

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | JANUARY 2024

# TOASTMASTER®



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## TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL MISSION:

We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

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# Embracing the Fresh Start of a New Year

When I was growing up, I did the same thing every January 1. After breakfast, I would go walking in the woodlands near our house with just the dog. The old year, whatever it had been like, was gone and now it was time to focus on the possibilities of a new year: the plans that I knew were already in place and the ambitions that were still only dreams. I asked myself if I would dare to make those dreams a reality.

As we say goodbye to the year that has ended, the new year offers us a fresh start. Many of us use this time to write down our intentions, our resolutions, our goals for the year ahead, or maybe like me you choose a guiding word for the year.

Regardless of what a fresh start might look like for you, it will require some effort and commitment. By focusing our energy, defining our goals, and putting plans in place to achieve those goals, we can realize the change we dream of seeing in our lives.

The goals we set are as individual as we are. You may want to run a 5k race, travel to Thailand, read a book every month, or study for a qualification.

We can set goals that relate to Toastmasters too, such as completing a level—or a whole path—in Pathways, mentoring a new member, inviting colleagues to come to your club meeting, competing in a speech contest, promoting your club on social media each month, or offering to serve as a club or District officer.

Regardless of what a fresh start might look like for you, it will require some effort and commitment.

Determining your goal is just a start. We set ourselves up for success when we make a plan of how to achieve the goal, beginning by identifying the specific actions we need to take to succeed and anticipating how we can incorporate those actions into our routines.

A new year can also be a fresh start for your club. January falls in the midst of the Club Officer Training period and offers an opportunity for the Club Executive Committee to review the quality of the club, including its progress toward achieving the Club Success Plan. If your club is not progressing as you had planned, don't lose heart.

Although you can't go back and change the past, you can always start where you are and change direction by embracing the fresh start that the new year offers.

**Morag Mathieson, DTM**  
2023-2024 International President

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## Snapshot



**UPPER COOMERA TOASTMASTERS CLUB** of Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia, celebrates its fifth anniversary with past and present members and District Directors. The theme of the celebration was “achievement,” and each member was acknowledged for their accomplishments. The club gained two new members during the celebration.



## Traveling Toastmaster



**LUCY HO JIA YIING, DTM**, of Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, holds a printed cover of the *Toastmaster* while visiting the Bà Nà Hills in Da Nang, Vietnam.



**SUSANTHA MARASINGHE, ASHOKA RATHUGAMAGE, HIRAN PERERA, and SHENAL PERIES** (left to right), of Sri Lanka, visit the Blinkbonnie tea estate in Dickoya, Sri Lanka.

# The 4 Ps of Effective Meetings

Maximize your opportunity for collaboration.

By Mithun A. Sridharan

Be specific in your objectives and try to make them measurable, so you can gauge the success of the meeting afterward.

**M**eetings can be an incredibly effective tool for people to share ideas, make decisions, and collaborate. However, meetings can also be unproductive and a waste of time and energy.

An effective meeting has clear objectives, with active participation encouraged, relevant information shared, efficient decisions made, and follow-up actions assigned.

Inspired by the work of researchers Kim Cameron and David Whetten, here are some proven methods for how to have an effective meeting every time by following the four Ps: purpose, product, people, and process.

**Purpose:** First, clearly define the purpose of the meeting; ensure it is necessary and has a specific goal. With a clear purpose in mind, you can work toward actionable outcomes. Be specific in your objectives and try to make them measurable, so you can gauge the success afterward. Concisely defining the meeting's purpose ahead of time also gives other team members time to prepare their ideas and thoughts.

**Product:** The purpose of the meeting should lead to a clear and actionable product. For example, if the purpose is to brainstorm a marketing campaign for a new store item, the product (or end result) is choosing which channels the campaign will use and when it will begin.

**People:** Ensure that everyone invited is appropriate, with responsibilities relevant to the meeting's purpose. Throughout the meeting, foster a respectful and collaborative environment where all are free to voice their opinions.

**Process:** Having a clear process ensures the meeting moves along at a good pace and maximizes the time you have. Set your agenda and send it out ahead of time, establish ground rules for the meeting, keep track of time, avoid going off topic, close the meeting with a recap of the discussion and next steps, and send a follow-up email with meeting notes afterward.

## Steps to Plan and Run Effective Meetings

Here are a few steps to take in addition to the four Ps:

**Create an agenda.** An agenda should outline the topics you will cover, the order in which they will be discussed, and the time allocated for each item. Share the

agenda ahead of time so participants can prepare accordingly and suggest additional agenda items, if necessary, but stay focused on the meeting objectives.

**Establish ground rules.** Ground rules might include starting and ending on time, no interruptions or side conversations, and limiting the use of technology. Share these rules with participants ahead of time and remind them at the start of the meeting.

**Encourage participation.** Start by creating a safe and supportive environment where people feel comfortable sharing their ideas and opinions. Encourage active listening and be open to feedback and criticism. Use techniques like brainstorming and round-robin discussions to involve everyone in the conversation. Avoid dominating the conversation yourself or allowing any one person to monopolize the discussion.

**Manage time effectively.** Time management is essential. Allocate time for each agenda item and stick to the schedule. If a discussion is taking too long, cut it short and move on to the next item. Consider shorter meetings, which tend to be more focused and productive.

**Use technology wisely.** While technology can be a valuable tool in meetings, it can also be a distraction. Use technology to enhance the meeting, not detract from it. Tools like screen sharing, online whiteboards, or virtual breakout rooms can facilitate collaboration and engagement.

**Follow up.** Send out meeting notes that summarize the key points of the discussion and the decisions made. Include action items and deadlines, and assign responsibility for each task. Follow up with participants so they are clear on their roles and responsibilities and ensure they have the resources needed to complete their tasks.

Planning and running effective meetings requires careful thought and preparation. By using the four Ps, you can make your meetings efficient and productive, leading to better business outcomes and a more engaged team.

**Mithun A. Sridharan** is an entrepreneur and speaker. He is Club President of Heidelberg International Toastmasters club (HITC) in Germany, and founder and chief strategy officer at Think Insights, a leading portal on strategy, management consulting, leadership, digital transformation, and data literacy.

# 5 Ways to Elevate Your Emails

The do's and don'ts of electronic communication.

By Joel Schwartzberg

Without a salutation, emails may seem rushed and abrupt, even angry.

Even with the popularity of social media and smartphone communications, making your points clear through old-school email is as important as ever.

But all too often, even professional communicators make email-writing mistakes that severely diminish—if not destroy—the impact of their intended points.

Effective emailing starts with wisdom, not just words. Below, find five ways to elevate the readability and impact of your emails from top to bottom.

## 1 Knowing when not to email.

If your point has multiple steps or details, or requires group brainstorming or immediate feedback, or if you need to cover several unrelated matters, consider a meeting instead. Each email should be a one-way, one-topic street.

If you're asking a quick question, sharing a brief comment, or making a personal request, consider a chat or text. No one wants their inbox clogged with just a few words.

But if you want to make a single point or need content reviewed, email may be your best bet.

## 2 Don't sabotage your subject line.

Your email's subject line is the only clue that drives a reader's split-second decision to read, ignore, postpone, or delete the email, so immediate clarity is essential.

Despite this criticality, many emails have subject lines so general that they become virtually meaningless. As I write this, some of the subject lines in my inbox include:

- *Re: Feedback*
- *3/17 Doc*
- *Re: Re: Steve*

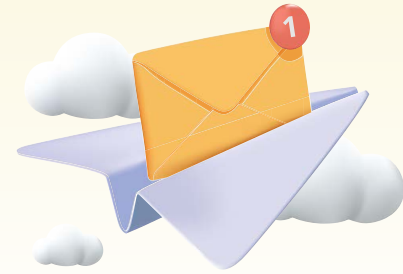
Can you tell me the points of these emails? Neither can I. And I know five Steves.

"The clearest subject lines communicate two things: the topic and the purpose of the email," says business communication expert Chris Fenning, author of *Effective Emails: The Secret to Straightforward Communication at Work*. "The topic is the main subject of the email, like a project name, event, or client name. The purpose is what you want the recipient to do with the message, such as review immediately, respond, or take action."

"When both the topic and purpose are clear in the subject line, readers see what the message is about and what they need to do with it before they even open the email," Fenning adds.

Examples of communicative subject lines:

- *Employee Engagement Survey Results—Read Before Dept Meeting*



- *DATE CHANGE: April Team Offsite*
- *Proposal Brainstorm: Nike Partnership*

## 3 You had me at hello.

In the email body, it's good practice to start with a salutation like "Hi, Peggy" or "Good morning, Walt." (Choose whatever feels natural to you.)

