastmasters created a [debate manual](#), designed to fit a 35-minute practice in club meetings.

Participants research timely topics, collaborate, and face off against one another in collegial arguments that emphasize friendly, spirited competition.

"It's fun because you're a team going against your opponents," says Darren Ng, Secretary and Vice President Education of Caltech Debate Toastmasters in Pasadena, California. "You're all trying to win, but you're all supportive of each other, regardless. It's different from the traditional Toastmasters meeting, and that brings a lot of value to what our club does. People bond over that shared experience of, 'Let's work together as a team and see if we can convince the audience to see it from our angle.'"



Vice President Education Darren Ng (3rd row, in headset) and his club value debate for the lessons it teaches in thinking about both sides of an issue. It's an important skill to practice in today's often-divided society, he says.

The Caltech club is home to staff and students of the California Institute of Technology, community members, and others who simply love debate, Ng explains. The group devotes one meeting a month to the traditional Pathways curriculum, and a second monthly meeting to debate. By combining the two, members have ample opportunities to learn and practice the kind of speech techniques that apply on the job and in life.

Debate has allowed Ng to enjoy a valuable exchange of dialogue with fellow members and get to know everyone better.

“Your thoughts and perspective are being challenged in real time.”

—PHILIP KAO, DTM

He also uses debating techniques regularly in his work. “As an engineering manager, I need to convince people of my viewpoints and be able to listen to and be swayed by logical and well-constructed arguments from others. Debate helps me on both fronts and allows me to take a level-headed approach to running my team and interacting with other groups,” he explains.

Teamwork and Flexibility

Members of Toastmasters clubs that specialize in debate learn to think on their feet—not just through the longer debates that pit

teams against each other, but also through Table Topics®, which can be held in a debate style.

“The first person picks a side, pro or con, and the second person has to take the opposite side,” Ng says of the way Caltech Debate handles Table Topics. “Even if you don’t agree with the position you’re taking, that’s the choice that’s forced upon you. Being able to debate the other side allows you to really think

DEBATE BY THE BOOK

Stage your debate with expert advice. Check out [The Debate Handbook: A Guide to Competitive Speaking](#),

a step-by-step guide to organizing a 35-minute club debate. Find it in the Toastmasters store, and use it to give your club a taste of artful argument.

Fun fact: The handbook is Item 104, which is how the 104 London Debaters club in England got its name.





Advanced Debaters in New York City happily argued pre-pandemic and continue now on Zoom with global participants. The club often uses the Toastmasters Debate Handbook.

about the other perspective. Especially in today’s society, where we’re very highly divided and politicized, being able to understand the other side, I think, is a valuable skill to have and a valuable thing to actually exercise.”

When it comes to the longer debates, the research time allotted to participants varies. Some clubs choose topics months in advance; others, like the [Tokyo Debate Toastmasters Club](#) in Japan, don’t announce them until right before the meeting. Kazuko Kawauchi, DTM, the club’s Vice President Education, says not everyone has an equal amount of preparation time so the last-minute announcement levels the playing field—and encourages quick thinking.

In these Toastmasters clubs, no matter which side of a debate you end up on, you have to work with your teammates to put together a plan. “It’s really exciting to be working with other people, especially when you have a common goal,” Ng says. “It’s a little bit like team sports, getting that excitement and that rush. That’s fun, and that’s one of the things that really brightens people’s lives, especially in this time.”

Members of debate-focused clubs say they also like the almost-improvisational nature of the format, where approaches and strategies are ever-changing. “Your thoughts and your perspective are being challenged in real time,” says Philip Kao,

DTM, President of Advanced Debaters in New York City. “A lot of Toastmasters is public speaking and giving speeches, but in a debate, we’re being challenged as the debate is going on.”

Mary Johnson, DTM, another Advanced Debater, says she appreciates the opportunity to practice her debate skills—often on controversial topics—in a safe environment. “You know that it won’t get out of hand. It won’t get negative, and people won’t get upset and get mad at each other. We know that it’s a professional atmosphere as well. That’s helpful. It’s comfortable.”

