

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | OCTOBER 2021

# TOASTMASTER®

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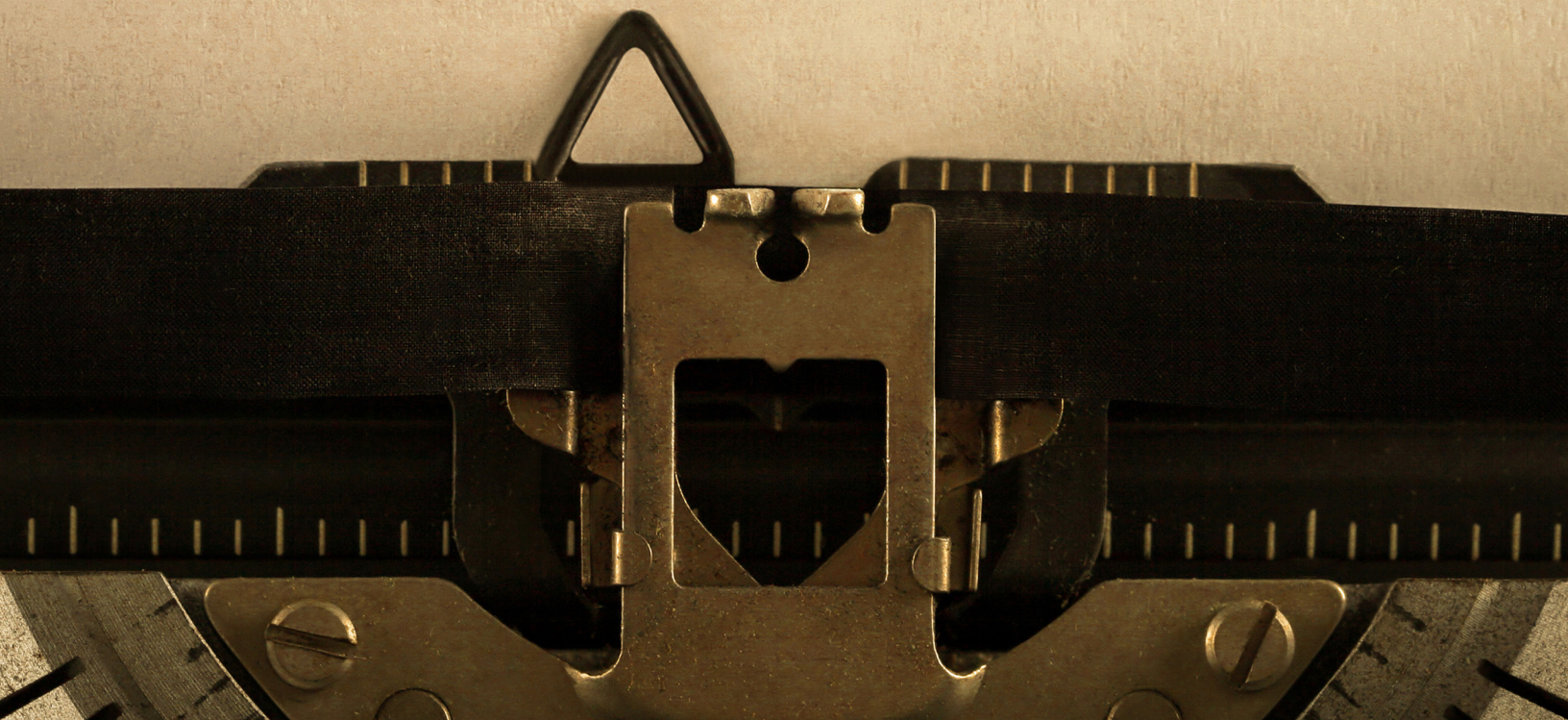
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## Toastmasters International Mission:

We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.



## WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

[www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org)

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# The Gift of Character

**H**appy Toastmasters 97th Year Anniversary Day! October 22 will be a Day of Celebration, a time to applaud our successes and reflect on lessons learned.

Most of us came to Toastmasters to hone our communication skills. Somewhere along the way, however, we began developing our leadership skills as well. Joining our organization has certainly taken me on a leadership journey I never anticipated—and like many of you, I'm grateful for the gift of that learning.

As I reflect on this Day of Celebration, I'm also grateful for a gift that might not express itself in the form of a Pathways project or level completion or show up on our [Features, Benefits, and Value chart](#). The gift is a quiet presence, but it sparkles and shines when I look at members in our clubs, or at our Districts, the Board, or the staff at World Headquarters.

The gift of character.

Psychologist and thought leader Adam Grant recently said, "Personality is how you respond on a typical day. Character is how you show up on your worst day."

## Toastmasters is an organization of character because it is made up of people like you.

Over the past year or two, we've had plenty of opportunities to show up on our worst days. Those moments may not have felt like gifts at the time, yet they were forging character just the same. We found ways to connect when we weren't able to meet in person. We encouraged each other to reach for greater heights. We took on new Pathways projects, started new clubs, and showed up despite our collective loss and grief.

Toastmasters is an organization of character because it is made up of people like you.

As we prepare to greet the future, we might yet encounter more challenges that escape our best-laid plans. But we can take comfort in the fact that we have already proven ourselves. We know now that we can tackle the strong headwinds and rogue waves of uncertainty.

And if we ever feel lost in the process, we know we have our navigation system—our organization's four core values. All we need to do is ask:

- ▶ Am I acting with integrity?
- ▶ Am I treating others with respect?
- ▶ Are my actions helping, or supporting, my fellow members?
- ▶ Am I committing to excellence today?

If we do these things we will arrive safely at our destination. And, best of all, we'll know we did so and received the gift of character.

**Margaret Page, DTM**  
International President



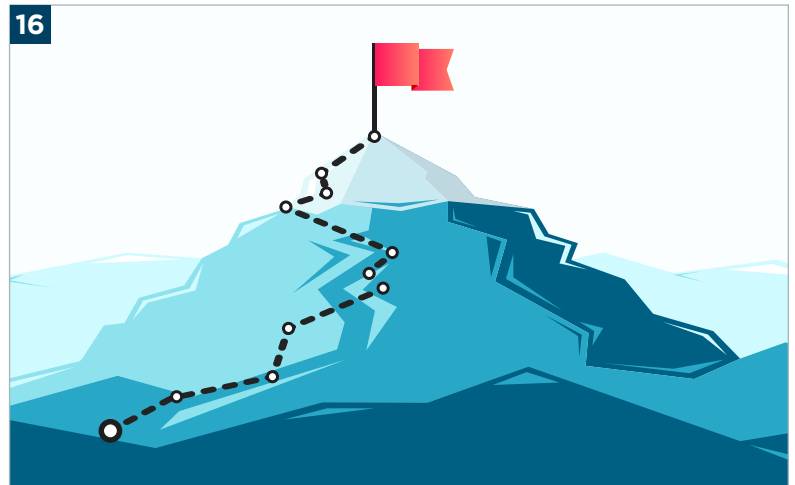
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## ▶ TOASTMASTERS NEWS

# Day of Celebration

Gather with fellow members on October 22 to honor your accomplishments.

BY LAURA MISHKIND

Throughout the year, we have many Toastmasters milestones—officer elections, the changing of the program year, the International Convention, District Leader Training, and more. With so much business to tend to, members might miss out on opportunities for celebration. After more than a year of challenges brought on by the global pandemic, take a day to step back and applaud one another for all of the hard work. And what better day to celebrate than October 22—Toastmasters International's 97th anniversary!

Ready for a new challenge? Want to have some fun? On October 22, or anytime throughout the month, set up a fun club meeting or gathering with a few members to honor the organization's anniversary and your outstanding accomplishments over the past year. Call it a Day of Celebration! Commemorate the camaraderie and connections you maintained and strengthened, or take the opportunity to reach out to a member you'd like to connect with more often. Plan how you and your club are going to build back stronger in the 2021–2022 program year—and then tell us about it. Send photos of your gathering to [photos@toastmasters.org](mailto:photos@toastmasters.org) and post them

on social media using #CelebrateTI and #TalkingToastmasters.

Need some inspiration for hosting your fellow Toastmasters? Here's a list of ideas from the Magazine Team:

- ▶ Go out to dinner at a new or favorite restaurant.
- ▶ Go on a hike.
- ▶ Send a message to a member who moved to a different city.
- ▶ Bring back the online happy hour.
- ▶ Cook dinner for fellow club members.
- ▶ Picnic in the park.
- ▶ Visit a museum.
- ▶ Host a potluck in your backyard.
- ▶ Go on a walk.
- ▶ Host a creatively [themed meeting](#).
- ▶ Get coffee with your mentor/mentee.
- ▶ [Step back in time](#) with *Toastmaster* magazine issues from 1930 to 2011.
- ▶ Test everyone's knowledge of Toastmasters history [with a quiz](#).

Make your celebration as complex or simple as you want. Get together with one member, a small group, or your entire club. It's up to you! **T**

**Laura Mishkind** is assistant editor for the *Toastmaster magazine*.

## SEARCH FOR THE HIDDEN SMEDLEY



In this month's *Toastmaster online edition*, take part in a special scavenger hunt! Look for this photo of Toastmasters International founder Dr. Ralph C. Smedley—his image will be hidden inside one of the articles, so make sure to click around to read them all! Once you've spotted him, let us know on our social media channels using #TalkingToastmasters.

► CULTURAL DIVERSITY

# Show Us Your Culture!



Members from India share stories and photos that represent their cultural diversity.

## Akshita A. Salecha

*Bengaluru, Karnataka, India*

**Republic of Toastmasters**

Being an Indian means cultural diversity. It comes naturally to us, and we at Republic of Toastmasters never miss out on an opportunity to celebrate and transfer this diversity to everyone who visits.