This suggestion may seem like a minor matter of etiquette, but a personal salutation comes across as warm and collegial, humanizing you. Without a salutation, emails may seem rushed and abrupt, even angry. (Imagine a coworker walking up to you at work and suddenly giving you an assignment without first saying "Hi.")

If you're emailing multiple people, try "Hi everyone," and retire gender-specific phrases like "guys."

## 4 End with action.

As you conclude your email, end with a specific recommendation or next step, such as delegating a responsibility, suggesting a next meeting date, proposing the formation of a committee, or volunteering to take action yourself. This articulated action step keeps the conversation—and with it, the project—moving ahead.

## 5 Do a final read.

Spelling and grammar mistakes can distract the reader and even injure your credibility. Always reread and spell-check your emails before sending them. All email programs have spell-check tools, and many have read-aloud features. Reading an email aloud will almost always reveal an opportunity to improve it, even beyond correcting typos.

Email feels like second nature to most of us, which is probably why we don't scrutinize our emails with the vigor we would apply to a speech. But that doesn't mean we should write off its ability to create a significant impact, or our power to produce that impact in our email-writing choices. The decisions you make at the start, middle, and end of that email can make the difference between selling your point and sabotaging it.

**Joel Schwartzberg** is the senior director of strategic and executive communications for a 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 X, formerly Twitter, @TheJoelTruth.

# Lessons From Around the World

What I've learned from virtually visiting clubs in other countries.

By Bil Lewis, DTM

I sat there, horrified by the speaker's description of the desperate fight of native birds trying to survive the ravages of the invasive pythons in Aruba.

Ronny, a Toastmaster I knew from past visits to Aruba, was articulate, passionate, and knowledgeable. He was among the invited speakers to "Stories of the Solstice," an international hybrid meeting hosted by my home club in Sandpoint, Idaho. Members from over a dozen clubs came together from all parts of the world—including Japan, Kenya, England, and France—for formal presentations and a unique Table Topics® session.

Connecting with Toastmasters from other countries has been an unexpected benefit over the past few years. When clubs began moving online, all I could think was, *Yippie! I can visit any club anywhere at any time of the day!* Like a kid in a candy store, I went wild. Sometimes I would spin a globe and point somewhere, then search for the nearest club. Other times, I would select a certain region and choose clubs there to visit. What an adventure!

The opportunity to visit clubs online in different cities, different states, and different countries is a unique and precious gift to our generation. Not only is online communication good for our speaking skills, but it builds international connections and destroys many vague stereotypes.

I have visited some 200 clubs in 40 countries. I have listened to hundreds of speeches from people with completely different backgrounds and different ways of viewing the world. I have often found myself saying, *Huh. That's an interesting way of thinking about this!*

I had never considered the challenges of running dog teams, nor the intricacies of 12th century Muslim friezes (a type of artwork). I found myself overwhelmed by the complexities of India's new identification system, and in tears listening to stories from "Boat People." In Kaunas, Lithuania, the American movie *Home Alone* is revered, and it served as a theme



*Bil Lewis, DTM, performs in costume as U.S. President James Madison, often practicing at his club meetings.*

The opportunity to visit clubs online in different cities, different states, and different countries is a unique and precious gift to our generation.

throughout the entire club meeting I visited, evoking much hilarity.

I've had some really happy times visiting my old clubs in California and Stockholm, Sweden, where I lived for several years. Although Mandera, Kenya, the town where I taught when I was in the Peace Corps, has no club, I was warmly welcomed in the Kenyan cities of Nairobi and Eldoret. My friend and fellow Past District Governor Paul White,

DTM, invited me to his online club based in Annandale, Virginia, where I got to see him deliver a beautiful speech on his mother and "Trees." Impossible without Zoom!

It is fascinating to observe the various ways that clubs implement the Toastmasters mission within the sensibilities of the local culture. In many clubs, members refer to each other with the slightly more formal "Toastmaster [person's last name]," which I find comforting. Some clubs recite the Toastmasters mission. Some clubs in the United States recite the Pledge of Allegiance. There are roles like Quiz Masters, and jokes/poems/thoughts/moments/prayers, etc. All of which are grand individually, though excessive taken as a group.

When visiting clubs in other countries online, I invariably give a speech. I want them to get a feel for who I am and what (some) Americans are like. (My contribution to international relations.) I also want to be a good example. I practice. I hit my time. I have a written introduction. And I always, always, always, do a Pathways project.

At first, I spoke about how to use Zoom effectively for business purposes. I have one friend who is using basic Toastmasters skills to organize small-business meetings through that online platform. There is so much opportunity to use our Toastmasters skills to build our professions, and I wanted to help people do it. I also wanted to make people feel good. I once sang a stanza of *What a Wonderful World* and proceeded to give examples of my friends and acquaintances doing good deeds.

Visiting other clubs around the world has been the most wonderful experience. Plus, when I decide to visit Rio de Janeiro, Santiago, Lima, Manila, or Sydney in person, I'll have people I know that I can visit!

**Bil Lewis, DTM**, is a member of *Humor and Drama Toastmasters*, an online club, and *Lake Pend Oreille Toastmasters*, a hybrid club in Sandpoint, Idaho.

# Are Your Goals Achievable?

Discover three tips to set yourself up for success.

By Bill Brown, DTM

I am a master goal-setter. I've listened to all the trainings and applied what I have learned. My goals are specific and measurable. The problem is accomplishing them. Perhaps you can relate.

The question is: Why am I not accomplishing as much as I want to? Recently I stepped back to analyze that question.

The first observation I made is that there are some goals I get totally absorbed in. I work relentlessly and tirelessly on them until I accomplish them. Why? Because those are goals I really want to achieve. I can't wait to complete them.

What does that say about the other goals? Maybe I need to weed them out. As I reviewed my goals, I set three criteria for my evaluation.

First, is this a goal that I really want, that I am really committed to, or is it only something I think I should want? If I don't have a strong motivation to achieve it right now, maybe I need to drop it or, at least, give it a lower priority. If I want to accomplish my goals, I need to focus on the ones that I am really excited about.

Second, I perform better when I have a single focus. That does not mean that I don't do other tasks. As Vice President Education (VPE) of my Toastmasters club, I have to create the agenda for each meeting, but I also have other responsibilities to take care of. To accomplish all my tasks, I have to pick one and work on it to get it done.

Unfortunately, I am someone who goes through a buffet line and wants one of everything. I am that way with goals, as well. I collect them. And, of course, I want to complete them all immediately. But my goals are never quick tasks. I develop detailed plans of action to accomplish each one and they usually involve major research and development projects. I am an avid reader; therefore, much of that research comes from books. Those books are rarely page-turners. You have to think while you read them, so I set goals to read a certain number of pages per day. No problem—except that I don't stop with one book or two or three. I keep adding them until I have about 15. And then I am no longer reading for content, I am reading



to check it off the list. I start focusing on the process rather than the objective.

I have found that I must limit my reading. Will this book get me to my objective? Or am I reading it just because it sounds interesting? And let me tell you, for a reader like

If I want to accomplish  
my goals, I need to focus  
on the ones that I am  
really excited about.

me, limiting my reading is almost as painful as limiting myself to eating just one chocolate chip cookie. Almost, but not quite. If I want to accomplish my goals, I need to focus.

A third criteria is that the goal must align with how I am wired.

I am a creative person and I like to create something new, whether that's a new project or a new process. Some people enjoy keeping the trains running on time just as they are. I need to lay down track in new directions to stretch my creativity.

The chair of my county's museum board recently suggested that I run for an open slot. I

was tempted. It would place me with a higher visibility in the community and possibly give me more influence over time. But I declined because it was a maintenance type position—it required someone who wanted to keep the trains on the current tracks. The trains were running on time quite well without me. It was a time commitment that I would have found frustrating, and it would have taken me away from something I really wanted to achieve. To accomplish my goals, they need to coincide with who I am and allow me to be creative, so I really enjoy working toward them.

If you find that you are not doing as well as you would like in accomplishing your goals, perhaps you need to step back and look at what you are doing. You may have done a good job creating your goals, but have you set the right ones for you? What goals are you reaching? Where are you falling short? Focus on where you see success and filter out the rest.

You are wired differently than me, so your criteria may be different, but your goal is the same—accomplishment. Let's make it happen!