Real-Life Debate

Any Toastmaster will tell you that public speaking skills are helpful in all kinds of real-life situations. Toastmasters who are part of debate-style clubs say the skills they gain in debating teaches them to think and respond quickly in unexpected situations.

“I hear professionals say that they’re totally fine going to a conference and giving a presentation, but they dread the Q&A afterward because that part is unscripted,” says Paul Carroll, DTM, Treasurer of [104 London Debaters](#) in England. “Debate helps you prepare for that.”

“In a debate, the two skills you learn quickly are listening and patience.”

—RORY MOORE

It helps in other work situations as well, Carroll says, whether it’s defending a new project or initiative, running a meeting among different departments, or mediating a dispute.

“People say they can defend themselves, or they can make a better case for their project using debate skills,” he says. Another benefit is the ability to “spot bad logic, logical fallacies, and bad reasoning, and call those out.”

Rory Moore, another member of Advanced Debaters, adds that debate relies on sharp listening skills and the calmness to wait and hear the other side of an issue. “In a debate, the two skills you learn quickly are listening and patience,” Moore says. “You may ask the other person a question, or challenge them, and

CHAOS IN THE COURTROOM

Debate techniques, staged in a variety of ways, can undoubtedly spice up club meetings. The drama really ratchets up when you turn a debate into an event that includes a murder trial, dueling barristers, and Toastmasters International President “Sir” Richard E. Peck, DTM, as a global expert on bioweapons and a character witness for the defense.

That is the plot of “Chaos in the Courtroom,” an online mock murder trial staged by [Hamwic Speakers](#), a Toastmasters club in Southampton, England, and 10 other clubs. The event earned the rapt attention of more than 130 Toastmasters from 25 countries who packed the court gallery.

It was a tough communications challenge. The prosecution and defense faced off in timed segments, with realistic rulings from the judge. The two sides had seconds to defend and counter, which made every word important. Speakers had to stay calm and focused because the arc of the case could turn at any moment.

Club member Ben Jones created the three-act play to challenge club speakers and push them to their limits, which they rose to with tongue-in-cheek gusto. What better way for Toastmasters to immerse themselves in hands-on skills practice than to act them out in an exciting story?

The event was a case study in applying Toastmasters skills, says Club President Guy McNair-Wilson. It included “the DNA of



Toastmasters, and incorporated the core elements of a standard meeting, prepared speeches, evaluations, and impromptu speaking.”

Act 3 closed on a familiar note: an evaluation by the judge. Then the audience voted on guilty or innocent, best speaker, and best performer.

“Chaos” was born when McNair-Wilson challenged his club to create a meeting that would re-ignite the interest that had been dwindling due to online meeting fatigue. The event gave everyone a role, including creating super-charged publicity for the mock trial.

“A project of this scale requires passion and determination, so before you start, have a good reason to pursue it,” Jones says. Hamwic members are already saying, “Let’s do another one!”

What happened? [Watch the trial](#) and find out!

Jack Irwin is Vice President Public Relations for Hamwic Speakers.

you have to have the patience to let them answer the question. The first thing you do is listen very closely and wait. They might not be as fast or as good as you are at debating, but you have to give them that patience so they can express themselves.”

Visiting Hours

For Toastmasters interested in checking out a debate-focused club, there’s never been a better time than now, since the majority of clubs now meet online due to the pandemic. The Tokyo Debate Toastmasters Club has welcomed members from the Philippines, the United States, and elsewhere, while Advanced Debaters in New York has expanded its membership to other states, and even Australia. Recently, two United Kingdom clubs, [Manchester Communicators](#) and [Digital Communicators](#), hosted a free virtual workshop and real-time debate.

“Now, besides attending your own club in the virtual space, you can go visit other clubs just to say hi to people and see how people do things,” Ng says. “It’s a great way for keeping in touch

with folks and to actually explore other clubs and what they have to offer and what you can bring to your own club.”