It comes to light during festivals as we all come together to celebrate with the same energy and enthusiasm. Be it dressing up and distributing sweets for Diwali or decorating the tree during Christmas. This is what keeps us rooted together, thus we call ourselves a diverse Indian family!

## Sukanya Suresh

*Palakkad, Kerala, India*

**Capgemini Toastmasters Club**

India is a land of vibrant colors, breathtaking landscapes, amazing architectural styles, amalgamation of spirituality, beautiful languages, and ethnic dress. Each state in India has its own culture and traditions. Indian mountains speak a lot of its culture. Folk dance and folk songs still exist. Yoga gives us peace of mind and Ayurveda [an alternative medicine system] for well-being. The remarkable country offers a wide range of feasts, and our cultural diversity makes India unique.



## Aditya Saxena, DTM

*Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India*

**Kolhapur Toastmasters Club**

I attended a wedding ceremony for my cousin in my native home of New Delhi, India, and took some photos of this beautiful milestone. This photo depicts the “Varmala,” a ceremony wherein the bride and the groom exchange garlands made of pious and fresh flowers. It symbolizes the acceptance of each other for the life ahead.



## Sachin Thakar, DTM

*Al Azaiba, Oman*

**Excel Oman Toastmasters**

I am Indian-born and was brought up in Maharashtra. I’m natively called “Marathi,” but am a die-hard Hindi language lover. I’ve traveled for work and social networking across the Indian states from north to south of length and breadth of India. In the photo I am holding a typical Maharashtrian (Indian) snack prepared by Marathi people. This is made with beaten rice as the main ingredient, mixed with peanuts, chopped onion, garlic pieces, pickle, oil, a pinch of salt, and garnished with coriander leaves. The Indian name is “Poha” or “Kaccha Poha” (raw one).



**SHOW US YOUR CULTURE!** Tell a short story and include a photo to help others get to know your country and its cultural diversity. Email [magazine@toastmasters.org](mailto:magazine@toastmasters.org) for an opportunity to be featured in the *Toastmaster* magazine.

## ▶ SNAPSHOT



Toastmasters Szczecin of Szczecin, Poland, pause during a meeting to take a photo from a new perspective. Club members say they are proud of all they've accomplished in the past year and look forward to the new opportunities to come!

## ▶ TOASTMASTERS NEWS

**Need Some Help?** – Have you tried the self-help widget on the [Toastmasters International website](#)? It will display as a pop-up on the bottom right-hand corner of your screen when you visit the website. Simply type your question in the search bar to access helpful answers within our knowledge base (English text only). This tool is intended to direct you to an answer that may address your question. Any questions you type are not directly answered by a representative. For better results, type more than one word, or type a full question. If you do not find a match, try phrasing your question differently.

If you still can't find what you need, you can reach out to a representative by email at [membership@toastmasters.org](mailto:membership@toastmasters.org) or by calling +1 720-439-5050 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Mountain Time, Monday through Friday.

**Set New Members up for Success** – Keep your new members engaged by using the [New Member Orientation PowerPoint](#). This resource will allow a club officer or mentor to introduce

Toastmasters International and the Toastmasters Pathways learning experience to new club members while setting them up for success.

**Looking for an Event Speaker?** – If you have a club or District event coming up, keep in mind that there are resources to support you in finding a quality event speaker. [Review a list](#) of Toastmasters members who have earned the Accredited Speaker designation. You could also consider supporting the [Rotary/Toastmasters alliance](#) by inviting a local Rotarian as a guest speaker.

**Toastmaster Online Magazine** — Check out the [October online edition](#) for exclusive features! This month, Toastmasters International is celebrating its 97th anniversary—read how you can commemorate the occasion with your club and test your Toastmasters knowledge [with a quiz](#). Or catch a podcast with the 2021 World Champion of Public Speaking and watch them on the virtual stage. You can also find additional video tips on how to get to the point of your speech.

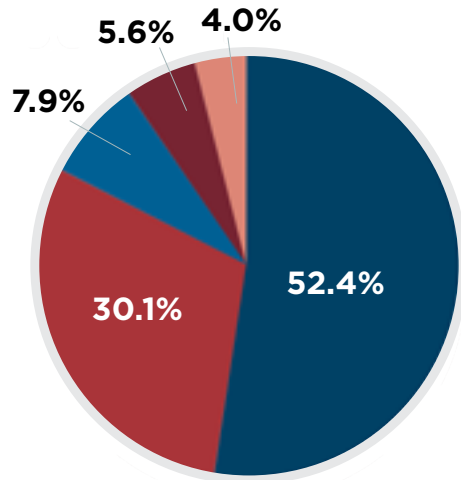
# The Numbers Are In!

The international aspect of our community has never been stronger, which is evident by this year's statistical snapshot. This report is based on the latest demographic survey, covering July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021.

## MEMBERS

**>300,000**  
MEMBERS\*

**>104,300**  
NEW MEMBERS



### Where They Live:

- Americas
- Asia
- Europe
- Oceania
- Africa

**69.8%**  
have become  
more confident  
and effective  
speakers

### Age:

**46.2**

Average  
Age

### Education:

**10.4%**

are  
Students

**78.1%**

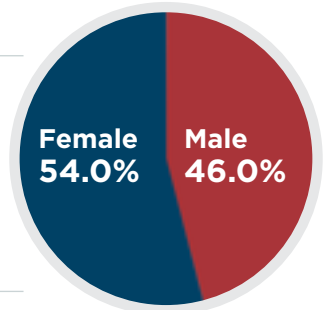
Bachelor's  
Degree or  
Higher

### Language:

**56.6%**

are  
Multilingual

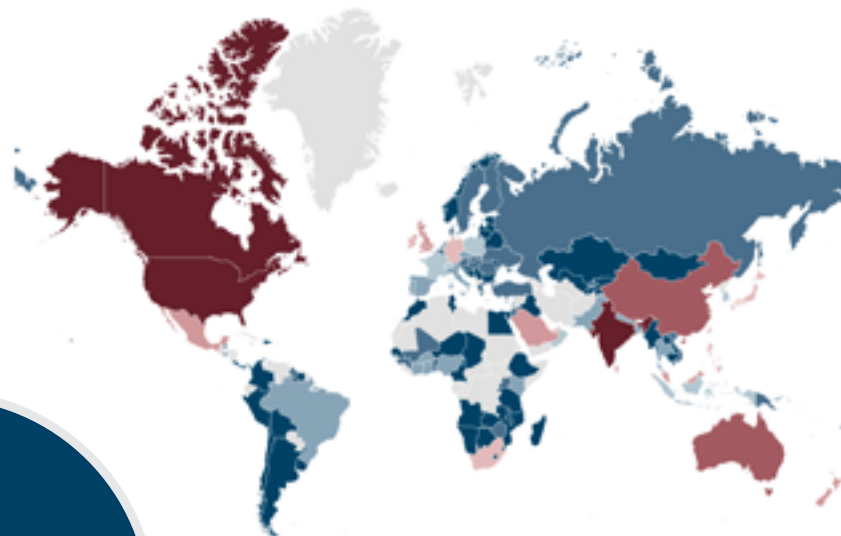
### Gender:



## CLUBS

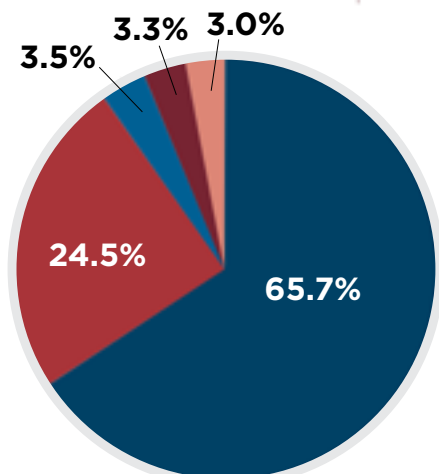
**149**  
COUNTRIES

**>15,800**  
CLUBS



### Total Clubs:

- 1 to 10
- 11 to 25
- 26 to 50
- 51 to 100
- 101 to 250
- 251 to 500
- 501 to 1000
- 1001 or more
- None



### Club Type:

- Community
- Company
- Government
- College
- Other

### Recognition:

- President's **>4,700**
- Select **>1,100**
- Distinguished **>1,200**

**45.0%**  
ACHIEVED  
DISTINGUISHED



## TRAVELING TOASTMASTER



**SEND YOUR TRAVELING TOASTMASTER PHOTOS** to [photos@toastmasters.org](mailto:photos@toastmasters.org). Show us a new hobby you learned during quarantine or where you're taking your digital *Toastmaster* these days. We want to see your photos and share them with other readers!



**1 | DECCAN TOASTMASTERS CLUB** in Pune, Maharashtra, India, hosts its first in-person meeting in March 2021.

**2 | GAGAN KUMAR MOGILINENI** of Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh, India, rides a camel in the Rajasthan state area of the Thar Desert, also known as the Great Indian Desert.

**3 | OREN LEE PETERS** of Edmond, Oklahoma, shows off his collection of Toastmaster magazines.

**4 | DEEPA VENKAT, DTM,** of Frisco, Texas, shows her Toastmasters pride while staying dry at the Buckingham Fountain in the center of Grant Park in Chicago, Illinois.



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

# Pitch Perfect

Toastmasters helped me turn the page on fear and successfully market my first thriller to a literary agent.

BY KRISTA WELLS, PH.D.

**W**hen I co-authored my first fiction thriller with my friend Nicole Moleti, fellow authors told us, “Great, now you’ll need to pitch an agent.” My insides froze. Sure, I had the book’s pitch written on a piece of paper, but saying it out loud? That felt scary.

Yet I refused to let this fear engulf me and instead tapped into a similar feeling I’d worked through when attending my first Toastmasters meeting. If I could overcome the fear I felt that day, I could overcome the fear of making a live pitch to a literary agent.

