

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | APRIL 2020

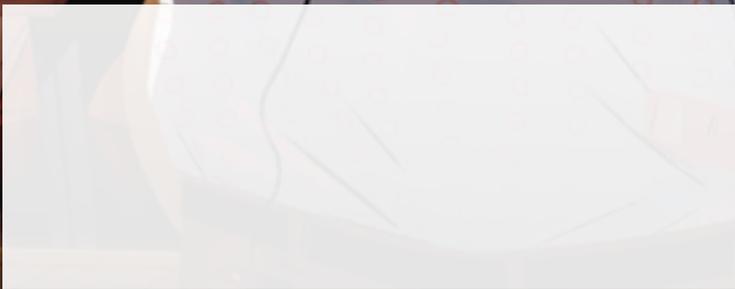
TOASTMASTER®

Forget Your Lines?

How to survive and thrive if your mind goes blank

Ensuring Humor Isn't Lost in Translation

Tips and Tricks for Podcasting



Do You Have the Right Attitude?



Club President Julie was reviewing the club dashboard on the Toastmasters International website and was not thrilled with what she found. It was April and the Toastmasters year was rapidly coming to a close.

Julie realized the club was not on schedule to reach some of its annual goals. She called an emergency meeting of the executive committee to discuss the situation and the measures needed to get the club back on track.

The leadership team pored over its Club Success Plan, which they had created nine months earlier, comparing it with the progress reflected on the dashboard. Within a few hours they had revised several plan tactics.

Julie and her team are not alone in reviewing goals, comparing them with achievements, and re-strategizing for successful outcomes. In the Toastmasters world, members, clubs, Districts, and even the Board of Directors often review their performance to determine if they have reached the milestones that were planned. If not, course correction is the need of the hour.

Are your club goals big enough, exciting enough, scary enough?

When I was a District officer, I was glued to the dashboard. The daily updates provided me with an ongoing measure of my District's health and helped me determine if our members were receiving the service they deserved. If members were achieving their educational goals, it was clear to me that clubs were providing a high-quality learning environment. I did not rest until we had surpassed the goals we had set for ourselves.

What about you? Do you have goals for yourself, your club, or your District? Bob Proctor, a Canadian motivational coach and author, advises setting a goal "to achieve something so big, so exhilarating that it excites you and scares you at the same time." Is your goal big enough, exciting enough, scary enough?

Are you monitoring progress toward your goals? "Review your goals twice every day in order to be focused on achieving them," suggests American motivational speaker Les Brown, a past recipient of the Toastmasters Golden Gavel award. April is not too late to review what you have achieved, what is left to achieve, and what needs to be done to reach the finish line successfully.

President Julie and her team got cracking on their re-strategized plan. They set up a meeting with club members to enthuse and inspire them. They are certain they will achieve their goals this Toastmasters year.

America's third president, Thomas Jefferson, said, "Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing can help the man with the wrong mental attitude."

Julie has the right mental attitude and will achieve her goal. What about you?

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We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.



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Clubs celebrate accomplishments of the group and individual members.



AGOISSI Toastmasters Club of Columbus, Ohio, U.S., celebrates achieving the Smedley Award six times for its membership-building efforts. Members are very proud of their five Distinguished Toastmaster members, including one who has earned the designation three times.

Photo Credit: DLA
Photographer Charles Morris



Members of Toastmasters Ljubljana, Slovenia, and Toastmasters Business Club Slovenia, both of Ljubljana, Slovenia, celebrate the wedding of Katarina Primožič Ramovec, who is holding the *Toastmaster* magazine.



Engadine District Club of Engadine, New South Wales, Australia, celebrates its 45th club anniversary. Club founder Greg Tall, DTM, holds the anniversary certificate, and original Club President Ron Wittig is pictured in the back row, far right.



Send your fun club photos to photos@toastmasters.org. Include a description and your club name, number and location. Photos must be in jpeg format with a resolution of at least 300 dpi (dots per inch) and size of at least 1 MB (megabyte). Out-of-focus images cannot be accepted. It is not necessary to include the *Toastmaster* magazine or other branded materials in your photos, but if *Toastmasters* materials are displayed, they must reflect the current brand.