**Bill Brown, DTM**, is a speech delivery coach in Gillette, Wyoming. He is a member of Energy Capital Toastmasters in Gillette. Learn more at [billbrownspeechcoach.com](http://billbrownspeechcoach.com).

# Toastmasters 2024 Bucket List

Forget the resolutions and find something that inspires you.

By Shannon Dewey

This year, instead of creating a long list of goals that you may or may not meet, look to a bucket list of aspirations to take your Toastmasters experience to the next level.

## Take on a Meeting Role

Whether you're a new or seasoned member, volunteering for a [meeting role](#) can bring an abundance of benefits. With nine roles to choose from, there are unlimited opportunities for growth. Perhaps your strengths are grammar and vocabulary—consider being the grammarian. Do you like to take the lead or be a host? Try out Toastmaster of the Day to ensure a smooth meeting. You can also speak, evaluate, time, or count people's filler words—pick one you're passionate about or try one you've been afraid to take on.

## Participate in a Speech Contest

Each year, more than 30,000 members compete in speech contests. Even if you don't have your sights set on the World Championship stage, there are plenty of other contests you can participate in. For instance, you could put your imagination to the test in a Tall Tales contest where you present a speech on a topic that is highly exaggerated in theme or plot. Or, if you enjoy the thrill of impromptu speaking, take part in the Table Topics® contest. Members who have participated in these events say there's more to it than winning—take the leap and compete!

## Visit a Club

This one's too easy to pass up. If you prefer meeting in person, search for other clubs local to you. But if your schedule is flexible and you've always wanted to visit another part of the world, check out hybrid or online clubs. For several years now members have visited hundreds of clubs outside of their own state or country. You can immerse yourself in another culture, learn a new language, connect with members you'd never meet otherwise, and get ideas on how other clubs run their meetings.

## Make a New Friend

Sometimes a new friendship comes along when you least expect it. You can find camaraderie in your club, District,

and beyond. You already have one thing in common—you're Toastmasters. Members have [shared stories](#) of the connections they've made over the years—some blossomed into friendships and others found love. Get to know the members around you ... you might just walk away with a new relationship.

## Try a Pathways Elective

If you've been going through the Pathways learning experience, you may have noticed “Elective Projects” starting with Level 3 in each path. While at least four electives are necessary to complete a path, you have the option to take on as many as you want. You could create a podcast, prepare for an interview, write a blog, moderate a panel discussion, and more. Pathways was designed for you to go at your own pace, so pick a path and discover what electives align with your objectives for the coming year.

## Speak Outside the Club

Giving Pathways speeches in the club setting is a great way to practice your public speaking in front of a supportive audience. But stepping outside the club—and your comfort zone—is where you can apply the skills you've learned and really shine. You could volunteer to give a wedding toast, speak at your child's school, keynote a conference, give a presentation at work, or be the emcee of an event. Whatever the speaking opportunity may be, take it on with confidence and then cross it off your bucket list!

## Submit a Photo to the *Toastmaster*

You don't have to be a professional photographer to get published in the *Toastmaster* magazine. We're always looking for unique and fun club photos—whether your group goes for a hike, dresses up for the holidays, or celebrates a milestone meeting. In addition, as you travel or go on vacation throughout the year, you can take a picture with a print or digital magazine in hand or other Toastmasters memorabilia for the Traveling *Toastmaster* section. Submit your high-resolution images to [photos@toastmasters.org](mailto:photos@toastmasters.org).

**Shannon Dewey** is digital strategy and engagement editor for the *Toastmaster* magazine.

# Bucket List BINGO

Participate in a speech contest	Speak outside the club	Learn a new language	Volunteer for Table Topics®	Make a new friend
Listen to <i>The Toastmasters Podcast</i>	Pick a topic outside your comfort zone	Watch a Toastmasters webinar	Complete a path in Pathways	Sign up to be a club leader
Become a mentor	Join an advanced club	<b>FREE</b> Read an article from the <i>Toastmaster</i>	Register for the 2024 International Convention	Visit a club online or in person
Go to a Rotary meeting	Give Yoodli a try	Coordinate a Speechcraft workshop	Take on a meeting role	Submit a photo to the <i>Toastmaster</i>
Dive into Toastmasters history	Bring a non-member to a meeting	Start a club	Try a Pathways elective	Meet a member from another country

**TOASTMASTERS**  
INTERNATIONAL



# He's Got Six Decades of Toastmasters Memories

Emmett Clary joined in 1962 and is still going strong.

By Paul Sterman

Few—if any—Toastmasters can say they've participated in Table Topics with Toastmasters International founder Dr. Ralph C. Smedley himself. But Emmett Clary can. The Florida man has been a member for 62—yes, 62—years.

It seems fitting to celebrate such a devoted member in this year when Toastmasters International turns 100. Clary, DTM, is almost as old as the organization: He's 93. He still actively participates in club meetings, and fellow members say his longevity, enthusiasm, and insights are inspiring.

Why has he stayed so many years?

"The change in my life [after joining Toastmasters] was so drastic that I just would never quit," Clary explains. "It's incredible."

The "enormous benefits" include the self-improvement he's experienced from regular club meetings, the lasting friendships he's formed, and above all else, the confidence he has gained. He remembers being a young man and having a boss who bullied and intimidated him.

"Toastmasters builds up self-confidence," says Clary, and that means "not being afraid of people." Now, he adds, "I'm never intimidated by anyone."

## A Long Journey

When Clary joined Toastmasters, back in 1962, he was a young salesman for a telephone company. His lack of self-confidence was severe. One particularly painful memory: He refused to be the best man at his friend's wedding because he was so petrified of giving a toast in front of an audience.

Clary worked in St. Petersburg, Florida, and his boss told him to attend a Toastmasters club that met a few blocks away. For years after becoming a member, Clary's stomach knotted up with nerves before every club meeting. But he could feel the training take hold, and he enjoyed the people. He took on officer positions. His confidence grew.

Though Clary can't remember the exact date he spoke with Smedley, he thinks it was in 1964. (The Toastmasters founder died the next year.) Clary was serving as Table Topicsmaster for the St. Petersburg Toastmasters Club meeting at the Dutch Pantry restaurant. Because

he worked for what was then the GTE phone company (which paid his membership dues for many years), he was able to have a speaker phone (not a common thing back then) placed in the meeting area.

Beforehand, he had arranged for Smedley, who was in the organization's Southern California headquarters, to answer when Clary called. When Clary stepped up to ask his Table Topics® question over the phone, everyone heard the surprise guest.

"I don't remember the question I asked him; however, he talked to us beyond the question," Clary remembers. "He even said 'hi' to our Area Governor, who he knew. He just happened to be there that day.

"Needless to say, everyone was thrilled."

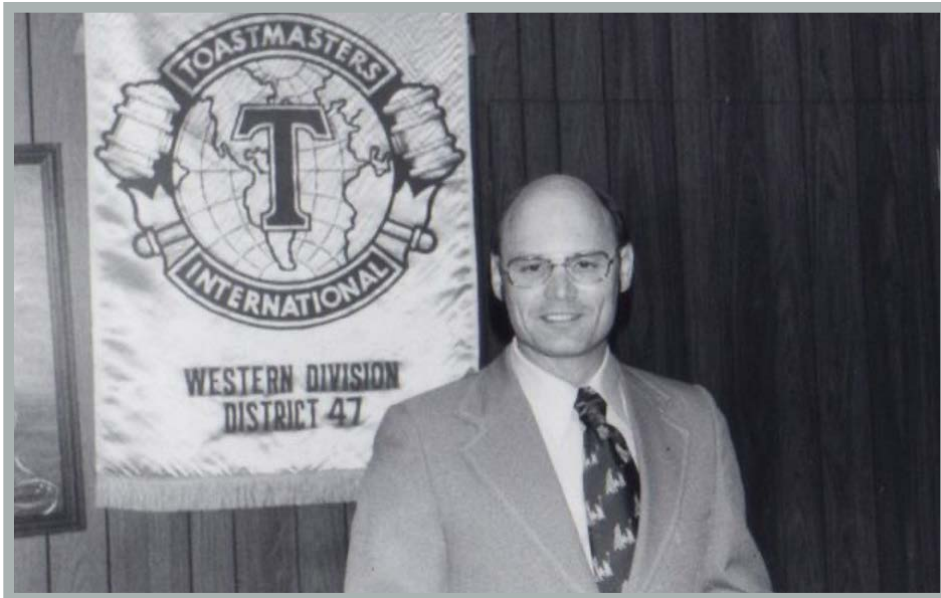
## Distinguished Service

In his six-plus decades as a Toastmaster, Clary has earned the Distinguished Toastmaster award (he was the 88th member in the organization's history to achieve the DTM), started five different Toastmasters clubs, including a Spanish-speaking one (Clary is fluent in the language), visited clubs all around the United States when he traveled for his job, worked with Toastmasters in Mexico and Puerto Rico to teach public speaking to local residents, and has received numerous Toastmasters awards, including the organization's Presidential Citation (for exemplary service), and his District's Lifetime Achievement Award.