In 2014, I was practically shaking when Jane Phillion, DTM, welcomed me to West Hartford (Connecticut) Toastmasters Club. She said I could observe rather than speak and I was pleasantly surprised when later she asked only, “How did you enjoy the meeting?”

I breathed a sigh of relief and learned a great lesson. Just show up afraid; you’ll get through it.

I joined the club and after 10 speeches, my voice was less shaky, my posture more poised, and my “ahs” and “ums” were under control. I learned not to memorize and deliver a speech like a robot. I also learned that practice makes progress.

I let my membership lapse several years ago, but recently started attending the West Hartford club again as a guest, to prepare for that literary pitch at a writers’ conference in New York City. Then came the pandemic; I continued as a club guest through many Zoom meetings.

Finally, armed with new and refreshed presentation skills, Nicole and I began to perfect our book pitch. Our first run was so unnatural we ended up in tears of laughter, but it got a little easier each time.



Co-authors Krista Wells (left) and Nicole Moleti

We gave each other constructive feedback. We videotaped ourselves delivering the pitch and worked to keep it under the allotted time, as one would with a club speech.

On the train to New York City, we even tried our book pitch on a fellow passenger, a middle-aged man in a baseball cap, traveling with his son. He was intrigued, and a good sport. However, when we got to New York, I froze.

**I learned a great lesson.  
Just show up afraid;  
you’ll get through it.**

Mark Sullivan, a published author who had already been through this process, led us through a practice pitch session. That was fortunate, since I messed up my first line due to nerves.

However, his feedback reminded me of a seasoned Toastmaster delivering a top-notch speech evaluation. He had us rearrange the pitch structure, suggesting we lead with a quote about the \$36 billion infertility industry, which is a big part of

the book’s theme. He suggested a new, more compelling title. Our favorite tip was his advice to “relax and start over,” which left us both laughing in nervous relief. We were back on our feet and I was again reminded of the power of the Toastmasters’ process. Another author introduced us to the literary agent we’d be pitching before the actual presentation—it was just like experiencing a great speech introduction at a club meeting.

When the time came, I delivered the three-minute presentation almost perfectly. I tucked

my nerves in my pocket, imagined myself in the front of my club on my best day, and articulated our book’s purpose, while keeping within the time limit and smiling. When the agent told us to send our manuscript, I felt grateful for all the Toastmasters skills I’d learned.

I decided right then to rejoin Toastmasters because if the agent signed us (he did, to a two-book deal), I’d need to continue tapping into effective public speaking skills to market the book in an authentic voice, without sounding too sales-y, robotic, or nervous.

I rejoined West Hartford in February 2021, and after the first meeting I knew I was back in the right place to master my next level of speaking skills and transfer those capabilities to my pursuits in the world of fiction authors. **T**

**Krista Wells** has a Ph.D. in industrial organizational psychology and is a certified coach with the International Coaching Federation. Under the pen name Addison McKnight, she and Nicole Moleti are finishing *An Imperfect Plan*, set for release in May 2022.



# The Many Facets of Toastmasters

The benefits continue to multiply the longer you stay active.

BY BILL BROWN, DTM

If you were asked what Toastmasters does, what would you say? Would you say it helps you become a better speaker? Or that it helps you develop leadership skills? Both are accurate, but do they fully capture all that you gain from your Toastmasters membership?

When I first became a Toastmaster, I was focused on getting through the manuals and, shortly thereafter, trying to win speech contests. Fifteen years later, my objectives have changed. I am no longer looking for the next designation and my competing days are over. But I still gain a lot from my membership.

As you work through Pathways, are you gaining in other areas too?

If you have been a Toastmaster for a while, you may have reached a certain level in your speaking ability; but continuing to speak keeps you in practice. I have found that the longer you are away from club meetings, the more the ums and ahs come creeping back into your vocabulary. Those filler words have a gravitational pull. It's like a satellite in orbit. Sooner or later, they pull you back down to where you started. And before long you become an "um-aholic." Continued participation keeps you filler-free, or at least filler-lite.

Toastmasters can help you in your business or career too. The relationships that you make through your club can lead to clients or vendors. Or, perhaps, they could get you connected with others in your company or your industry that you would not otherwise meet. And they are the best type of contacts—you start as

friends, not as targets. It can be better than a networking group.

A number of years ago, I was a member of a professional organization. There was a fellow member who was looking for ways to serve, and she always did an excellent job. One meeting, during the networking segment, I met a manager who was looking for a person to fill an open position. In that same meeting, the fellow member told me that she had just been laid off. She was looking for a new job in the exact field that the manager had an opening. I immediately got them connected. Her performance earned her the connection—and the job. What qualities are you demonstrating in your club that can lead to bigger opportunities?

## Continued participation keeps you filler-free, or at least filler-lite.

Toastmasters also gives you valuable experience. From the various meeting roles and officer positions, you gain leadership experience and, through your performance, you could be building your [resume](#). By showing how you can perform, you are also showing those in your club your capability and dependability.

I mentioned the speech contests earlier, which have provided a strong benefit for me. I have grown more in my speaking ability through the contests than any other avenue. And I have seen this happen time and time again for others just by competing in the club and Area contests.

For me, another major benefit of Toastmasters is helping others. I recently moved to a new state and am now a member of a small club that has not been exposed to the higher level of speakers that my previous clubs have had. By applying my expertise, I have been able to give them a bigger vision of what is possible in their speaking. And I am occasionally asked to help other clubs in our Area. I find that very satisfying. Perhaps you are seeing that same advantage as you help and mentor the other members of your club.

There is one final benefit that I see. Whether you work from home or in an office environment, your days can sometimes seem repetitive, mundane, or frustrating. Sometimes you just need a break. Toastmasters can help you escape the routine and clear your brain in a friendly family get-together.

Are these all of the advantages that we receive from Toastmasters? I'm sure that you can add a few. When we reflect upon what the organization provides us beyond the official tagline, "Where Leaders Are Made," we gain a much greater appreciation for all that we get. When someone asks me what Toastmasters is all about, I am tempted to say, "How much time do you have?" **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](http://www.billbrownspeechcoach.com).

# Get to the Point

The difference between a meaningful presentation and a forgettable collection of words may not be what you think.

BY JOEL SCHWARTZBERG

**W**hen I got married in 2008, my 9-year-old son stood on his chair and gave a succinct toast that, even putting aside my fatherly pride, was one of the most successful speeches I'd ever heard. He introduced himself, made the case for why my wife and I were good people who deserved each other, and wished us well.

Three years later, I was sitting in an auditorium listening to a senior vice president deliver one of the least effective speeches I'd ever heard. With nothing more than a jumble of thoughts in his head, he rambled, tossed out ideas as they occurred to him, and didn't know when to stop. It was a tortuous hour for his captive audience. The critical difference between these two speakers wasn't age, experience, or confidence—typical grounds for distinguishing a strong speaker from a weak one—it was a point. My son had one; my boss' boss' boss did not.

In my 11 years as a public speaking instructor, 15 years as a competitive public speaker, four years as a university speech team coach, and five years as a Toastmaster, I've seen many people giving speeches, but too few making real points.

Most speakers, in fact, confuse a point for a theme, a topic, or a title. But a point is different: A point is a contention you can argue, defend, and prove with reasoning or data. For example, the point of a speech about unsafe toys isn't "unsafe toys." It could be: "Parents need to better protect their children from unsafe toys." Similarly, the point of a speech about animal cruelty isn't "animal cruelty." It

could be: "We need stronger animal welfare laws to prevent animal cruelty." Even your Table Topic® response is stronger when you make a real point: "My favorite summer vacation" becomes "My summer vacation taught me the value of taking risks." Or, "The superpower I most want" becomes "I would use the power of teleportation to make me more efficient."

## A point is a contention you can argue, defend, and prove with reasoning or data.

So how do you turn a non-point into a point? Start by asking yourself five questions, starting with the most important one.

### 1 Do you believe it?

Take the "I Believe That" test: Place the words "I believe that" in front of what you think is your point and see if your statement is grammatically correct. If it is indeed a complete thought, you're well on your way to a real point. If not, rewrite the statement until it would satisfy your middle school English teacher. These three words force you to commit to a contention and make an argument for it.

The "I Believe That" test is not only helpful for speeches; it's also useful for emails, job interviews, pitches, performance reviews—any situation in which you're trying to make an impact. Don't just take my word for it. Read these

famous "I believes" and consider what makes them so powerful:

"I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word ..." —Martin Luther King Jr.

"I believe that, as long as there is plenty, poverty is evil." —Robert F. Kennedy

"In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart." —Anne Frank

Once you've passed this test, proceed to the following questions.

### 2 Is it a truism?

If your point is instantly true ("Ice cream is delicious."), dig deeper to find a point you can argue. ("Soft-serve ice cream is the most convenient summertime dessert.") One way to root out a truism is to follow up the point by asking yourself "Why?" If it's a truism, there won't be much of an answer. It answers itself. Another sign of a strong point is a feasible counterpoint. Can someone reasonably take the opposite point of view? If so, proceed.

### 3 Am I jamming too many ideas into my point?

Most of us know "less is more," but we also need to understand "more is less." If you have multiple thoughts or adjectives to convey, don't jam them into a single point like clowns into a Volkswagen. Pick the most important one, focus on it, and bring up the others later, one at a time. It may seem like you add value to your point when you add new words



and ideas, but when you throw multiple points at an audience in a single sentence, you actually dilute the impact of each one. The audience is not only forced to split their attention between multiple points, but is left clueless as to which idea is most relevant.

**If you have multiple thoughts or adjectives to convey, don't jam them into a single point like clowns into a Volkswagen.**

Let's test this. Which of these statements makes a stronger impact?