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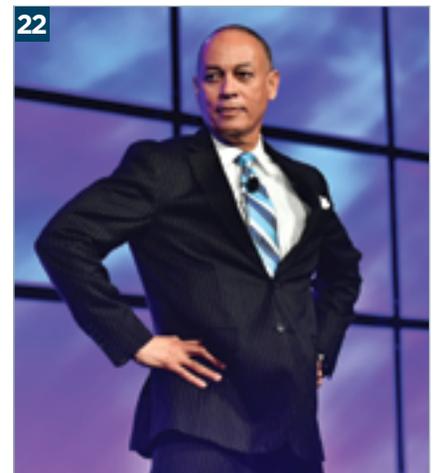
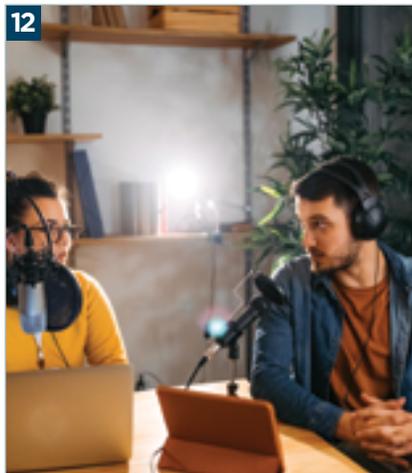
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LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT BEHAVIOR, NOT TITLES

Learn seven techniques to help you better communicate and connect as a leader.

By Karen Friedman



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PRESENTATION SKILLS

SEVEN SECONDS OF TERROR

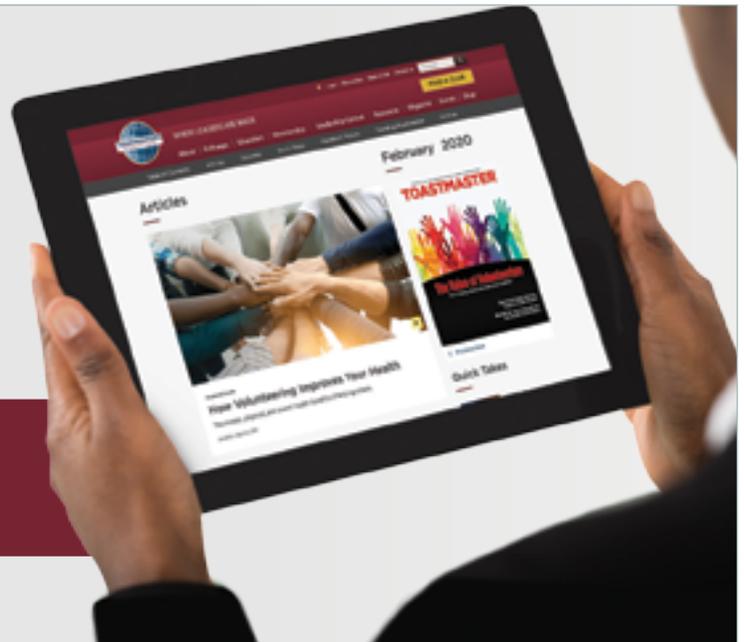
How I survived (and even thrived) after forgetting my lines during a keynote speech.

By Ed Tate

Cover Illustration by Bart Browne



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FIND MORE ONLINE THIS MONTH:



Perfecting a Podcast

Hear from the official *Toastmasters Podcast* hosts Greg Gazin (left) and Ryan Levesque for tips on how to develop a podcast with interesting content.

Body Language for Leaders

When nonverbal behavior and body language don't match, leaders can inadvertently diminish their credibility and sincerity through simple gestures. Watch a video by communications expert Karen Friedman with some quick fixes for body language blunders.



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From Good to Great



Ready to achieve your ultimate goal as a speaker? *Toastmasters Toolbox* author Bill Brown, DTM, shares advice on overcoming roadblocks you might encounter on the path to becoming a great speaker.