The biggest changes he's seen in Toastmasters over the years? He lists the official admission of women as members in 1973, and the creation of the Pathways learning experience. He gave four speeches in the Pathways program, but says that now "I'm too old to mess with it."

In the late 1960s, before the organization's policy on women changed, Clary formed a club with a woman who worked for the federal government in St. Petersburg and was interested in joining Toastmasters. By law, women who worked in federal buildings were required to be included in Toastmasters membership. So the two of them started a club, with about half of the members women, Clary says.

"I was a pioneer in supporting women in Toastmasters," he says proudly.



At left, Emmett Clary, DTM, at a Toastmasters Division meeting circa 1981. He joined the organization in 1962, and his current club, the O-Town Toastmasters in Orlando, Florida, celebrated his 60th anniversary as a member in 2022.

“The change in my life [after joining Toastmasters] was so drastic that I just would never quit.”

—EMMETT CLARY, DTM

## Latest Turn

Clary is still discovering new Toastmasters experiences. For 59 years, he attended the St. Petersburg club; then three years ago, he and his wife, Jo, moved a couple hours away to an independent living facility near Orlando, Florida. But Clary had no intention of quitting Toastmasters. He simply found a new club nearby, joining the O-Town Toastmasters in Orlando.

His fellow club members couldn't be happier. Barbara Bess says she instantly took to “this lovely man who has done so much for Toastmasters.”

“Emmett has been such a joy! He's funny, observant, and quick-witted,” she says, adding that “he lifts spirits.”

Bess, a longtime member of the O-Town club until just recently, wrote a tribute to Clary in the District newsletter. Club President Kenneth Walley, DTM, says Clary is a great asset to the group, which held a celebration to mark his 60 years of membership.

“His wisdom, humor, and love of Toastmasters shine through at every meeting,” Walley says. “Besides being an inspiration for everyone, he is so much more ... mentor, friend, and walking encyclopedia.”



When Clary leads Table Topics, says Bess, his topic questions often reference current local issues, and his speech evaluations “always point out something the rest of us wouldn't have noticed.”

## Trove of Speech Material

Clary likes to draw on everyday life for his speeches. He once spoke about saving a swarm of honeybees that had made a home in his old oak tree. His most recent speech to the O-Town club related to a scary driving incident about 10 years ago, when a railroad crossing gate crashed down on the car Clary was driving. (He wasn't injured.) The gate broke off into three pieces, and he took one of them with him—because he knew that inevitably he would be giving a speech about this.

And he'd already given that speech a couple of times before relaying it to the O-Town club. With so many years of Toastmasters speeches under his belt, he notes, it's easy to recycle old ones.

He's also done a lot of public speaking outside the club setting. “When you're a Toastmaster, you're called on to do all kinds of stuff. I've spoken to all sorts of civic clubs. So I can show up for a free meal and give a speech.”

He adds that he's often asked to give eulogies for friends and family members. By his count, he's given six of them, including three for Toastmasters friends.

Clary, who retired from the phone company in 1988, and then later worked as director of telecommunications at the University of South Florida, marvels at how much he's changed from his early Toastmasters days, when it was so painful to speak in the club.

“Now you can't shut me up,” he says.

For which his fellow club members are eternally grateful.

**Paul Sterman** is senior editor, executive & editorial content, for *Toastmasters International*.



# Building Extraordinary Teams

The key factors and strategies to succeed together.

By Kristin Arnold

**T**here's something about putting together a new team—you might feel a sense of anticipation, expectation, potential, and perhaps trepidation. Every January, Toastmasters clubs either mark the halfway point for their leadership team, or they elect new club leaders for six-month terms.

Whether you are a seasoned leader or a new one, now is a good time to examine your goals. What does your club need, what do you bring to the team, how do you want to grow your skills?

For all leaders, including Toastmasters club officers and members of a workplace or volunteer team, building and maintaining an effective team is crucial to accomplishing anything. Strong teamwork generates better and more efficient results and enhances the relationships on the team. Poor teamwork leads to mistrust, tension, and hurt feelings.

## 8 Factors of an Extraordinary Team

### 1 Clear Goals

The glue that holds any group together is the team mission. For Toastmasters, the club mission is to “provide a supportive and positive learning experience in which members are empowered to develop communication and leadership skills, resulting in greater self-confidence and personal growth.” *Everything* the club does should support this critical mission.

As soon as the team comes together, the first task should be to discuss the goals and priorities for the year. “[Have] the team go through the Club Success Plan. Use the questions as a springboard to quickly identify priorities they are most passionate about,” recommends Bob Hooey, DTM, Accredited Speaker (AS), and past Region Advisor, of Egremont, Alberta, Canada.

When everyone understands and agrees on the purpose and direction of the team, there is less chance of discussions going off topic or getting pulled in different directions.

### 2 Defined Roles

While some of the club officers may be returning to the team, others might be new. Each position has a defined set of tasks. Often, a person is elected to a role with responsibilities that allow the officer to lean into their strengths or develop a desired skill.

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Strong teamwork generates better and more efficient results and enhances the relationships on the team.

Sheryl Roush, DTM, AS, of Afton, New York, who has been a member for over 30 years and held numerous club officer positions, recommends that Toastmasters who are new to officer roles attend Club Officer Training to get a clear idea of what the role actually is (not what they *think* it is!).

Roush also advises that you ask each of your officers the one thing they want to accomplish during their tenure and how the team can help. Let them know they are not alone. Everyone is in this together.

### 3 Valued Diversity

On an extraordinary team, members ideally represent a range of backgrounds, experience, and opinions. Having a diversity of ideas, methods, experiences, and opinions is crucial to success. After all, if all the team members represent the same demographic group or have the same experience, their ideas will reflect a narrow perspective.

Whether you are creative or logical, fast or methodical, recognize each other’s individual talents and tap into their expertise—both job-related and other skills they bring to the team. Dr. Gayatri Deshmukh, DTM, a meditation practitioner and member of two Toastmasters clubs in India, says teams should leverage their diverse backgrounds and skills when assigning roles and tasks—something they can only do when they understand and know one another.



“Celebrate new ideas and give it a try! Don’t be afraid of failure as we can always do it better next time,” he says.

### 4 Open and Clear Communication

Effective teams communicate honestly, openly, and transparently, which is easier said than done. (See the sidebar on page 17 to help make it easier.) On a strong team, members feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas, especially when they differ from the majority’s. Everyone listens with curiosity in order to understand one another. There is no fear of reprisal, shame, or embarrassment for sharing opinions.

### 5 Constructively Managed Conflict

Conflict is normal and natural to the process when you have committed and passionate team members. Some people are quick to express their (often strong) opinions, while others may accommodate the more vocal team members or avoid the conflict altogether.

An extraordinary team manages inevitable conflicts by confronting the issues rather than confronting other team members. They see conflict as a healthy way of “hammering out the truth.”

“It’s important to note that even the best of us are not free from our unconscious biases, so it’s especially critical to take an objective look at the conflict at hand,” Sravanthi Vallampati, DTM, of Aurora, Ohio, a diversity, equity, and inclusion ambassador, says. “Separate the person from the problem, and model neutral language while honoring confidentiality in order to leave the persons in conflict, and the team, whole.”



A difference of opinion may open up possibilities, or problems, the team hadn't thought of before. Rather than be annoyed by different viewpoints, members should pause and consider that angle. Even if the group decides not to act on that opinion, it's important not to assign blame to the person who spoke up.

## 6 Effective Decision-Making

Extraordinary teams must make decisions all the time; it's important to ensure the small decisions don't take time away from the big ones.

"For our decisions to be worthy of our time and energy, also ask, 'Why is this decision important?'" Vallampati suggests. "Value could manifest in many ways for individuals and teams: achieving goals, reducing cost, utilizing talent, resolving conflict, creating a sense of belonging, inventing new ways of learning and doing, empowering team members to lead, acquiring new skills, investing in something new, providing recognition, etc."

Once it's clear how the decision adds value, the team can select the best approach in executing it.