"This approach will improve our productivity, increase our efficiency, reduce our carbon footprint, and allow us to expand operations," or "This approach will substantially improve our efficiency, enabling us to put more resources into research and development."

The statement with the singular focus clearly packs a stronger and more memorable punch.

#### 4 Am I using "badjectives"?

Badjectives are adjectives so broad that they convey no value. They're deceptive because they *seem* to project a clear impression. Who wouldn't want to be connected to something "excellent," "fantastic," "terrific," or "very good"? And of course, they're very useful on Twitter.

But being so general robs your point of substance. What does it really mean to call something "great"? What makes it great? The audience has no idea. Using badjectives is like when a Little League baseball or softball coach says, "Come on now, Johnnie!" versus "Keep your eye on the ball as it comes to you, Johnnie!" One has no value, but the other makes a substantive point.

Whether you use them in a speech, in an email, in a compliment, or even in a tweet, precise descriptors in your point have a more powerful impact on your audience. So keep digging for words that say what you truly mean.

#### 5 Can I speak about this for more than a minute?

If you can't make the minimum time for a Table Topic response, chances are your response does not have much of a point.

Take this very tip, for example. I'm already done in less than a minute. The bottom line: Your point is the foundation of your speech. Without one, you have nothing to build on, and you're offering your audience little value. In essence, you're pointless. But armed with a strong point, you present to your audience an idea they can digest, take home, and even benefit from.

So the next time you convey a thought—whether standing on a chair or acting as a chairman—don't just describe or discuss it. Make your point, put power behind your words, and champion your ideas.

**Editor's Note:** *This article first appeared in the [December 2017](#) issue of the Toastmaster magazine.* **T**

**Joel Schwartzberg** is the senior director of strategic and executive communications for a U.S. national nonprofit, a presentation coach, and author of *The Language of Leadership: How to Engage and Inspire Your Team and Get to the Point! Sharpen Your Message and Make Your Words Matter*. Follow him on Twitter [@TheJoelTruth](#).

# Meet the Winners of the 2021 World Championship of Public Speaking

BY STEPHANIE DARLING

**T**oastmasters' second online World Championship of Public Speaking® (WCPS) wowed audiences with finalists who spoke with heart, humor, and insight.

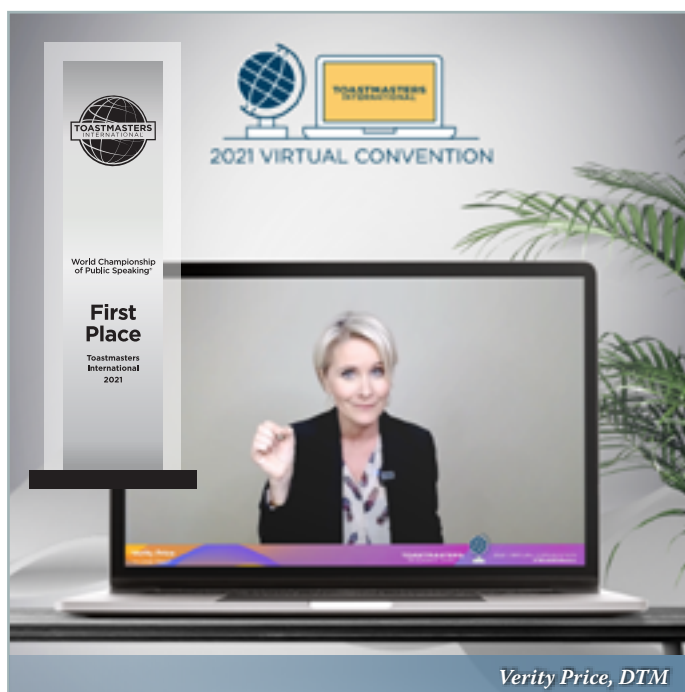
Verity Price, DTM, from Cape Town, South Africa, won the World Champion title with her speech [“A Great Read,”](#) a funny, profound look at conquering life’s “scary tales.” Second place went to Nitay-Yair Levi, from Sydney, Australia, who shared a poignant love story in his speech [“Advice for Life.”](#) Roger Caesar, DTM, from Brampton, Ontario, Canada, placed third with [“Is It in You?”](#), a guide to finding greatness in oneself by helping others find theirs.

## Verity Price, DTM

Before she entered the WCPS, Price recalls waking at 3 a.m. one day to a little voice in her head, urging her to share a story with the world. It was one she’d told in a Level 1 Pathways Ice Breaker (and had even used at club open houses). The voice was “telling me to give it everything I had and see where it took me,” Price remembers.

Ultimately, it took her to the World Championship. “This is the most incredible feeling—a palpable love from my country and my District,” says Price, who is the first African to win the title. She also thanked the organization she joined in 2011. “Toastmasters gave me a purpose during a very dark time in my life. It’s been life changing.”

Her speech tells of advice her father wrote in his last letter to her. She’d kept the letter for years and found herself reading it when her life had become a “scary tale” of depression and distress. Her father urged her to rise above failures by writing



Verity Price, DTM

a new story for herself. The perspective was life changing.

“I stopped worrying about where I wasn’t in life and started enjoying where I was,” she says. “Life is all about detours, delays, and things that go wrong, but it’s never too late to write a new story.”

Price, a member of ToastED Toastmaster in Cape Town, gathered broad feedback in support of her contest bid, even though she was already a professional speaker, facilitator, TEDx presenter, and trained singer and actor. She practiced her speech endlessly and eagerly asked for input from Toastmasters clubs around the world. Among her trusted advisors: her sister, an accomplished speaker, and Lance Miller, DTM, the 2005 World Champion.

To polish her small-stage presence, Price also studied 2020 World Champion Mike Carr, who was widely praised for his memorable Zoom performance. Watching him helped Price see how to have fun and create impact with gestures, facial expressions, and movement toward and away from the camera.

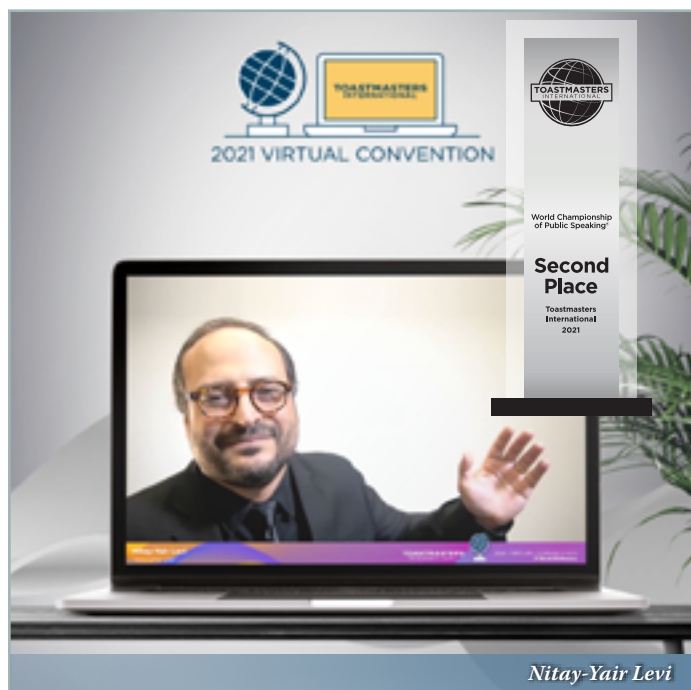
Price continued to soak in feedback until, shortly before the contest

deadline, a London Toastmaster heard the speech and said: “My whole soul absorbed your message and it pervaded me.” The comment so moved Price that she decided her speech was ready at last.

Ultimately, the WCPS preparation taught Price an unexpected lesson.

“I’ve always been a very self-reliant person,” she says. “This contest taught me that I couldn’t do it by myself. I needed people in my corner.”

When asked about her willingness to share personal struggles, Price offers a simple explanation. “I’ve been doing it so long in my speeches I hardly know how not to.” When writing a speech, she mentally asks her potential audience if they can see themselves in her vulnerabilities. Finding



those common links, she says, is a joy.

“I love speaking to people who are looking for a mindset shift; that’s my happy place.”

### **Nitay-Yair Levi**

Second-place winner Nitay-Yair Levi says not so long ago, he was a terrible speaker. After he “completely tanked” giving his own wedding speech, he joined Toastmasters in 2019 and set out with determination and committed curiosity to learn all he could about speaking publicly on topics that mattered to him.

“Imagine a 5- to 7-minute speech delivered in 30 minutes,” he says of his wedding words. Yet, he adds, “She still married me—so that ended well.”

Levi’s forays into the realm of international speech competition have also gone well. After reaching the regional quarterfinals last year, he applied all that he’d learned to his 2021 preparation. His work paid off in a finals speech that unfolded like a one-man movie, in which he virtually chronicled the emotions, voices, gestures, pain, and joy of numerous characters.

His continuing speaking success suggests Levi was right in choosing Toastmasters to learn how to meld messages and delivery skills. He often knew what he

wanted to say, but not how to say it.

“I felt that on the inside, my ideas were positive. But when it came time to communicate those ideas to the outside—well, that was the problem,” he explains.

Now Levi is a member of four Toastmasters clubs: City Tattersalls Toastmasters (his home club); Stage Time! Toastmasters; North Sydney Achievers Club (all in Australia); and Jackpot Speakers, in Las Vegas, Nevada.

“I just want to improve,” he says of his multiple club memberships. “I’ve found that the more you dedicate to the world that is Toastmasters, the better you will get.”

### **Roger Caesar, DTM**

Roger Caesar, DTM, says he’s still on “cloud nine” over this third-place finish and all the congratulatory goodwill coming from his fellow finalists and many Toastmasters friends over the past decade of his membership.