WEB RESOURCE

Get Your Friends on the Fast Track



Looking for a way to introduce people to Toastmasters? Try the *Toastmasters Public Speaking Fast Track*, an online learning course featuring instructional videos for people who might need help with public-speaking skills but aren't ready to commit to joining a club. To learn more about Fast Track, visit the link below.

www.toastmasters.org/Fast-Track



This icon at the top of a page means an online extra is included with the article at www.toastmasters.org/Magazine.

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▶ CLUB PROFILE



Reinvention in Chiang Mai

Thai club gets creative to draw in a new demographic.

BY CONSTANCE MUDORE

The Chiang Mai Toastmasters Club in Chiang Mai, Thailand, chartered in 2006, and when it held its 300th meeting in 2019, the room was packed with members and many local and international guests. Most of the attendees enjoying the camaraderie were unaware, however, that Chiang Mai Toastmasters almost lapsed seven years ago.

“The club was founded to help Thai people develop and practice their English communication skills. But by 2013, we realized that it was time to reinvent ourselves,” says current Club President Thanoo Saowaros, DTM, who joined the club that year and later became a District 97 Director.

When the club started to decline in 2013, attendance at meetings, conducted in English, was sparse. Membership dwindled as the club struggled to survive in a city where local people are reluctant to speak English. The *lingua franca* of Chiang Mai is a dialect known as *kham muang* (Northern Thai). Most people in the city also speak Central Thai, and few are fluent in English.

Saowaros says, “The club decided to target people in Chiang Mai who wanted to communicate in English, and who also wanted an international exchange experience, all without having to leave the city.”

In order to reach its newly identified market, the club underwent some major changes. First, members changed the club name. Originally known as The First Northern Thailand Toastmasters Club, the name never appeared in Google searches for “Toastmasters in Chiang Mai,” making it difficult for potential members to find meeting information.

After renaming itself, the Chiang Mai Toastmasters Club began meeting at a location and time more amenable to potential members. Instead of convening on Thursday nights in a classroom on the Chiang Mai University campus, the club held meetings at a popular and centrally located hotel on Sunday afternoons.

The changes helped significantly. In the 2018–2019 program year, the Chiang Mai Toastmasters earned President’s Distinguished Club status for its achievements and the Beat the Clock award for membership building. In September 2019, the club earned the Smedley Award for membership building as well. The club has a stable core of members who are long-term residents of Chiang Mai, and its overall membership consists of a diverse group of people originally from Thailand, the United States, Israel, the Philippines, New Zealand, Kazakhstan, and Saudi



Members of Chiang Mai Toastmasters Club

Arabia. Now, during any particular Sunday meeting, there may be visitors from Taiwan, Japan, Canada, the U.K., Australia, and even local guests from Chiang Mai.

Challenges Remain

Even with increased membership, the club does face some challenges members are working to resolve. “Many non-Thai members tend not to stay in Chiang Mai year-round or even long-term,” says former Club President Edward Kitlertsirivatana, who initially joined Toastmasters in Australia in 2006 and later became a member of the Chiang Mai club. “This transiency poses an obstacle to maintaining a stable core of long-term members. We need to strengthen our core by continuing to recruit younger Thais.

“This means marketing Toastmasters in ways that are appealing and appropriate for that demographic,” he adds. “This isn’t just an issue for Chiang Mai! We need to stay relevant to young people who tend to be most comfortable communicating electronically.”

To better communicate with this demographic, Chiang Mai Toastmasters began updating its Facebook page more regularly with videos, photos, and announcements. Members are also establishing a regular presence on Instagram and Snapchat. The club uses these social media platforms to advertise open houses for students at Chiang Mai University and Wall Street English School, and attendance is high. With strong engagement in person and online, the club is utilizing LINE—a popular chat application in Thailand—to stay connected more directly. The application is used for a lot of the club’s business and provides a way for members to interact daily and provide feedback with ease.

The club plans to continue its active campaigning to attract and retain younger members over the course of 2020. From establishing more frequent Youth Leadership Programs to exploring a way to mentor younger members online, Chiang Mai Toastmasters is focused on continuing to adapt and grow.

Constance Mudore, a retired counselor, joined the Chiang Mai Toastmasters Club in June 2018. She and her husband, a longtime Toastmaster, have lived in Chiang Mai, Thailand, for seven years.