## 7 Balanced Participation

On an extraordinary team, people don't just talk, they participate in a meaningful fashion, contributing when appropriate, regardless of their status in the group or years involved. Members of the team are equally committed. Although sometimes someone may be busier than others, overall there is a balance to the workload. If there is an imbalance, team members should feel comfortable asking for and offering help. One person does not dominate or hold the club hostage.

## 8 Positive Atmosphere

Strong teams establish a climate of trust and openness, because they know they need each other's skills, knowledge, and expertise. Such a climate also means you hear plenty of laughter and the team members enjoy what they are doing. Team members trust each other implicitly, creating a safe environment for open communication and collaboration.

There is a sense of belonging and a willingness to make things work for the good of the whole team.

Deshmukh, the Toastmaster in India, suggests teams of club officers spend time getting to know each other, finding out why they joined the club and why they want to be on the leadership team. Once teammates are comfortable with one another, they can be creative, take risks, and make mistakes.

Roush, the longtime Toastmaster in New York, who works with organizations to increase team morale and engagement, suggests having a creative, lively theme for every club meeting to infuse a sense of fun into the club dynamic. After all, your teammates are investing time with you and the club, so make your time together fun and energizing!

## Set the Stage

One very helpful tip is for a team to establish ground rules at the beginning. These are explicit expectations for how the team is going to behave. Some suggestions might be: "An agenda will be sent out 24 hours in advance of a meeting." This allows members to prepare and be aware of what will be discussed. Another possibility: "Everyone must weigh in before any votes are taken." This helps ensure that no one person may dominate the discussion.

To establish team ground rules:

- Have someone (among club officers, likely the Club President) define what the ground rules are and explain why they are important.
- Ask for input on what ground rules members have seen or used before that they feel would be helpful. Record the ideas.
- Check for agreement. After everyone has listed their ideas, ask if there are any rules that they cannot live with or support. Change as needed.
- Ask the team what the consequences should be if the ground rules are not followed.
- Post the ground rules in a prominent place at every meeting or include them in your board packet or on the agenda.

On an extraordinary team, people don't just talk, they participate in a meaningful fashion, contributing when appropriate.

- Refer to the ground rules at the beginning of each team meeting. One of my volunteer teams started each meeting by going around the table with each person reciting one ground rule. At the end of the meeting, we shared our perspectives about what we did well and the two ground rules we could improve upon.

**Encourage team collegiality.** Build camaraderie. Organize team-building events and casual gatherings, and start each meeting with a quick icebreaker or warm-up to get people talking and involved. Use icebreakers to reinforce the team's values. For instance, take one of the Toastmasters International values—integrity, respect, service, and excellence—and use it as a springboard for discussion. Ask, “What does that value mean to you? And share an instance where you demonstrated or saw this value demonstrated.”

**Show progress.** Take time to review the team's performance regularly. What's working well, and what needs improvement? Continual feedback loops keep the team on track. Periodically evaluate and update team roles based on evolving skills and interests.

For Toastmasters club officers, Rochelle Rice, DTM, AS, of New York City, recommends appointing someone to track your club's success in the

Distinguished Club Program. They can do this by visiting the dashboard on the Toastmasters website to review the Distinguished Performance Report. Share this with your club members quarterly and engage them to be part of the Distinguished Club goals.

**Cheer each other on.** Celebrate achievements, no matter how small. When the team achieves a critical milestone or goal, give credit to each team member. Recognize that one person couldn't have accomplished the task alone and that the team is greater than the sum of its parts. Compliment each member's efforts, achievements, and good qualities. Recognize the simple things they do, such as being on time, completing assignments, and other tasks. A simple “thank you” goes a long way in boosting morale.

Rice suggests asking each team member how they like to be acknowledged when something goes well. Give them a few ideas, because it's possible no one has asked them this question, she notes. “Do they prefer a public acknowledgment? A quiet thank-you email? A handwritten note? At times, I may joke and ask, ‘Do you need a lottery ticket?’” In your heartfelt thank you, weave in specifics about what they did so they know how they contributed to the success of the team.

The foundation of extraordinary teams lies in their collective commitment to these eight factors. Team members should discuss these factors and intentionally create an extraordinary team dynamic that provides awesome value to all members.

**Kristin Arnold** is a meeting facilitator, moderator, and keynote speaker with over 30 years of experience making meetings more engaging, interactive, and collaborative. She has worked with over 450 teams in all 18 identified sectors of the U.S. economy and 147 different industries. Find out more about her at [ExtraordinaryTeam.com](http://ExtraordinaryTeam.com).

## Tips for Team Communication

- ♦ Be sincere. Be candid with each other, openly express ideas, opinions, problems, and feelings with other team members.
- ♦ Be innovative. Be curious about new ideas and different ways of doing things. Brainstorm and build on ideas, without being possessive about whose idea it is.
- ♦ Listen actively. Really focus on what each person is saying as well as the emotions that are expressed.
- ♦ Support others. Clearly express and support your views, and encourage others to share their view, even if it's different than yours.
- ♦ Be helpful. Support each other by asking for and offering help.
- ♦ Challenge ideas. Ask tough, probing questions. Be willing to debate the issues without taking disagreements personally and find realistic solutions.
- ♦ Balance courage and consideration. Have the maturity to balance saying what needs to be said with listening to what others are saying.
- ♦ Park it. Stay focused on the topic at hand and put tangents in the parking lot.
- ♦ Provide constructive feedback. Periodically point out what's working and what's not working so the team can continue the constructive behaviors and adjust the not-so-positive behaviors.



—Kristin Arnold



From left: Newly designated Accredited Speakers Dale Rees-Bevan, Stephanie Angelo, and Verity Price onstage at the Toastmasters 2023 International Convention.

# Three New Accredited Speakers Emerge

Professional speakers earn prestigious designation from Toastmasters International.

By Mackenzie Eldred

The Accredited Speaker Program recognizes some of the most exceptional professional speakers in Toastmasters. It is designed for sought-after presenters who combine expert knowledge in a particular subject with mastery of the spoken word.

This Accredited Speaker (AS) award, which requires applicants to pass two levels of judging, is the highest-earned designation recognized by Toastmasters International. Since the program began in 1981, only 93 candidates have earned this prestigious honor.

Meet the three members who earned the coveted title after giving a live presentation in front of a panel of judges at the 2023 Toastmasters International Convention in Nassau, Bahamas.

## Stephanie Angelo

When Stephanie Angelo first heard about the Accredited Speaker Program, she was intrigued. She had been speaking professionally for 20 years and believed the accreditation would be a crowning accomplishment to her career. “I felt it would prove that I was a working professional speaker and would confirm my dedication to the speaking industry,” she says.

As an expert in company culture, Angelo presents to management- and leadership-level individuals who often face challenging situations. Her presentations focus on “Ethiture®,” a word Angelo invented that combines “ethics” and “culture.”

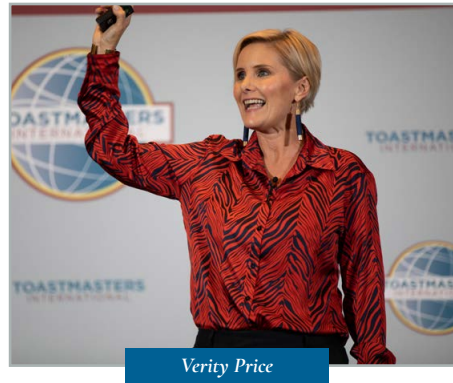
With a degree in business management, Angelo began her career in human resources at a hotel and a hospital, where she frequently gave new-hire orientations and leadership trainings. When she began her own consulting business in 2003, she helped organizations train employees and form policies and procedures, but soon moved on to educating leaders on safety and the effects of domestic violence in the workplace. She spoke on this topic for 16 years across North America and Europe before she transitioned back to her human resources roots. “I had clients that were asking me about company culture and asking for help,” Angelo says. “When I saw there was a need, I knew that that was the right path for me. I fell in love with it.”

Angelo’s driving force is the desire to help people learn to coexist with one another. She believes that making the workplace better can create a positive ripple effect in people’s lives. She became a public speaker to communicate that passion and inspire others. When she rejoined Toastmasters in 2017, after previously being a member for a year in 2003, she used the meetings as a rehearsal space to practice her speeches before presenting to clients.

“The advice I would give to other members who are interested in pursuing the AS designation is to be sure that you’re doing it for the right reasons,” Angelo says. “It’s rigorous, demanding, and requires everything from thorough bookkeeping records to outstanding presentation skills.”