Caesar, who has reached the semifinals four previous times, spoke eloquently about discovering personal greatness while helping others find theirs in his finalist speech, “Is It in You?” He is a member of Brampton Toastmasters and a co-founder of Raising Champions Advanced Toastmasters, both in Brampton,

Ontario, Canada. In addition to his clubs and District 86, Caesar credits his achievement to Kathryn MacKenzie, DTM; fellow Canadian Toastmaster Neil Dunsmore; 1999 World Champion Craig Valentine; and most of all, his family, who figure prominently in his finals speech.

Understandably, Caesar is an ardent supporter of Toastmasters training.

“At first, you don’t realize how quickly you can learn skills in this program when you put your mind to it. There’s a lot of self-doubt when you start then suddenly you’re participating—and that’s the key word—*participating*. You will start to bloom when you get out there and start practicing.”

Caesar lights up when asked to share what’s he’s learned in Toastmasters.

“I’d like to say, especially to anyone new or who is considering joining—it takes a ton of work to reach the international speaking contest level, or any level you aspire to. There’s self-doubt, mistakes, it doesn’t work out,” he notes. “I’ve been to all those mountains. But it’s a true journey. Keep pushing forward. Participate—practice—and enjoy the moment, constantly.

“You’ll get there,” he adds. “Be the driver of your life, not the *passenger*.” **T**

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

# Shining a Spotlight on DTM Projects



These five Toastmasters used their project to make a difference for others.

BY KATE MCCLARE, DTM

**T**oastmasters is “Where Leaders Are Made,” and executing a well-planned leadership project is an essential step in the process; simply put, you can’t achieve Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM) without it.

This leadership project, called a DTM project, requires members to create and implement a project of their own design, in which they demonstrate the skills and expertise they have gained. Many members, however, go beyond just completing the requirements so they can check off a box and move on. Instead, they pour themselves into the project and make it meaningful beyond their own success. Here, five Toastmasters share how they completed the requirement, including one member who used it to knock out her sixth DTM!

## Clare Crowther, DTM, AS

Armada Speakers • Plymouth, England

- ▶ DTM Received: 2020
- ▶ DTM Project: “Mentoring for Mentors”

Clare Crowther created a mentoring program for her club, which wanted a robust mentor system but had only a few experienced members. She set up a project team of mentors—plus one new member who volunteered to contribute “newness perspective.” Next, she surveyed existing mentors about the support material they needed, which became her first challenge.

“For several weeks, the questionnaire questions seemed just beyond my grasp,” she says. She finally switched gears and, drawing on the Pathways mentoring program, simply talked to the





Clare Crowther, DTM, AS

“Look for a problem that is crying out for a solution in your club, organization, or community. Listen to the opinions of the key people affected by the problem and build your solution accordingly.”

—CLARE CROWTHER, DTM, AS

mentors about what they needed. She asked three simple questions: How is your mentoring going now? What would most help you now? Thinking back to when you started, what would have been most useful then?

“I have loved talking with our mentors in this way,” she says. “They are all so inspirational!”

Crowther is still talking to the mentors and refining the program. “The final resource I envisage will have a series of links to relevant TI [Toastmasters International] articles and materials, plus bespoke Armada Speakers resources.”

Crowther, a speaker, executive coach, workshop facilitator, trainer, and project manager, says her project taught her the importance of involving others. “A resource produced for the benefit of an organization is more valuable when people from the organization personally contribute to its production.”

When it’s time for your DTM project, she suggests that you “look for a problem that is crying out for a solution in your

club, organization, or community. Listen to the opinions of the key people affected by the problem and build your solution accordingly.”

## Fred Haley, DTM

World Golf Village Toastmasters • St. Johns, Florida

- ▶ Third DTM Received: 2018
- ▶ HPL Project: “How to Win the Job at the Interview”

Wanting to help non-Toastmasters improve their job interview skills, Fred Haley developed a workshop and presented it at local public libraries. He also sought to encourage other members to conduct projects in the community, not just with Toastmasters-related projects in their clubs. He recruited club members to help organize, promote, and run the event, including registration and set-up.



Fred Haley, DTM

“Toastmasters is not a destination. Toastmasters is a tool to help you advance your career, grow your business, and improve your relationships.”

—FRED HALEY, DTM

He created the workshop, designed handouts and PowerPoint slides, and then promoted the event at local libraries, in community calendars, and on social media.

"I only had a dozen attendees," he says, "but three said it helped them get jobs and three expressed interest in joining Toastmasters." A final bonus was that one of the attendees hired Haley to continue helping him get hired.

Haley, a retired public transportation manager now working as a communications coach, says he learned "we are developing skills in Toastmasters that can make a difference in the lives of others, and Toastmasters members want to be part of any action or project that can help others." He also came to the realization that "Toastmasters is not a destination. Toastmasters is a tool to help you advance your career, grow your business, and improve your relationships."

He advises finding a project that will have community service value. "Make it about something related to your career field or personal interests outside Toastmasters. And it's okay to promote your own business."

## Lucinda Harman, DTM

Shilling Speakers • *Havant, England and Toastmasters Kalahari • South Africa*

- ▶ DTM Received: 2020
- ▶ DTM Project: "Beacon of Hope"



Lucinda Harman, DTM

"Create a project that aligns with you, and that will challenge and expand you. A DTM project should be memorable, significant, and something of value."

—LUCINDA HARMAN, DTM



A month after the COVID-19 lockdowns began, Lucinda Harman decided to do "something good and uplifting" for her fellow South Africans and the world at large. She gathered

champion speakers from her District and

asked each to deliver a speech that would motivate and bring hope to the audience.

Harman, who has spoken on the TEDx stage, created an online Zoom platform for "Beacon of Hope," a free live-streamed event. She promoted it with fliers, social media posts, and live videos on each speaker's Facebook page. Harman had planned on 100 attendees, but registration jumped over this mark, so she had to borrow a friend's Zoom account.

"The event made a big difference to those who attended or watched the live feed. We got a lot of great feedback on the power and effectiveness of the event. The speakers all spoke highly of the event and how it assisted them personally by doing something good and taking the focus away from the negativity of lockdown. As a team, we grew closer, and the experience was uplifting for all."

Harman, a sales specialist, international speaker, and coach, says her project taught her "how resilient and adaptable I can be, and the immense power in collaboration and teamwork."

Her advice: "Create a project that aligns with you, and that will challenge and expand you. A DTM project should be memorable, significant, and something of value."

## Kathy Shine, DTM

Cream City Communicators • *Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

- ▶ Sixth DTM Received: 2019
- ▶ DTM Project: Catholic Campaign for Human Development

Kathy Shine volunteered for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. She coordinated committee activities that provide local and national grants to support the Catholic Campaign for Human Development.

"Social justice is an important core value of mine," she explains. "I was so proud to be part of a process that funds mental health awareness training, violent-crime reduction, education and family well-being, youth leadership formation, and more."



Kathy Shine, DTM

“Follow your heart by allowing your personal core values to help you select your DTM project.”

—KATHY SHINE, DTM

Shine coordinated 15 site visits for local and national grant applicants across a 10-county area of southeast Wisconsin. The biggest challenge was to ensure attendance from the task force leaders, program participants or board members, or risk losing consideration for financial support.

In the end, more than \$225,000 was awarded in local and national grants for community development efforts, advocacy, and intergenerational activities.

Shine, an administrative specialist, realized that spending her personal time contributing to a worthwhile cause brought her more joy and fulfillment in the process of the volunteer work than in the end result. “It was more about the climb than reaching the summit!” she says.

Her advice: “Follow your heart by allowing your personal core values to help you select your DTM project. If you have a passion for a nonprofit organization, reach out to them. Ask what they want to do but may be short staffed to accomplish. Maybe you can use your Toastmasters experience to move ahead with phase one or implement phase two of a special project.”

### Tony Stutes, DTM

Smooth Talkers Toastmasters Club • Greenville, South Carolina

- ▶ DTM Received: 2020
- ▶ DTM Project: “Smiling Hearts Farm and Orphanage”

Because of Tony Stutes and his wife, a community in Africa is prospering. Local residents are operating a farm for food and income, they have clean drinking water, and their children are going to school for the first time. The couple provided funds and organizational skills to start the farm and orphanage near Kampala, Uganda.

It began when his wife, Sandy, was contacted over the internet by a young man who wanted to help the children in his village. The couple decided to help, first by sending him to agriculture school for two months. Then they got to work.

They established the DTM project to build the farm, which would generate income for building and maintaining a school. They oversaw the purchase of land, equipment, and livestock. They hired a teacher and a cook. And there was lots more to do: crops to be planted, animals to be cared for, improvements to be made to the farm and buildings.



Tony Stutes, DTM

“Pick a project that can make a difference. In our case, we chose to teach people to fish rather than to give them a fish.”

—TONY STUTES, DTM

Work continued after the DTM project was complete. The school was built and Stutes’ company awarded him a \$5,000 USD charitable grant. The money is being used to develop the Stutes Clean Water Project, which purchases and distributes water filtration machines to schools, hospitals, and orphanages in Uganda.

Stutes, a mechanical engineer, says the project taught him “how to use my skills to make a big difference where people are in need of an opportunity”

“Many people are being touched by this program,” he says. “The community has come together to gain access to the fruits of this labor and are living healthier lives.”

His advice: “Pick a project that can make a difference. In our case, we chose to teach people to fish rather than to give them a fish.” **T**

**Kate McClare, DTM**, is Vice President Education for Miami Advanced Toastmasters in Miami, Florida. She earned her DTM in 2018 under the traditional education program.



# Distinguish Yourself and Your Club

How the Distinguished Club Program helps members meet their goals.

BY FLOYD R. STRAYER, DTM

**W**hy do clubs sustain success? Because they serve the needs of individual club members, and they do it in ways that can be measured.