Give It a Try

Debate-style clubs encourage other Toastmasters groups to explore the format, even if just for one meeting as a fun activity that’s a break from the norm. Ng suggests trying out debate-style Table Topics for starters, “and if you really like that and think it’s fun, go ahead and set a special event, a special night for your club to actually have a debate. Perhaps get in touch with one of the debate clubs or take a look online to see how they’re run in high school and college and use those rules.”

Chances are, Ng says, members will enjoy the experience. “Having these debates on relevant, sometimes politically charged topics allows us to get to know each other better and actually learn a little bit more about the topic at hand, while having fun doing so.”

Greg Glasgow is a Denver-based freelance writer and frequent contributor to the Toastmaster magazine.

Successful Leadership = Engaged Membership

6 ways leaders can create a peak club experience for members.

BY RUBY NEWELL-LEGNER

Leadership is in the details. It's about delegating tasks to your team; it's about looking at logistical questions; it's about making a commitment to fulfilling the needs of the people you serve. When it comes to Toastmasters, good leadership results in an engaging member experience.

I've experienced both the good and the bad of leadership. Not long ago, I was hired to speak at an association meeting. Before the meeting, I reached out to the president with some logistical questions. Would there be a dinner afterward? Should I send my slide deck to somebody? The group president always answered with the same refrain: "I'll take care of that!"

The day of the meeting she ran around setting up the registration table, helping members sign in, handing out badges, greeting everybody, and trying to cover audiovisual issues. At first, I thought that it was just a small organization and she had to wear many hats, but as I met more people on her team, I realized that wasn't the case.

This leader hadn't learned to delegate, nor had she learned the fundamental lesson of building community, no matter how big or small. Leadership is not about doing everything; it's about involving your team in the process.

Members of your club want to help; leaders want to contribute. In the case of the association I was visiting, because everything had to be done by the group president—the way she wanted it done—

the needs and expectations of the attendees and presenters weren't met. It did not seem like a great experience—for anybody.

Leadership is not about doing everything; it's about involving your team in the process.

I have coached and trained all kinds of organizations around the world to help them design their customers' experiences. The best ones make every constituent experience engaging. How? I've learned there are six universal elements that help leaders engage guests, grow the loyalty of members, and develop brand recognition.

1 Respect

Respect for members seems like an obvious choice when talking about creating an engaging experience. It's one of the four Toastmasters International core values, along with integrity, service, and excellence. Certain factors are universal—like being courteous and listening attentively—but respect is also personal. How you show respect for members and guests requires careful consideration about the type of experience you want to deliver.

I surveyed some Toastmasters recently about their best and not-so-best experiences. The less-than-positive responses were often about respect: Meetings started

late; members didn't feel welcomed; they didn't feel heard. Take the time to learn what matters to your club members—why they show up, what they want the experience to be like—and use that knowledge to show understanding and respect for their expectations. Toastmasters has many resources to help with this—the [Member Interest Survey](#), the [New Member Profile Sheet](#), the [Club Quality Checklist](#), and the [Moments of Truth](#) module in the [Successful Club Series](#).

2 Develop

When it comes to creating engaging meetings, club leaders would be wise to focus primarily on two elements of development: club culture and the meeting process.

Toastmasters meetings follow the same guidelines, but not all club meetings are the same, nor are the experiences of members and guests. What kind of personality does your club have? Are you formal? Are you casual and relaxed? Is there a wide range of ages and professions? Every club has a unique flavor, which is why Toastmasters encourages people to visit clubs until they find one that resonates with them.

Examine how your meetings are run. Walk through the experience of a typical meeting—from the attendee's perspective—step-by-step, paying attention to the details and the transitions. Are guests greeted and introduced? Do some members always speak, while some never



Influence

Successful leaders positively influence people and outcomes by creating an environment of opportunity, continual improvement, communication, and service. Use your influence to do the same in your club.