Stephanie Angelo



Verity Price



Dale Rees-Bevan

## Verity Price, DTM

Verity Price is a former professional singer who began doing public speaking in 2007 to raise money to record her debut album. As one of the first online crowd-funders, she became well-known for her ability to think differently when she sold her music before it was produced in a studio. At the time, Price didn't realize it was the start of her speaking career.

Today, Price is a global speaker and facilitator. She has presented at TEDx twice and speaks on strategy, innovation, and crafting a positive mindset for different organizations and industries. A resident of Cape Town, South Africa, she is passionate about changing the world one idea at a time and building happy teams.

"I love to work with organizations to inspire their staff, align strategic direction, solve old problems, uncover new ideas, and gain the competitive edge in their industries," Price says. She has worked with multi-national teams across South Africa and Europe.

With a degree in psychology and anthropology, Price also works as a faculty member at the University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Business. She serves as part of the Executive Education faculty, where she teaches students and leaders across the continent how to present with power.

Price joined Toastmasters in 2011, and is only the second person (after Dana LaMon, DTM, AS) to achieve the three highest designations in Toastmasters: Distinguished Toastmaster, World Champion of Public Speaking (2021), and Accredited Speaker. "It felt like the final step in my Toastmasters journey and something I wanted to get under my belt," Price says about pursuing the designation.

She hopes being the first resident from Africa to become an Accredited Speaker will inspire other professional speakers to pursue the designation. Her advice to anyone interested in the program is to only go for it when your career is well established. "It's important to build your speaking business first and feel that you have a solid footing before pursuing the Accredited Speaker designation."

## Dale Rees-Bevan, DTM

As a professional speaker for more than 25 years, Dale Rees-Bevan inspires others to use language and communication as tools to make a positive difference. Passionate about promoting better communication, she enjoys making people think and helping build their confidence to express their ideas.

Originally from Zimbabwe, Rees-Bevan started her career as a French and English teacher before moving into training and speaking programs. She has conducted workshops and seminars for different professions and industries, including medical, accounting, IT, engineering, legal, and others. When she moved to London, in 1999, she worked with teenagers at SpeakersTrust, an organization that provides public speaking and communication programs across the United Kingdom. Today, Rees-Bevan works with not-for-profit organizations and corporations in Australia, where she currently resides.

She says it's gratifying to help people through public speaking. "I love the creativity involved in thinking about how to present meaningful ideas in a way that lands, and I love hearing people say that certain points changed the way they think and created positive

outcomes," Rees-Bevan says. Her proudest achievement is setting up ChatterCamp, an annual camp for children ages 9-12 where they spend three days learning about public speaking and building confidence.

Rees-Bevan joined Toastmasters while attending the University of Cape Town when she was living in South Africa. In 2017, she advanced to the semifinals of the International Speech Contest. That same year she learned about the Accredited Speaker Program when other members encouraged her to apply. She joined Keystone Speakers, a hybrid club based in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, that offers mentorship to members interested in pursuing the accreditation.

"To achieve the Accredited Speaker [designation] feels like a validation of my journey as a speaker and is also a tribute to the organization that has played a huge role in who I have become," she says.

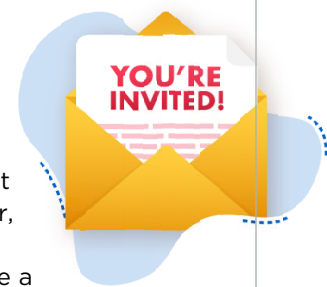
Rees-Bevan advises members to focus on educating people or solving a problem before pursuing the designation. "Build your business, serve your community, and you'll know when the time is right to apply," she says.

**Mackenzie Eldred** is editorial coordinator for the *Toastmaster magazine*.

## Invitation to Apply

Are you currently a paid, professional speaker? Toastmasters invites you to apply for the esteemed Accredited Speaker designation. If you want to build status and increase your visibility as a speaker, this designation can help you with that goal.

To be eligible for the program, an individual must be a Toastmasters member in good standing, have earned a qualifying education award, and have given at least 25 non-Toastmasters presentations in the last three years. At Level 1, candidates are required to submit a complete application, including a video of a professional speech. Candidates who advance to Level 2 give a live presentation in front of a panel of judges at the Toastmasters International Convention.



# Frozen in Front of 5,000 Toastmasters!



Don Colliver

Confessions of an International Convention speaker.

By Don Colliver

Panic coursed through my body as I stared down from the stage. I was midway through my Toastmasters 2023 International Convention education session, “No Joke: Engaging Your Audience Like a Clown (Not the Creepy Kind).” The audience member in the front row that I had just invited to join me onstage gazed up at me thoroughly confused. He began explaining why he couldn’t ... in a language that I did not understand! I chose him because his engaged, positive, and kind demeanor seemed to make him the perfect audience participant, but unfortunately, there was no way to gauge his familiarity with my native tongue. This was an *international* convention, after all.

I’ve faced more than my share of stage mishaps, but this one was occurring in front of an audience of more than 5,000 in-person and virtual Toastmasters attendees. My mind flashed back to my preparation ...

It all started seven months prior when I was overjoyed to receive an invitation to deliver a 45-minute session at the International Convention in The Bahamas. *Wow!* I thought, *What an opportunity!* And then, moments later, PANIC! Even though I speak to Fortune 500 companies and have performed internationally as a Blue Man and contemporary circus clown in front of thousands, I still had doubts. What if I’m not “Toastmaster-y” enough? I took a deep breath and began to prepare for my big talk using four elements: community support, productive feedback, video review, and self-care.

## Community Support

I immediately reached out to Jennifer Perry-Ruzic, the 2022-2023 District 4 Director, to ask if any local clubs

would be interested in hosting my practice sessions, and our District (San Francisco to Los Altos, California) showed up in an incredible way. Clubs that generously allowed me to present included Menlo Park Toastmasters Club, San Mateo Toastmasters Club 191, Evening Stars, SAP Toastmasters, Plane Talk, Daly City Toastmasters, First Republic Toastmasters, and Genentech Toastmasters Club. The members’ crucial feedback completely transformed my presentation.

## Your Takeaway

If you have a high-stakes presentation on the horizon, your speech content is of value to fellow Toastmasters, and you can segment your talk to fit into a club agenda, consider reaching out to local clubs for practice opportunities. Our Toastmasters community is an incredible resource. Repetitive practice before a supportive audience diminishes anxiety thanks to the theory of habituation. Habituation theory proposes that after repeated exposures to a stimulus, the response to that stimulus will decrease. In other words, repeated deliveries of your presentation will result in decreased anxiety. Plus, you will build your speaking skills, try out new ideas, and meet new Toastmasters.

## Productive Feedback

During one of my practice club presentations, one Toastmaster who proudly called herself “the Shredder” delivered a challenging, no-holds-barred assessment of my talk. I grinned and thanked her for her input, but on the car ride home I came up with a quippy retort in response to every one of her criticisms. However, as her comments percolated over the next couple of days, I realized that

every one of her comments was absolutely on target. I gratefully integrated her comments into my presentation. Thank you, “Shredder!”

### Your Takeaway

Hearing feedback can be difficult, especially if your content is personal or fresh. However, the detailed and solitary tasks of writing and rehearsing can cause you to lose perspective and forget to focus on your audience’s needs. If feedback overwhelmingly tells you that a beloved element of your speech does not serve the audience, it’s time to let that element go. You can find a helpful grain of truth in nearly all feedback if you can avoid taking it personally.

### Video Review

As I practiced at home, I began to record and observe my rehearsals. Although watching myself was uncomfortable at first, these viewing sessions allowed me to improve my nonverbal communication and refine physical moments in my presentation. For example (spoiler alert), during a humorous moment of my speech, I trigger my pants to drop to reveal silly boxer shorts (it is a clown presentation, after all). In



*Don Colliver speaks to the audience during his education session at the 2023 International Convention.*

### Self-Care

Once I arrived at the Grand Hyatt Baha Mar resort in Nassau, my nerves wouldn’t let me forget that my presentation was coming up. As I waited for my session, I was grateful to be distracted by the many incredible presentations before mine, like Lisa Nichols’ inspirational keynote.

During the morning of my session, I focused on self-care. At that late hour, I knew that panicked revisions and cramming would do more harm than

### Flashback to the Stage

I was back, mid-presentation, staring down at the confused audience member in the front row that I had just invited to the stage. He clearly did not understand my request. So, I had to move on. As my months of preparation flashed through my mind—community support, productive feedback, video review, and self-care—I realized that I had prepared for exactly this moment. With the ease that only comes with practice, I acknowledged and thanked the original audience member, then smoothly gazed down the front row, landing on another kind, supportive face: the face of Jeff Sobel, DTM, Past International Director. I invited Jeff to the stage to a loud round of applause, and our audience participation portion went off without a hitch.