Through research reports, Toastmasters International identifies members' most important needs and individual goals. The information gathered shows how clubs that consistently enable members to meet their goals are successful and have certain characteristics that can be measured. (To see the reports, visit the [Statistics and Data Hub](#) on the Toastmasters website.)

Those measurable goals are reflected in the Distinguished Club Program (DCP). The 10 DCP goals direct leaders' attention to the real drivers of sustainable club success.

I remember my own experience with the DCP. I had only been a member for a few weeks when our club's Vice President Education announced we were on track to becoming a "Distinguished" club. Everyone clapped, including me.

"We only need one more DCP goal by the end of the month," he said. I thought, *Wow, I wonder where we get these DCPs.* I listened carefully, trying to figure out this new language of Toastmasters.

Having retired from the U.S. Marine Corps and worked 17 years for the U.S. Navy at that time, I can say that the number of abbreviations and acronyms used in these two armed-service branches are mind-numbing. For Toastmasters, it is easy to forget that someone new in your audience may not recognize the terms you use.

While I noticed how Toastmasters business resembles corporate business meetings, and felt this was great for efficiency and productivity, I wondered about my own needs—the reason I joined

Toastmasters. What about me—the "What's in it for me?" (WIIFM) as a member. Meetings started sounding like they were all about the District's goals. Why should I care about the DCP?

It's because the recognition—the Distinguished status (or higher) earned by a club—indicates that the club provides the positive and supportive learning environment that will aid members in meeting their goals. When speaking about the DCP goals, use terms that members can easily understand to create member buy-in sooner.

The following examples of the DCP goals show why they are important for individual members as well as for the club as a whole.

For more information about the DCP, see the Distinguished Club Program and Club Success Plan, available as a [PDF](#). Learn more about the Toastmasters [Pathways learning experience](#).

## Education

### GOALS 1 AND 2:

- ▶ Four members have to complete Level 1 in the Pathways learning experience. (DCP educational goals have to be met by separate individuals within each category.)
- ▶ Two members have to complete Level 2 in Pathways.

Having members complete Levels 1 and 2 is evidence that a club is concentrating on meeting the basic needs of its members by improving their public speaking skills. The projects in these two levels teach building blocks necessary to develop and deliver a competent and effective speech, such as speech structure, body language, and vocal variety. Clubs that continually produce members with

Level 1 and Level 2 awards for completion are providing the educational platform that members seek in Toastmasters.

### GOALS 3 AND 4:

- ▶ Two more Level 2 completion awards.
- ▶ Two Level 3 completion awards.

Producing members who have completed Level 3 is evidence that a club is retaining skilled speakers who wish to become polished speakers. These members are essential because they demonstrate by their examples what can be accomplished in Toastmasters. They also have the expertise to provide skilled evaluations that support and encourage new members to continue striving to improve.

### GOALS 5 AND 6:

- ▶ One Level 4 completion, Level 5 completion, or DTM award.
- ▶ One more Level 4, Level 5, or DTM award.

The projects in Levels 4 and 5 are complex and often require taking an extended leadership role to complete a project. To complete a path, each member must fulfill the roles of speech evaluator, Topicsmaster, and Toastmaster for at least one meeting. These roles are essential to conducting an effective club meeting, which is the foundation for aiding each member in meeting their goals. The consistent achievement of these awards provides clubs with skilled functionaries, mentors, and leaders to meet the needs of a growing and thriving club.

## Membership

### GOALS 7 AND 8:

- ▶ Four new, dual, or reinstating members.
- ▶ Four more new, dual or reinstating members.

Members who are learning in clubs that are growing have loads of fun. Where else can you find leadership, friendship, support, feedback, and training in communication for \$45 USD every six months? I challenge you to find a quality program that encompasses everything we do in Toastmasters while having fun doing it!

Club growth helps ensure support positions are filled when we need practice speaking. With increasing club membership, we also gain experience speaking to a larger audience. Plus, we receive a broader spectrum of feedback, which allows faster, stronger, and better growth opportunities. And when we give an awesome speech, it draws more applause, providing the positive support we all need to build our confidence to get up and speak again.

## Training

### GOAL 9:

- ▶ At least four club officer roles trained in both the first and second rounds of Club Officer Training.

Club Officer Training is essential for providing members the experience they need to serve in any officer role. Even officers who have been trained previously for the positions they hold need to attend to hear new information and share creative ideas. It's a worthy goal. And experienced Toastmasters offer valuable insights to newly appointed members who have never served in a club officer role. This transfer of information and ideas is key to the success and strength of a volunteer organization. It takes each member supporting and assisting in the development of the next generation of leaders.

## Administration

### GOAL 10:

- ▶ Timely submission of an officer list and membership dues.

Members want to know their club is efficient and supportive of their goals. Club officers gain members' trust and confidence with the timely administration of duties. The on-time submission of a club officer list and membership dues is essential to a well-run organization. All administrative tasks, including the timely submission of award recognitions, are important to members. **T**

**Editor's Note:** This is an updated version of an article that originally ran in the [October 2016](#) Toastmaster magazine.

**Floyd R. Strayer, DTM**, is Immediate Past President of Progressive Speakers in El Cajon, California, and a member of Sharp Toastmasters in Chula Vista, California.

# Growing Skills

Toastmasters programs aid young people seeking to boost their speaking abilities.

BY EMILY SACHS

As part of the first “digital generation,” most teenagers are fairly comfortable communicating via texting and social media. Yet this doesn’t mean they are necessarily comfortable speaking up in person or online. Like generations before them, many young people today still struggle with public speaking.

Max Hu, 17, is founder and president of a youth public speaking group in Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada, that evolved from a Toastmasters youth Gavel Club—a club geared to those under 18. He says communication anxiety peaked among teenagers attending “Zoom school” during the pandemic.

“I had friends who would have anxiety attacks just turning on their camera. It shows how unprepared youth are,” says Max. “We’re not given opportunities to specifically work on our communication skills.”



Toastmasters aims to fill that educational gap with two programs for the under 18-set: youth Gavel Clubs and the Youth Leadership Program (YLP).

“I’ve been influenced by Toastmasters my entire life.”

—MAX HU

The YLP is a workshop typically consisting of eight one- to two-hour sessions and is sponsored either by an individual Toastmasters club or an organization such as a school. (Likewise, Gavel Clubs are hosted by an organization or regular Toastmasters club.)

Toastmasters members serve as coordinators of the YLP, which follows the format of a typical club meeting and has the same intended outcome as the Toastmasters experience: to teach participants to speak effectively and persuasively in both prepared and impromptu scenarios and learn to evaluate and give feedback.

The benefits of developing comfort with public speaking are widely documented—and well known to the typical Toastmaster. Improving communication skills while you’re still relatively young can lead to improved academic performance, increased persuasive and listening skills, less fear, and increased self-esteem. Eventually that can result in a better chance of social and professional success.

### **Gavaliars Gain Quality Experience**

Unlike the short-term YLP, Gavel Clubs offer a recurring Toastmasters-like experience for groups otherwise ineligible for club charter, whether due to member age, club location, or another factor. “Gavaliars” use the same type of structure and protocols as used in regular Toastmasters club meetings.

Srikumar Pai, DTM, a longtime Toastmaster from Kerala, Cochin, India, was living in Muscat, Oman, when he decided to host a YLP for his friends’ children. At the end of the workshop, the parents surrounded him. “What is next?” he said they asked. “You gave them a chance to speak but how are you going to help them practice? Move forward? They were very smart.”

He did some research and started a Gavel Club. One club became two and quickly grew to 34 youth Gavel Clubs.



*Max Hu, 17, has participated in a Toastmasters Gavel Club and Youth Leadership Program. He says teens need to work more on their communication skills.*

With the structure and practice provided by the Toastmasters program, the young members flourished, developing confidence as speakers and evaluators and embracing their new responsibilities as club leaders. Young people actually want opportunities to be face-to-face with their peers, Pai says. “They have a lot of distraction. If you give them something like a Gavel Club, their full concentration is there,” he notes.

Something even more surprising happened as a result of the Gavel Clubs: Parents watched their children improve and soon new Toastmasters clubs were born to give the adults the same experience. Today, Muscat Family Toastmasters offers a 3-in-1 experience, with concurrent club meetings in adjoining rooms for parents, teenagers, and preteens. (The teens and preteens are part of the Oman Kids Gavel Club.)

### **Gavaliars Get Their Own Championship**

In January, Pai helped organize an event billed as the inaugural Global Youth Gavaliars World Championship, a virtual speech contest involving 125 Gavel Clubs from Canada to Australia. In her winning speech, Afreen Macksood, 13, made light of the Zoom experience for kids stuck at home during this time, in contrast to how seriously adults are treating it. Afreen only joined her school’s club, BPS Gavel Club in Doha, Qatar, weeks before the contest.



Afreen Macksood (left), 13, won a speaking championship involving members of 125 youth Gavel Clubs. Her mother, Nishana (right), is a Toastmaster in Doha, Qatar.

But she is very familiar with the Toastmasters method: For the last four years, she has been a speech practice partner for her mother, Nishana Macksood, a member of CA Toastmasters in Doha.

“She would ask me to evaluate her, even though I used to know nothing much about public speaking,” Afreen says. “I would have a book and pencil with me, writing down words I didn’t know while my mom spoke.”

For all its merits as a connector across the continents, Afreen finds digital communication very restrictive. Facial expressions, group discussions, and talking during class breaks all disappeared during classes over Zoom. Her teachers even disabled the chat function during online classes because too many students were using it. “We’re missing out on our friends’ lives,” she says.