Take the time to learn what matters to people in your club.

How well are you delegating to help build the leadership skills of other officers? What can you do to help other officers play their vital role in creating engaging meetings? No matter what club role you play, all officers are responsible for respecting, developing, connecting, communicating, and acknowledging.

How do you encourage members to support each other and encourage them to grow? One good way is through mentorship. As a leader, try to team up more experienced members with newer Toastmasters whom they can guide and support. When you help members grow, you build a community that is more engaging, something that will permeate every meeting. Promote a united approach to engagement, and you will create evangelists for your club.

A quality experience is part of your brand, and your reputation for delivering it is built in every meeting. Invite your members to help create it with you, for themselves and their fellow members and guests, and you will create a new level of enthusiasm in your club. **T**

Editor's Note: Watch Ruby Newell-Legner presenting on this topic at the 2019 Toastmasters International Convention.

Ruby Newell-Legner is a Certified Speaking Professional, a Certified Virtual Presenter, and past president of the National Speakers Association. She specializes in enhancing the fan experience for 66 professional sports teams and 1,692 leisure and entertainment venues. Learn more at www.7StarService.com.

open up? Do meetings begin and end on time? By understanding the culture of your club and the process of your meetings, you can cultivate an engaging experience for everyone.

Connect

As a club leader, fostering a friendly and welcoming atmosphere is how you create community and grow your membership. But real connection takes focus and effort.

Some clubs assign a greeter for every meeting. Some create a buddy system, pairing new members or guests with established members to help them feel comfortable and connected at meetings.

Connection is also a personal objective. Leaders might feel so busy during meetings that their interactions with members become superficial. Sometimes they aren't entirely present in conversations. Before the meeting, set an intention to focus on each person you talk with, shutting out all of the distractions and building a true connection.

Communicate

Improving communication is the only issue identified by every one of the organizations I've worked with over the years. Every single one. They know that great communication is the foundation of every success story.

Toastmasters is built on the goal of better communication. That includes

communication with potential members as well as current members or guests. Make sure to follow up with people who have expressed an interest in joining or want more information.

Communicating with all members and guests—new and established—before, during, and after a meeting is one of the essentials of engagement. Timely information helps everyone feel confident and included. Do new members or guests know what to do after a meeting? Make sure they have information on how to join and who to reach out to with questions.

Acknowledge

Everyone likes to feel that their contributions are seen and matter. Toastmasters rewards members with ribbons, pins, and Pathways badges, but as a leader, you can personally acknowledge the contributions of any member or officer. When you acknowledge accomplishment, you also support engagement.

Do you take the time to say a few words to members who offer valuable feedback about club operations? How about members who take the time to make a new member feel welcome? How about an officer who goes above and beyond to help a meeting run smoothly? Everyone contributes to an engaging meeting in their own way and acknowledging that helps ensure it happens again.

Interruption Reduction

Be respectful, clear, and firm in resolving meeting disruptions.

BY CRAIG HARRISON, DTM

We've all experienced meetings that were electric, magical, and memorable. Then, there are those that feel fragmented, frustrating, and unfulfilling.

In deconstructing many "meeting fails," I've found needless interruptions and distractions can quickly derail meeting quality. Of course, some interruptions are necessary, even critical. Think fire, flood, or a club member experiencing an emergency health issue. There may also be legitimate meeting "timeouts" to adjust the agenda, curtail a speaker who has exceeded a time limit, or to correct misinformation.

However, unnecessary interruptions distract speakers, interfere with meeting flow, turn listeners off, waste time, and stifle a meeting's overall energy and impact. And if Toastmasters, who understand what a quality meeting *should* be like feel that way, imagine the impression guests take home from an unorganized, nonproductive meeting.

As the saying goes, "If something can go wrong, it will," so don't let disruptions rattle you. Handle them with calm confidence, civility, and firmness, and your members and guests will both enjoy a seamless, high-quality group experience.