Patient practice brings about more than just a polished speech. Low-stakes practice and lots of self-care prepares you for all the ways your presentation may *not* go the way you planned. You will get to know your content so well that you will be able to effortlessly adapt to any situation. My Toastmasters 2023 International Convention experience will forever live on as one of my most cherished memories, and I hope the tips I delivered onstage also live on in the speeches of Toastmasters around the world!

**Don Colliver** is a world-renowned keynote speaker and bestselling author living in the San Francisco Bay Area of California. He recently released the book *Wink: Transforming Public Speaking with Clown Presence*. Reach him at [winkpublicspeaking.com](http://winkpublicspeaking.com).

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If feedback overwhelmingly tells you that a beloved element of your speech does not serve the audience, it’s time to let that element go.

my recordings, I observed that my pants would get caught while dropping, ruining the gag’s timing. To resolve this issue, I added weights to my pockets, ensuring that the pants would fall smoothly and quickly. The pants gag was saved!

### Your Takeaway

Observing videos of your presentation can be an efficient route to improvement, but almost no one enjoys watching themselves. You’re not alone! Before you watch yourself, you may find it helpful to pick only one specific element to observe, like eye contact, nonverbals, or pacing. Once you begin watching, there can be a great temptation to simply create a list of all the other areas you can improve, but do your best to resist. Creating a massive list of your faults while you watch yourself is a great way to discourage any further self-observation.

good. I chose to do a gentle workout, eat a light breakfast, and then take time for quiet meditation.

### Your Takeaway

With practice, meditation can allow anxious feelings and sensations to be observed from a detached, curious, and compassionate perspective, allowing them to pass so you can focus on the situation at hand. A 10-minute guided body scan meditation can be an easy intro to this practice. During a guided body scan meditation, a gentle voice guides you to visualize consecutive parts of your body, one at a time, from head to toe, or vice versa. Free meditation apps like [calm.com](http://calm.com) and [insighttimer.com](http://insighttimer.com) have many options to choose from. Over time, this practice can strengthen your ability to observe your anxiety as a detached spectator, a critical shift necessary to improve as a public speaker.



# Finding a Balance to Beat Burnout

Daily routines deliver big benefits when personally tailored to your lifestyle.

By Olya Amelina

A few years ago, a massive physical, mental, and emotional burnout hit me. I was battling constant sickness, persistent neck and back pains, uncontrollable emotions, and an utter lack of energy. Dragging myself out of bed seemed impossible.

No experts could find any solutions, and eventually I took matters into my own hands, embarking on a journey of self-discovery, and ultimately becoming a certified health and performance coach. It was then that I unraveled the truth: The source of my troubles lay in my lifestyle.

Somehow I'd never considered that immersing myself in work could trigger such severe health issues. But thinking back to my lifestyle then, it becomes obvious it wasn't the best: I'd wake up, immediately reach for coffee, and plunge headfirst into work, rarely leaving my home office and delaying meals and breaks until late. Throughout the day, my husband would send gentle nudges for me to step outside, breathe some fresh air, or move a bit, but I'd always counter with the same excuse: "I don't have time."

Eventually, I had no hobbies or passions left, and my relationships suffered. As terrifying as it was, I had to quit my successful career to regain my health and find out what truly mattered to me. It was while I was learning about human physiology and psychology that I started questioning: "Can we chase big dreams and still lead a balanced life?" I can now confidently say it's entirely possible.

Focusing solely on a goal, whether it's a desired promotion, weight loss, parenting, or a podium finish, can lead

to obsession. Pushing yourself too hard doesn't guarantee success, and you can't control outcomes by how much effort you exert. Instead, what you often get is high stress levels and exhaustion.

## Slowing Down to Speed Up

Instead of obsessing over your goal, think of it more as a lighthouse guiding you in the right direction. Keep your focus on the tasks that structure your day. Your daily actions and routines actually shape a supportive environment, gradually helping you progress toward your goals in small, manageable steps.

Consider one of my clients, a working mom preparing for an athletic event. Her mindset was always "the harder I work, the better I'll become." So she pushed herself through six training sessions a week, two hours each, despite feeling hungry or exhausted after a busy day at work. She said she often felt moody and over-emotional; she lacked energy and was constantly hungry. On top of that, her joints were continually aching. You could say that her body screamed for help.

We began by cutting down her training to a few days a week to allow her body time to recover. Simultaneously, we focused on improving her sleep quality and crafted an evening routine—she would put her phone away as soon as she got home from work and spend time cooking with her toddler. After putting her child to bed, she ended her day with calming activities like reading

Your daily actions and routines actually shape a supportive environment, gradually helping you progress toward your goals in small, manageable steps.



a magazine, listening to soothing music, and taking a relaxing shower.

After mastering the bedtime routine, her energy levels began to grow. With this, we gradually reintroduced her intense training sessions but moved them to the mornings to fit better in her schedule. We simultaneously homed in on her nutrition to ensure she stayed fueled throughout the day and during her workouts. After a few weeks of adjustments, her performance improved significantly.

When the day of her event arrived, despite training less and sleeping and eating more, she experienced zero joint pain, was more energized, less stressed, and had better control over her emotions and daily routine.

When you only focus on your big goal, daily tasks get pushed off, and they start piling up. Sooner or later, they can make your life much harder than it needs to be.

## The Importance of a Simple Routine

Daily routines are powerful tools if you tailor them to your needs and desires. They enable you to make the most of your time, saving you mental energy and providing clarity about your day. Moreover, routines create space for things that are important to you, such as friends, charity work, or mastering a new skill. If you feel like you don't know where your time goes, it may help to write down everything you do in a day for a few days. Being aware of your schedule allows you to accomplish what truly counts, and it becomes much harder to get stuck mindlessly scrolling on social media.

There's no one-size-fits-all "magic routine" that guarantees success or peak performance. We're all unique, so the routines to support our individual needs and desires will vary.

For example, I worked with a client eager to boost their daily productivity. Brainstorming ideas to improve their daily flow, we identified two things: 1) their energy peaked in the morning,

and 2) their overloaded inbox and ignored personal tasks were causing stress. Together, we came up with the following morning routine: 30-45 minutes for emails straight after waking up, then breakfast, followed by 30 minutes for personal tasks, a morning run, and a shower. Handling emails and personal tasks early provided a sense of accomplishment and set a positive tone for the day. Breakfast and a run meant they were taking time for themselves first thing in the morning.

However, another client aspires to run a successful business. He chooses not to start working until after he takes his children to school and has breakfast with his wife. Those morning moments with his family are crucial for him since he travels extensively and often works late. His morning routine allows him to balance work and family, ensuring he doesn't spend all his time working.

Two similar goals, two very different morning routines. Yet both ended up working well and allowing each of my clients to achieve what they wanted.

## Choosing Your Routine

Convinced and ready to give designing a daily routine a shot?

First, begin by taking care of yourself. Basic needs are often overlooked when pursuing ambitious goals: eating healthy and regularly, sleeping well, resting adequately, and learning to control your thoughts and emotions.

The best way to establish a new routine is to add one action to another, something that isn't too big or too small, something that doesn't make you feel overwhelmed but gives you a sense of accomplishment.

It helps to consider what basic need you're currently overlooking, then find some small steps to gradually adjust your schedule. For example, if you know you need to improve your sleep, focus on going to bed 30 (or even 15) minutes earlier every night for one week. The following week, try replacing mindless phone scrolling with listening to calming music. A week later, experiencing increased energy from two weeks of good sleep, add more protein to your breakfast. In the fourth week, try adding a fistful of salad to your lunch for extra vitamins and fiber. And so you persist, and every small win will encourage you to continue.

At some point you'll have immersed yourself in the process of these small actions so much that they become not just a way of accomplishing your big goal but also about living a vibrant, joyful life.

My burnout ended up turning my life around. Once I recognized the importance of routines and structure, I started helping others design lifestyles that support their goals and allow them to find joy in life. Balancing my business and my own passions is a challenge, and that's where my daily routines keep me on track.

**Olya Amelina** is a health and performance coach who helps clients create personalized routines so they can perform their best. She lives in Istanbul, Turkey, and is a former member of Istanbul Toastmasters. Learn more at [amelina.health](http://amelina.health).

# Cultivating Authenticity as a Speaker

Learn how to let your true self shine while presenting.