Of the 10 most downloaded apps in 2020, six were focused on oral communication. Even TikTok is no longer limited to learning

### Community Program Options

Go to the Toastmasters website to learn more about youth [Gavel Clubs](#), [Interpersonal Communication](#) (a community-based program that doesn’t need to be presented by Toastmasters members), and the [YLP](#). If you are looking for a YLP, contact Toastmasters clubs in your area to ask if any of them plan to present the program or have an interest in doing so. (Because YLPs are sponsored voluntarily, Toastmasters World Headquarters does not have official information on available programs or which clubs offer it.)

To search for local club listings, go to the [Find a Club](#) section on the Toastmasters website.

new viral dances and sharing memes; it now allows videos to be up to three minutes long, the same length as speech evaluations and Social Speeches in the Pathways learning experience.

Max Hu, the Canadian youth speech group founder, says that young people have plenty of opportunity and drive to use their voices for change, such as protesting against racial injustice or advocating for education reform, but they often don’t have the confidence or the competence.

“There’s a lot of these very cool ideas but I feel so many of these ideas are overshadowed because students are afraid to speak out—because they are comparing themselves to those two or three students who do speak out,” he says. The teen sees his peers give up before they even try, because they don’t want to be judged or make a mistake that is captured on video for perpetuity.

One of the most effective tools, he says, is being around others who are trying to improve the same skills as you. As a child, he struggled with stuttering and had to work closely with a speech therapist. His mother, Joyce Lang, DTM, a member of Advanced Speakers on the Hill in Richmond Hill, Ontario, would invite Max to her Toastmasters meetings to see adults improving their communication. Four years ago, while participating in a YLP, he says something clicked for him and he hasn’t looked back.

## This year the Global Youth Gavaliers World Championship debuted. The virtual speech contest involved 125 Gavel Clubs from Canada to Australia.

Since then he has formed a public speaking group, has spoken at school events in front of 800 classmates, and was elected as a class leader this year. In fact, Max, who wants to study computer science at university, has been working with some classmates to develop a phone app, called Fearless, that detects spoken filler words, the bane of all Toastmasters. “I’ve been influenced by Toastmasters my entire life,” he says.

### Lifelong Learning

Another unexpected consequence of an early exposure to public speaking is the chance for it to become a lifelong pursuit. Kareena Hassan was a self-described “shy bookworm” as a young teen when her parents signed her up for a YLP being hosted by a family friend. She then took part in a Gavel Club and found that she enjoyed it more the more she went.

“I think it was something that kind of pushed me out of my comfort zone,” Hassan says. “It helped me with my confidence and with my interactions with people around me, with my family and my peers.”



## YLP IN INDIA REACHES HUNDREDS

BY SATISH MENON

Nearly 350 students across the state of Tamil Nadu in India participated in an online Youth Leadership Program (YLP) spread out over eight months. I initiated the program (I am currently the District 120 Director), and it was coordinated by Mr. NTR Swamy, a member of the HCL Pandyas Toastmasters Club in Madurai, Tamil Nadu.

YLP is for those younger than 18, and this particular program—which ended in June 2020—was for students ages 12 to 16 attending government schools. The workshop was presented to 15 different groups of students over the eight months; each group was led by an individual club, which provided a coordinator and member trainers. The YLP coordinators worked with students online using the platforms Zoom and Google Meet.

Teachers said the structured curriculum was a great help to the students.

The YLP sessions were held over the weekends since students attended regular classes from Monday to Friday. Most students did not have access to desk-

tops or laptops and used mobile phones to access the sessions. In addition, the program was conducted in schools where English is not the medium of instruction but, rather, an optional language. Most students from these schools have a challenge adapting to using English in the classroom once they start attending college, so YLP workshops can be immensely beneficial, not only in helping them develop communication skills but in building leadership skills as well.

The success of the program can be gauged by the fact that the students and teachers have been asking for more YLPs. We have also seen that the students are now more comfortable speaking in front of an audience and their communication skills have improved significantly.

We have more clubs coming forward to present YLPs at schools this year too, and we hope to reach 500-plus students during this program year.

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**Satish Menon** is the District 120 Director. He is a member of three clubs in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.



During her first year at university, Hassan had to deliver a mock business proposal in a class presentation. “I remember my professor commenting that I had certain soft skills that he wasn’t expecting,” she says. He wasn’t used to first-year students being so well prepared to give speeches.

After graduation, while working in her first job, she realized that her ability to network and connect with work peers wasn’t

what it should be. “I could just tell that some of those soft skills needed some fine-tuning,” she says. She instinctively knew she needed to return to Toastmasters. In 2019, she not only joined Feel Good Toastmasters in Richmond Hill, but she also became a coordinator of the Speak to Lead Gavel Club. Today, she helps teenagers whose reluctance to speak is intimately familiar. “I was in your shoes once,” she assures them.

“I think [the youth Gavel Club] was something that kind of pushed me out of my comfort zone. It helped me with my confidence and with my interactions with people around me, with my family and my peers.”

—KAREENA HASSAN

“At the end of the day, it’s a life skill and a program that is for everyone,” Hassan says. “I can’t think of one person who wouldn’t benefit.” **T**

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**Emily Sachs** is President of Brooklyn Toastmasters in Brooklyn, New York. A former newspaper reporter, she now works in banking regulatory compliance. She is old enough to have taken speech class in high school.

# Researching and Presenting

This Pathways project isn't a drab homework assignment. Have fun with it.

BY KATE MCCLARE, DTM

**G**iving an entertaining or inspirational speech that reaches the audience on an emotional level is one of the pleasures of Toastmasters. So where does that leave the research presentation?

A necessary but mundane assignment? Something to endure so you can get to one of those fun storytelling electives? Think again.

"Research" doesn't have to mean dry science experiments or political analysis. Your research could focus on all sorts of topics: health issues, model trains, the funniest jokes ever told. As with any other speech, your aim is to engage your audience.

"Researching and Presenting" is currently a Level 1 project in each of the 11 paths in the Toastmasters Pathways learning experience. The project is being updated and repurposed as a Level 3 elective. That elective will launch sometime within the next few months, available only in paths selected after the launch. As you advance in your career, you may be called on to give work presentations on complex subjects. When that happens, you won't want to turn your presentation time into nap time for your boss and coworkers.

Giving such a speech in your Toastmasters club will help—it's like a practice run, says Pierre Andriani, a member of the Heart of England Club in Solihull, England. The Pathways project stretches

your skills and awareness, he notes. "You are specifically asked to research a topic you are not familiar with. Therefore, you are placed outside of your comfort zone on purpose. By design, you will learn something new, and this is where personal growth thrives."

## What Makes a Good One?

As long as you're gathering facts and the opinions of expert sources, it's a legitimate research presentation. You may have to

work a little harder and get a little more creative to make factual content sound intriguing, but it can be done.

For Eddie Landron, a member of Out-of-the-Box Toastmasters in Miami, Florida, it's a matter of "breaking down the subject matter so it can be easy to understand. Making it relatable to everyday life lets your audience absorb the information."

Andriani agrees. "It must be clear, relevant, and accessible. Even if it was a topic people might not have been

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PATHWAYS PROJECT

- ▶ **Purpose:** To learn or review basic research methods and present a well-organized, well-researched speech (5-7 minutes) on any topic.
- ▶ **Choosing a topic:** Be sure it's narrow enough to fit the speech time. If you are knowledgeable about the subject, present an aspect that interests you most.
- ▶ **Start with what you know:** List these areas; determine what to research by generating questions you want to be answered.
- ▶ **Find reliable sources:** They should be authorities on the subject and recognized by others in their field. Give proper credit for both statements and images.
- ▶ **Use structure appropriate to the subject:** A scientific paper might need a chronological structure. A speech about a geographic area could use a spatial approach, taking each region one by one. You might use the problem/solution format when discussing a local social issue.



Like any other presentation, a research project's main goal should be: to inform and engage the audience.

interested in at first, you want them to leave thinking, *I did not know that. Glad I heard that speech.*

In other words, just like any other presentation. Here are some ways to keep things lively and still informative.

### Get Personal

For a presentation on income tax, Landron says, "I opened up with a true story about my first job, and I answered questions that I asked myself." Then, he reviewed the history of the U.S. income tax system, starting with its creation by President Abraham Lincoln during the American Civil War.

The personal touch also worked well for Andriani when he presented a research paper to his peers. "I referenced examples from the people attending," he recalls. "I also mentioned the previous speeches given that day. Finally, I acknowledged the people in the audience who helped me. It worked out well."

### Keep It Focused

The Pathways project calls for a 5- to 7-minute speech. You can't cover everything about your subject in such a short time, and even if you could, you'd probably lose your audience. If you're giving a presentation on tourist sites in a particular city, try narrowing it down to the top

three places to visit, or getting even more specific, with the top three historic sites or family activities.

### Make It Engaging

For some, "research presentation" suggests the need to use presentation software like PowerPoint. But tread carefully.

"I stay away from slides when possible," Landron says. "I enjoy doing speeches live and with humor." When he explained how a battery worked, he didn't use a PowerPoint slide but gave a live demonstration in which he made a battery with two nails and a lemon.

### Keep It Real

Using [appropriate sources](#) is an essential element of research presentations. You can present your own opinions, but you must show the facts they are based on. Furthermore, they must come from reputable, generally accepted sources. As the Pathways assignment points out, a scientific study in a recognized journal is acceptable, but a comment from a personal blog is not.

### The Bottom Line

Like any other presentation, a research project's main goal should be: to inform and engage the audience. Every point you make should serve that purpose.

"Remember," Andriani says, "people are in the audience because they really are interested in what you have to say. Make sure you give them your best." **T**

**Kate McClare, DTM**, is a copywriter and former journalist who has presented numerous topics requiring research. She is Vice President Education for Miami Advanced Toastmasters in Miami, Florida.