Tactics to Stay on Track

Luckily, many online or in-person meeting interruptions can be avoided or minimized through careful planning and sticking to accepted meeting rules of order.

Time spent before the gavel drops also allows those with meeting roles to review the agenda timing and responsibilities,

confirm handoffs, and troubleshoot technology and other logistics that could create disruptions during a meeting.

Given that interruptions are disruptive, we must always ask if the end justifies the means.

Many clubs establish "standing rules" to address issues like punctuality, politeness, and sharing the floor. Toastmasters subscribes to the traditional parliamentary principle that allows only one speaker at a time. Reminding members of this rule, in writing or aloud at the start of a meeting, keeps it foremost in everyone's mind. These behaviors become an integral part of club culture, and are appreciated by members and guests alike.

Make sure the timer of the meeting has a timing tool. Online meeting timekeepers often use green-, yellow-, and red-colored

backgrounds to alert presenters of elapsed time. Include the name of the color in writing, for those with color blindness. This non-verbal technique alerts speakers when their time is waning or lapsed.

Here's another tip to help your meetings run smoothly. For the time being, the majority of Toastmasters are meeting online; others are using the hybrid format. Many are joining from a variety of electronic devices and platforms, while others are coming to meetings using special equipment for their visual or hearing-impaired needs. Naturally, such a mix of methods can bring accessibility questions from attendees, often during the meeting. Make sure all attendees can hear, see, and participate fully in the meeting (preferably before it starts), regardless of location, circumstance, or ability. The *Toastmaster* magazine outlines some additional ideas on how to [make meetings inclusive](#) and accessible.

Given that interruptions are disruptive, we must always ask if the end justifies the means. For example, should you handle a meeting glitch on the spot? Could you set the issue aside and address it at a later point during or after the meeting?

Next, who is responsible for managing the interruption? Club officers and meeting role holders help ensure club meetings are timely and consistent in format. In most cases, the person in charge of the meeting at the time of an interruption is the one to intercede,

ONLINE MANNERS MATTER

There is a whole new level of propriety with online meetings, due to technology quirks and the fact the online experience is still new to many people. Use [these tips](#) to set online decorum ahead of time and maintain orderly meetings.

if necessary. It could be the Toastmaster of the Day, the Table Topicsmaster, the General Evaluator, or another person.

What to Say?

The best interruptions, whether questions or statements, are short, direct, and polite. Whether prefaced by a raised hand at an in-person meeting or a raised hand symbol in your online meeting platform, consider the following phraseology:

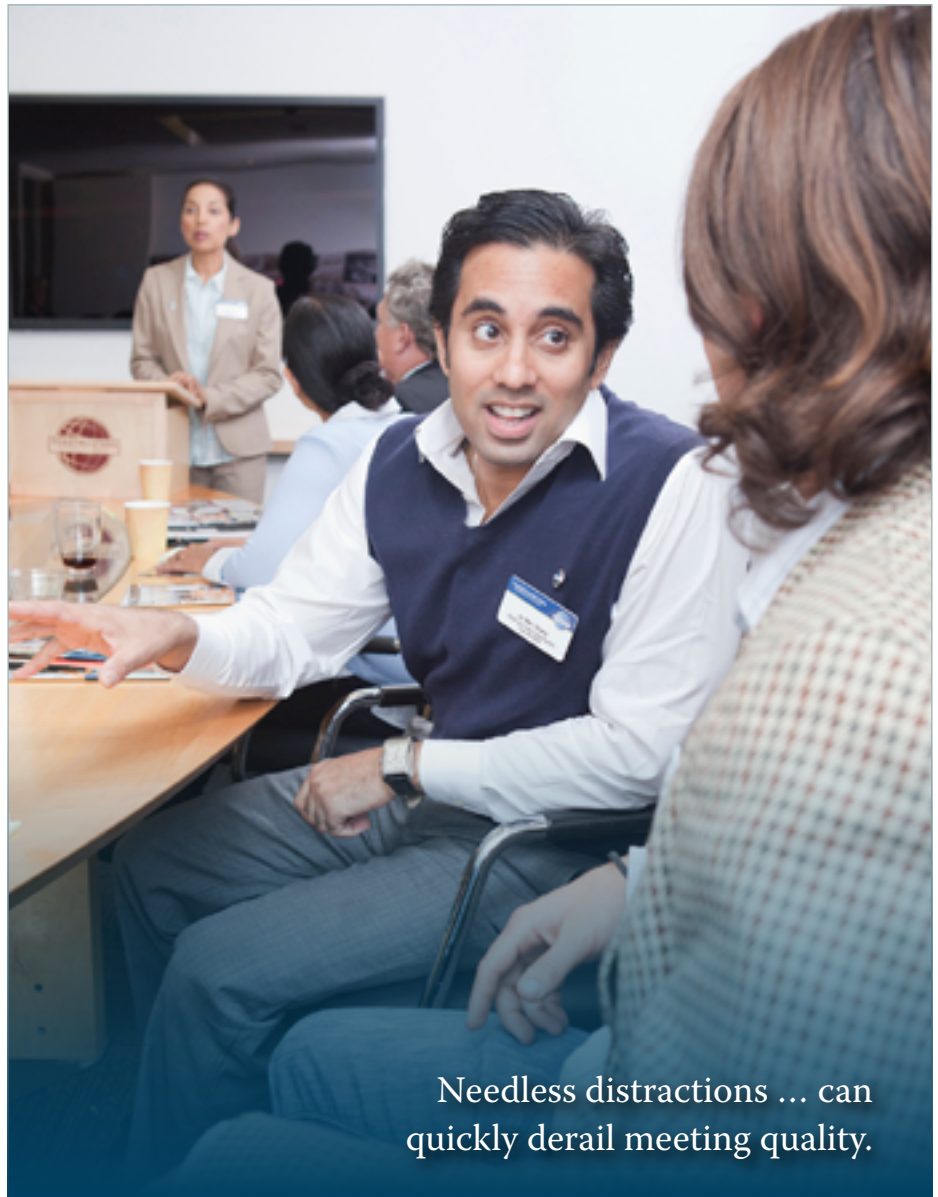
- ▶ Pardon the interruption ...
- ▶ If I might interject ...
- ▶ I'm not familiar with this (word/example, etc.); could you please explain what this means?
- ▶ For the benefit of our newcomers and guests ...
- ▶ To amplify what was just said ...
- ▶ With your permission, I'd like to clarify ...
- ▶ Due to the time, Mr. Toastmaster, might I suggest ...

When speakers are running over time, smile and say firmly:

- ▶ I see we're out of time. In the interest of time ...
- ▶ And in conclusion/summation ...
- ▶ With time running short, let's all give a round of applause to our speaker! (lead applause)
- ▶ We look forward to hearing the rest of your story at a future date.
- ▶ With a full agenda ahead of us, we need to stop here. Thank you! (lead applause)
- ▶ Given our tight schedule we'll need to stop here. Please join me in applauding (speaker's name).
- ▶ We see your time has run out. Thank you for yielding control back to (Toastmaster, Topicsmaster, next speaker, etc.)

Use a calm, firm voice to intercede in a disagreement between members:

- ▶ I respectfully suggest you table your discussion until *after* the meeting. Thank you for continuing your discussion outside of our official meeting.



Needless distractions ... can quickly derail meeting quality.

- ▶ Let's refer this to committee for further discussion between meetings.
- ▶ Recognizing the passion you each have around this issue, let's schedule a special time to resume this discussion in a facilitated session.
- ▶ This issue deserves more time than we can allot to it today. Let's schedule a time to revisit this issue when we can hear from all the parties. Please report back your progress/decision at our next meeting.

The ability to manage unforeseen meeting distractions politely yet firmly matters, especially when there are many speakers, a full agenda, and a passionate exchange of ideas. When handled effectively, everyone wins. **T**

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.