► NEWS FROM TI

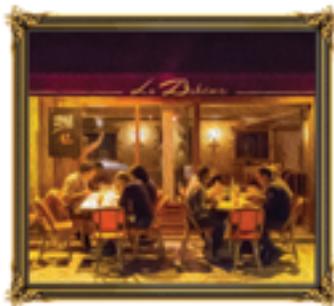
Register for the 2020 International Convention

Save the date for the 2020 Toastmasters International Convention in Paris, France! Be there for opening ceremonies, inspiring speaker sessions, networking events, and the World Championship of Public Speaking®. The 2020 Toastmasters

WHEN:
August 5-8, 2020

WHERE:
Palais des Congrès de Paris

International Convention is the perfect place to reconnect with old friends and meet fellow Toastmasters from around the globe. Just say “oui” to Paris and register today at www.toastmasters.org/Convention.



Promote the Value of Toastmasters

If you need a little help encouraging people to join your club, try using **The Benefits of Toastmasters Membership**, a one-page document that outlines the numerous benefits enjoyed by Toastmasters members. This helpful resource is available in translated languages. You can download and print it and use it to recruit friends, family, and members of your community to join your club. www.toastmasters.org/Benefits-Of-Membership

► CONVENTION

Oui Paris! Must-See Museums

Toastmasters will be heading to Paris, France, August 5-8, for the 2020 International Convention. If you’re planning to attend, mark off some time to visit any of the city’s more than 130 museums, some among the most well-known in the world, others more offbeat and specialized.

Art museums are at the top of most “must-see museums” lists. **The Louvre** is the world’s largest and most visited museum. The former royal palace is now home to some of the world’s most iconic works of art (including the “Mona Lisa”). The **Centre Georges Pompidou** boasts the largest collection of modern art in Europe and has a unique “inside-out” design. You can soak in the luminescent works of France’s Impressionist painters at the **Musée d’Orsay** and the **Musée de l’Orangerie**.

If science is more your speed, check out **Musée des Arts et Métiers**. Located in a former Benedictine priory, it’s Europe’s oldest science museum. The **Muséum Nationale d’Histoire Naturelle** is made up of 14 sites in France, including the spectacularly housed **Grande Galerie de l’Évolution**, located at the **Jardin des Plantes**, a large botanical research garden.

If you’re fascinated by the lifestyles of the Parisian upper class, two museums focus on French luxe living and interior design. **Musée Jacquemart-André** and **Musée des Arts Décoratifs Paris** feature elaborate period furnishings and home design from the past 500 years. To feast your eyes on Parisian clothing design and haute couture, head to the Paris Fashion Museum, **Palais Galliera**, which showcases French fashion trends from the 18th century to present day.

Are you a history enthusiast? The military museum **Musée de l’Armée** includes armor, uniforms, and artifacts from medieval times through World War II. Located in the stunning Hôtel



The Louvre Museum in Paris

Photo credit: Netfalls Remy Musser / Shutterstock.com

National des Invalides, it also includes Napoleon Bonaparte’s tomb. And the **Musée De Cluny** tops many visitors’ lists. Devoted to the Middle Ages, the museum is appropriately housed in a medieval building and boasts an impressive collection of medieval artifacts, including the famous unicorn tapestries.

As one of the oldest cities in the world, Paris appropriately offers plenty to see below ground. The **Crypte Archéologique de l’Île de la Cité** is located in the oldest part of Paris and includes the remains of buildings and homes dating back to ancient and medieval times. There is also a fascinating museum (including tours) of the **Catacombs of Paris**—the underground tunnel of tombs.

Paris has a wide range of specialty museums for every possible interest, including the history of music, fairgrounds, dentistry, fans, eyewear, and wine. And if you have a favorite famous resident of Paris, you’ll probably find a museum devoted solely to them as well!

This is the fourth in a series of articles about Paris in advance of the International Convention. To see previous articles, visit www.toastmasters.org/Magazine. To register for the 2020 Convention, visit www.toastmasters.org/Convention.