To learn more on this topic from members Pierre Andriani and Eddie Landron, read their top tips in this month's [online magazine](#).



# Ways to Win Your Audience

Above all, give them a reason to root for you.

BY CRAIG HARRISON, DTM

I was a new professional speaker, and it was my highest booking fee to date: an opening keynote on humor for a global corporation's retreat in Northern California's wine country. However, as the date grew near, I was anything but confident I could wow this audience. I reached out to the late humor consultant John Cantu for coaching and a shot of confidence.

John joked that I was facing a "trifecta of danger" by giving a humorous keynote, in the morning, to accountants! My face grew ashen as I envisioned an unresponsive audience staring back at me for 45 minutes.

Sure enough, I pressed from the start, trying too hard to be funny. My humor fell flat. My alliteration flopped. My turns of phrase fizzled and by 8:07 a.m., I was sweating onstage in a cool wine cellar.

I took a deep breath. I told the audience I'd done some research and knew, behind those emotionless faces, they were

secretly laughing inside. Silence. Then, from the corner of my eye, I detected the slightest of smirks from a man in the front row. I turned to him and smiled: "I saw that!" Then I heard a woman suppress a giggle: "I heard that!"

I went for it. "Let the auction begin. I've got one smirk. One giggle. Can I get a chuckle? A chortle? Who's got a guffaw? On the count of three, everyone let out a laugh!" And with that, we all shared a sip of silliness!

## Realize that what's funny in Peoria isn't necessarily so in Pretoria!

I replaced scripted humor with real-time reading of the room and ad-libbing. For the next 40 minutes we laughed and enjoyed feel-good stories about the

vicissitudes of accounting. That's when I learned the best humor is homegrown, organic, and collaborative.

## Audiences: To Know Them Is to Love Them

What are you saying and doing to win points with your audiences in introductions, opening remarks, and throughout your presentation? Are you appealing to the multiple segments of your audience, finding common ground, praising and honoring them, and acknowledging their hospitality? Or perhaps you're unintentionally dividing your audience by making incorrect [assumptions](#) about their values, gender, age, politics, religion, or other beliefs.

Even if the audience looks or sounds like you, they may not think like you or share your beliefs. Never make assumptions. The more you know about who you are speaking to, the better you can appeal to their needs and wants, their values,



their loves, and avoid remarks that ruffle feathers, or betray a lack of understanding of who they are or where you are. And realize, what's funny in Peoria isn't necessarily so in Pretoria!

Remember that it's a sign of respect and professionalism to educate yourself in advance on the organization or the group you'll be speaking to.

There are many ways to learn some basic details and dig deeper if you choose. Study the group's website or relevant sites, such as those that cover your audience's industry or profession. Attend one of the group's meetings in advance if possible. Talk to a meeting planner or organizer to find out what resonated—or didn't—with previous audiences.

When you've done the homework and customized your speech, your audience will marvel at your insights and praise you by saying "it's as if you actually worked for us!"

## Help everyone be seen, heard, and invited in.

If you're unable to learn much about the audience in advance, show them in real time that you care why they came to hear you. Try informal queries from the platform or use online tools like polls and chat responses for virtual presentations. Ask a few questions to find out who's "in the house" and help everyone be seen, heard, and invited in.

### How Signature Styles Work

Strong, confident speakers rely on a variety of tactics and styles to win over audiences. For example, Harvey Mackay is a *New York Times* best-selling author,

## MAKE EVERY LISTENER COMFORTABLE

**M**ake your speech [accessible](#) to every listener—including guests who are visual, aural, and kinesthetic learners, or who are visually, physically, or hearing-impaired. Here are accommodation suggestions from motivational speaker and coach Rosemarie Rossetti, Ph.D.

- ▶ Coordinate with organizers to reserve seats and spaces up front for those who need to be close to the stage.
- ▶ Always use a microphone; repeat audience questions.
- ▶ Let your audience see your lips (use clear or see-through masks).
- ▶ Describe slides for those who can't see or have joined the meeting without video.
- ▶ Use closed captioning for virtual presentations; show audiences how to enlarge the font size. An 18- to 20-point font works best.
- ▶ Consult this guide to [Understanding What Makes Typeface Accessible](#).
- ▶ Advocate for sign language interpreters; use apps like [Wordly.ai](#), which provides simultaneous interpretation in 16 languages.
- ▶ Avoid ALL CAPS as it gets read as acronyms by text readers.

speaker, and former Toastmaster. He is often known to memorize the entire opening paragraph of his speech in the language and dialect of his audience, creating an instant bond.

Mikki Williams, a National Speakers Association Hall of Fame inductee, makes a striking appearance, live and virtually, with her big blond hair, big jewelry, and big personality. Audiences immediately are distracted by her resemblance to famous celebrities. Knowing this, she poses and eggs the audience on with "Okay, who do I look like?"

Obviously, Williams favors an audacious approach to winning her audiences. If there's an elephant in the room, ride it! Do you have a distinctive accent? A unique look? A special skill or talent? Acknowledge it, leverage it, celebrate it! Williams exhorts you, "Be outrageous. It's the only place that isn't crowded."

When you know your audience, you can even capitalize on differences. Earn goodwill, and have some fun, by playing on the assumptions that speakers and listeners might have about one another,

as I did with the audience of accountants. Set a warm, playful tone and they'll warm to you.

Toastmasters Accredited Speaker [Eldonna Lewis Fernandez](#) has used a humorous opener to set the tone for her various speaking topics and offers multiple qualities for her audience to identify with: "My name is Eldonna, and I am a Harley-ridin' biker chick, military veteran, master negotiator, speaker-author-trainer-coach, girly girl, and most importantly, a mom." An introduction like that is likely to surprise, puzzle, and quickly appeal to a range of listeners.

This is only a short overview of suggestions and examples. The bottom line is: Give your audience a reason to root for you. Do your homework. Respect them. And bank a speaking win. **T**

**Craig Harrison, DTM**, is a professional speaker, a Certified Virtual Presenter, and a charter member of Silicon Valley ImprovMasters in San Jose, California. Visit [www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com](http://www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com) for more information.

# A Manager No More

Not to worry. Your job is even bigger now. All you have to do is turn yourself upside down and inside out.

BY JOHN CADLEY

If you are a manager, your job will be different after the pandemic than it was before. If you are a manager who, during the pandemic, accidentally turned on the Zoom filter and addressed your team while appearing as a potato, your job will be *very* different—as in working for another company. Once your team has seen you as a potato, they will always see you as a potato, and people don't work for potatoes. They do work for peanuts, but that's another story. No, best to seek employment elsewhere. Finely honed as your management skills may be, you will never fully regain the respect of colleagues who keep wondering if you should be fried, mashed, or scalloped.

How will your job in management be different? Nobody knows. I realize that is less than reassuring, but there are no business courses entitled *Managing People Who Have Just Survived the Worst Public Health Crisis in 100 Years and Who, After Spending a Year and a Half Working from Home, Have Discovered They Really Don't Need To Be Managed*. And yet that is precisely what you're up against.

The good news is that you're really not a manager anymore! Management per se no longer applies. Management is responsible for operational efficiency, organization, best practices, and deciding who gets an office with a window. You, on the other hand, are now dealing with workers who have organized themselves efficiently, developed their own best practices, and are looking out their home windows with views far more attractive than the **FLY DELTA** billboard across the street from the office.

If we don't need managers, what do we need? Leaders! In a transformational time,

businesses can't maintain the status quo. They need you to create a new one. In other words, you are no longer the conductor. You are now the composer. Don't let it frighten you. Most businesses have always been "over-managed and under-led." This is your opportunity to grab the banner, blaze the trail, lead the troops into uncharted territory, and be remembered as Richard the Lionheart instead of Larry the Let's Have a Meeting.

**This is your opportunity to grab the banner, blaze the trail, and lead the troops into uncharted territory.**

As you inspire your charges, do not use phrases like "the new normal" or "embrace change." If something is new it isn't normal, and workers have as much enthusiasm for embracing change as they do for hugging a porcupine. Change brings uncertainty, loss of control, unpredictability, worry. It causes rashes, gastrointestinal distress, nail biting, facial tics, and, in severe cases, regression to the fetal position. Instead of embracing change, just say you're all going to "try something a little different."

According to an article in *Forbes* magazine last year by Dana Brownlee, candor without ambiguity is a good place to start. After so much conflicting information during the pandemic, folks want the plain, simple truth, which for many businesses is a novel concept in itself. No more company line, no more reports by committee.

Just you ... and them ... and the truth. Hard, I know, but that's why you get the reserved parking space.

Show empathy. Your coworkers have been through a trying time. They're fragile. One tone-deaf remark could be devastating. Saying "Okay, folks, vacation's over. Let's get back to work" is not funny. If you think it is, get professional help. I don't know what a good life coach is charging these days but it's worth it. Correlative to this is active listening—i.e., listening to understand rather than listening to respond. "Listening" can no longer mean letting the other person talk while you think of all the reasons he or she is wrong. Now you must be prepared to say, "You're right." For those who have never said it before, it might take some practice. First say "you're." Then say "right." Then put them together.

Flexibility is important too. Change is everywhere. Prepare to adapt. Cruising the halls for gossip may have to go.

Finally, be humble. As a manager you've always been the person with the answers, even when you didn't have any. Now you must learn to say, "I don't know." (I feel your pain. It hurts just to write it.) However, if you add "But I'll find out," you'll be respected as a leader who isn't afraid to reassure his followers, "I have no idea where we're going but I'll get us there." Not the inspiring words of a great visionary but it's better than being thought of as a potato. ■

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



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## CLIENT SPOTLIGHT - BO BENNETT, DTM

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

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

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

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

We are happy to speak with you about your publishing needs.  
Call us at 978-440-8364 or visit us at <http://www.eBookIt.com>.



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