Negative or Affirmative?

Debate proposition: Should a 14-year-old get a tattoo?
Affirmative: Yes. Negative: No.
Judge: Good luck.

BY JOHN CADLEY



I wish I had joined the debate team in high school. My reason for not doing so was the reason you don't do anything in high school: It was Not Cool. I feared if I joined the debate team I would be put in the same class of losers as honor students, valedictorians, and student body presidents, not to mention the most scorned group of all adolescent pariahs—the chess club. I was convinced that over the door of their meeting place was a sign: *Abandon Hope of Ever Being Cool, All Ye Who Enter Here.*

No, I simply couldn't sink that low. Instead, I set about meeting all the requirements for membership in The Cool: bad grades, disappointed parents, class clowning, detention, familiarity with law enforcement, and at least one girlfriend with a juvenile criminal record.

The first time I truly regretted that decision was when my then-14-year-old son wanted to get a tattoo. Being underage, he needed my consent, which I was not about to give. There followed an ongoing debate in which he stunned me with a degree of knowledge, reasoning, and persuasive argument I did not know he possessed. You must understand, this was a high school student who didn't know who won World War II (*I don't know—Hawaii?*). Yet here he was, presenting well-thought-out rationales that included references to America's Bill of Rights (apparently "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" includes psychedelic body art), citations of various legal precedents concerning the emancipation of minors, and a deep dive into clinical dermatology supported by the requirements for safe body inking as stipulated in New York State Article 4-B: Regulations for

Body Piercing and Tattooing. I almost gave him permission just for doing the work. But I didn't. I said "No," and when he asked, "Why?" I won a resounding victory with the masterful rebuttal: "Because I said so."

Only I didn't win and we both knew it. He clobbered me, and I resolved that the next time we had such an encounter, I would be prepared. Consulting a website on debating, I learned that "a good debater never deviates from the topic. He or she knows the topic thoroughly and has the ability to clearly place points and express everything" (from one Renata Gready). This differed from my experience of American presidential debates, in which a good debater never addresses the topic, knows zero about the subject, misses the point entirely, and expresses clearly absolutely nothing. I then tried to study the famous Abraham Lincoln–Stephen Douglas debates of 1858, until I realized there were seven of them, with a one-hour opener and 90-minute rebuttal for each man. This would not do for a person who lacks the patience to read the washing instructions on a cotton shirt.

I won a resounding victory with the masterful rebuttal: "Because I said so."

To streamline the process, I went right to a site called [Rules of Debate](#), learning that one of the most common formats pits two teams, each consisting of two or three people, against each other. The Affirmative side must defend a given proposition and the Negative must attack it—sort of like a

husband and wife deciding how to spend money. In either case, "he or she who asserts must prove"—i.e., any statement must be supported with "enough evidence and logic to convince an intelligent but previously uninformed person that it is more reasonable to believe the assertion than to disbelieve it." No doubt this works under controlled conditions, but in the wider world, evidence and logic have proven to be less than effective in convincing anybody of anything. In fact, exhaustive scientific research concludes that of the 7.7 billion people currently inhabiting planet Earth, evidence and logic have caused no more than 42 of them to admit they were wrong, possibly fewer given the statistical margin for error.

During the questioning period, "the questioner may ask any fair, clear question that has a direct bearing on the debate," thus preventing a male questioner from asking his female opponent, "What are you doing after the final rebuttal?" Furthermore, the person being questioned must answer with no help from his or her colleagues, so you can't say, "Let me get back to you on that."

Finally, there is a judge to decide the winner. There is no judge in real life. There are 7.7 billion judges and 7.7 billion winners, minus 42.

My son has a tattoo now, of course. Oddly enough, so do I. He persuaded me. Talk about losing a debate. ■

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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Online Course

Take our online course to learn the strategies that will help make your book a best seller. For each strategy, a detailed audio and/or video explanation of the idea is included.




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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