By Elizabeth Danziger

Ron, a middle manager at an automotive parts company, had the chance to make a good impression on top executives by giving a presentation at a companywide meeting. Though he was naturally a gregarious person, he felt he should adopt a more formal persona.

He carefully scripted the whole presentation, even practicing where and when he would gesture with his hands. The big day came. In his attempt to follow the script, he neglected to make eye contact with his audience. Struggling to remember when to move his hands, he used gestures that didn't match his words. In the end, he came off as wooden and off-base. He seemed inauthentic and did not elicit his listeners' attention and agreement.

Clara, who spoke after Ron, took a different approach. Clara was comfortable with herself and did not feel the need to present a different persona to her audience. She studied her facts until she could quote the major ideas from memory. Without notes, she spoke openly to her audience and held their attention. She knew as she finished that she had successfully connected with her listeners. Later, the head of her division praised her for being sincere and authentic.

## What Does It Mean To Be Authentic?

The dictionary defines authenticity as being true to one's own personality, spirit, or character. The word also describes something that is worthy of belief because it is genuine or true. By contrast, inauthenticity seems fake. Unfortunately, even a sincere speaker like Ron can project an inauthentic image if they are uncomfortable onstage.

Being authentic does not mean winging it or saying whatever is on your mind. It requires thought and preparation. Communications coach Nick Morgan writes in a *Harvard Business Review* article that since neither casual spontaneity nor traditional rehearsal leads to compelling communication, "You have to tap into the basic impulses underlying your speech. These should include four powerful aims: to be open, to connect, to be passionate, and to listen. Each of these aims informs nearly all successful presentations."

The intention to openly connect to your audience and listen to their reactions guides authentic speaking.

You can develop these foundations with the following elements of authenticity.

**Know yourself.** Self-awareness is the underpinning of authenticity. After all, if you don't know who you are and how you feel, how can you be your authentic self? Developing self-knowledge begins with having the courage to see yourself as you really are, including your imperfections, doubts, and fears.

You don't need to blurt out your every anxiety when you speak, but by grounding yourself in the reality of who you are, you will make other people more comfortable. Judyth Jernudd, keynote speaker and founder of the Jernudd Company, a speaking and media coaching company headquartered in Los Angeles, California, reflects on her early career as a news anchor. "The producers told me, 'We want you to be yourself. Don't try to be anyone else.' That was the best advice I ever had," she says.

**Know your audience.** To build your credibility, consider your audience members' backgrounds, language patterns, and cultural mores. Customize the images and metaphors you use.

Frank Furness is the past president of the Professional Speakers Association of Europe and has worked in 69 countries. He says, "Your stories have to match the culture and you have to be aware of cultural sensitivities and maybe change some of your slides and presentation. Examples must also match the culture. If I speak in India and mention sports, I will speak about cricket, not American football. In Europe, I might speak about football (or soccer) and not basketball, as the audience needs to relate to what happens in their country."

Your audience members need to feel that they have something in common with you. Building on pertinent cultural details helps achieve this goal.

**Know your material.** It's impossible to come across authentically when you are stumbling over facts or key elements of your message. Rehearse until you know your material cold. Review your notes repeatedly. Memorize vital details and statistics.

When you speak, your listeners expect you to tell them something they have not heard before. That means you need to be original. Furness adds, “The most important thing is to be genuine and use your own stories and material. Never copy anyone else.”

Paradoxically, it takes planning and effort to build an authentic presence. Here are three ways to build your authenticity.

### 1 Match your gestures and tone to your content.

Morgan, the communications coach, writes, “People’s natural and unstudied gestures are often indicators of what they will think and say next.” If we try to control our gestures, our words and motions might get out of sync and confuse our listeners.

Using rapid movements, “studied” gestures, nervous tics, and other physical tells can detract from your image of authenticity. Allow your hands to move naturally in sync with your words; don’t try to artificially connect certain words to specific movements.

“Sometimes new speakers watch videos of successful public speakers and try to imitate



information is not recommended. As Jernudd says, “Delivering a speech is not therapy.” Do not share overly personal information unless you are confident that doing so will not make anyone uncomfortable.

Sometimes, individuals think that being authentic means spouting out whatever is on their mind. They might say, “I’m just being honest and authentic by sharing my truth.” Saying whatever comes to mind is not being authentic.

by limiting you to standing at a lectern and keeping your eyes on the script instead of your listeners.

As you speak, you should be scanning the audience—are they listening to and looking at you? Are they leaning forward to hear you or slumped back, waiting for you to finish? If you are reading from a script, you are likely to miss indicators about whether you are getting through to your audience.

Prepare carefully. Jot down your key points on a note card that you leave on the lectern in case you need to stroll by and look at them. Then let your language flow.

Cultivating self-awareness in your daily life is the best way to develop an authentic presence as a speaker. Be honest with yourself. Be truthful with others within the bounds of sensitivity. Walk through the world with integrity. You are the only you to ever exist: Let your true nature shine through when you speak, and you will always be authentic.

**Elizabeth Danziger** is founder of *Worktalk Communications Consulting*, an author of four books, and a columnist on *Inc.com*. She has taught business communication to companies throughout the United States for many years. You can reach her at [lizd@worktalk.com](mailto:lizd@worktalk.com). Her company sends out *Writamins* writing tips monthly. To receive them, sign up at [worktalk.com](http://worktalk.com).

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“While it’s helpful to learn from those more experienced than you, imitating another person’s speaking style or gestures may come off as inauthentic and fake.”

— LAUREN KERWIN, PH.D.

their style and/or mannerisms,” explains Lauren Kerwin, Ph.D., an associate professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, as well as a psychologist and a coach to business leaders. “While it’s helpful to learn from those more experienced than you, imitating another person’s speaking style or gestures may come off as inauthentic and fake.”

### 2 Be vulnerable, but don’t overshare.

Allowing yourself to show your humanity is a good thing. Blurting out overly personal

Authenticity includes emotional intelligence, which dictates that we should only share our thoughts when our audience is able to hear and understand them. For example, if you strongly disagree with something another speaker says, you can respectfully state your alternative view without sharing a negative opinion of the other person.

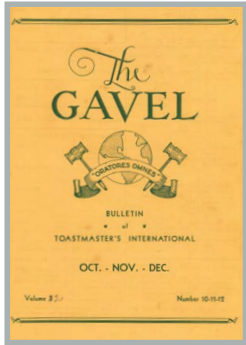
### 3 Don’t speak from a script.

Authenticity implies naturalness. Reading from a script is the opposite of natural. It is forced and often stilted. Moreover, it takes you away from connecting with your audience

# 100 Years at a Glance

In October 2024, Toastmasters International turns 100! In honor of this historic milestone, each issue of the *Toastmaster* magazine this year will show historical facts, photos, throwback articles, or recaps of Toastmasters firsts.

We're kicking off the celebration with a few highlights in the history of Toastmasters. While Dr. Ralph C. Smedley introduced the concept of Toastmasters in 1905, the groups he subsequently established all dissolved—until he started up once again. Our condensed timeline begins in 1924.



The second Toastmasters club is chartered in Anaheim, California.

The first Toastmasters club outside the United States is chartered in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.

The first Toastmasters club outside North America is chartered in Southport, England.

The first District is organized outside of the United States—District 18 in Scotland.

Dr. Ralph C. Smedley, founder of Toastmasters, dies at age 87.



World Headquarters moves to Rancho Santa Margarita, California.

World Headquarters moves to Englewood, Colorado, near Denver.

Toastmasters celebrates 100 years. The festivities officially begin at the International Convention in Anaheim, California, August 14–17.

1924

In Santa Ana, California, Smedley hosts the first club meeting of the Toastmasters organization we know today.

1926

The name Toastmasters International is adopted, and the organization's first bulletin—*The Gavel*—is published.

1930

1932

*The Toastmaster* magazine is published and produced quarterly, replacing *The Gavel*.

1933

1935

The Inter-Club Speech Contest begins. This event later becomes the International Speech Contest, which concludes with the World Championship of Public Speaking®.

1938

1946

Toastmasters International's World Headquarters moves into its own building in Santa Ana, California.

1962

1965

The first Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM) award is issued.

1970

Membership opens to women.

1973

Evelyn Jane Burgay, DTM, becomes the first woman to win the World Championship of Public Speaking.

1977

1990

Toastmasters International charters its 10,000th club. Membership reaches 200,000.

2004

2018

The Pathways learning experience becomes the official education program.

2020

2024



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## CLIENT SPOTLIGHT - BO BENNETT, DTM

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

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

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

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



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