▶ SNAPSHOT



Members of the Manchester Business School Alumni Toastmasters in Hong Kong don their beach gear, including sunglasses, swim wings, and floaties, during a “beach party” themed meeting. To enhance the theme, speakers stood in front of a beach view (shown on a projector) while the sounds of ocean waves and bird calls played in the background.

▶ SPEECH TIPS

9 Tips from Toastmasters

1 Know your material. Speak about a topic you’re interested in and know a lot about. Reinforce your message with facts and statistics, if possible.

2 Make it personal. Use humor, personal anecdotes, and conversational language to make your speech engaging.

3 Practice makes permanent. Rehearse your speech aloud using any equipment and/or visual aids you’ll use during your presentation. Rehearse as often as you can.

4 Time yourself. Time your speech every time you rehearse it to ensure you don’t go over the five- to seven-minute time limit.

5 Pace yourself. People tend to rush when they’re nervous, so practice keeping your speech at a calm, steady pace.

6 Arrive early. Give yourself enough time to get acquainted with the stage or presentation area. Be sure to test the microphone and any visual aids you’ll be using.

7 Relax. Breathe and stretch before taking the stage. Pause for a few seconds, smile, and count to three before speaking.

8 Visualize your success. Imagine yourself giving your speech: Your voice is loud, clear, and confident. Imagine hearing the audience’s applause—it will boost your confidence.

9 Trust your audience. The audience isn’t your enemy—they want you to be interesting, stimulating, informative, and entertaining. They’re rooting for you.





1

1 | SEUNGHEE LISA HAN, DTM, of Daegu, Korea, poses with her magazine at Lake Bled in northwestern Slovenia.

2 | DAFINA EDWARDS WILSON of Alexandria, Virginia, stands in front of Skógafoss Waterfall near Skógar, Iceland.

3 | WEI BIN LIM, DTM, of Singapore, stands at the top of Mount Hua near Huayin, Shaanxi, China. The hike to the top is considered one of the most dangerous in the world.

4 | DANIEL GOODRICH, DTM, of Vancouver, Washington, visits the imaginary land of Hobbiton—the movie set featured in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogies—in Matamata, New Zealand.



2



3



4



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



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

Breaking the Barriers of Autism

My experience speaking at the United Nations World Headquarters.

BY THOMAS ILAND, DTM, AS

My experiences as a person with autism, along with a recommendation from the head of the Global Autism Project, led me to speak in front of the United Nations (U.N.) not once but twice in the last year.

In December 2019, I addressed the U.N. on International Day of Persons with Disabilities at an event promoting the participation of persons with disabilities and their leadership. With my Toastmasters experience in mind, I prepared a speech pertaining to the power of people with autism when put into positions in organizations with the objectives of permanent, gainful employment. I started with myself, explaining how during my time as a property tax intern at the Walt Disney Company, my managers were both understanding and accommodating when I disclosed my diagnosis after starting the position. I was eventually promoted to a lead intern position and oversaw the progress of a team of interns. Under my guidance and leadership, the department completed its workload faster than ever.

The U.N. has sustainable development goals that it plans to accomplish on a worldwide level over the next 10 years. These goals pertain to persons with disabilities and include, but are not limited to, quality education, work and economic growth, and reduced inequalities. The U.N. continues to take vital steps toward improving quality of life for those with disabilities and beyond.

“We have so much to offer,” I tearfully told the U.N. audience regarding the possibilities and potential that people with disabilities can bring to employers and other organizations but often get overlooked and underestimated.

Earlier that year, in April 2019, the U.N. had invited me to speak for World Autism Awareness Day and share my



Thomas Iland

stories of law enforcement interactions. As a person with autism, I've had to learn how to communicate differently with people, especially during encounters with police officers over the years. For example, shortly after getting my driver's license, I was pulled over for speeding and nearly got myself shot for reaching for my driver's license in my pocket before the officer asked me to get it. Thankfully, I'm still alive and have never been shot, arrested, or imprisoned. However, people with autism are often unfamiliar with expectations of law enforcement officers, first responders, and other emergency personnel and may not understand nor adhere to verbal instructions, hand gestures, or personal boundaries.

The theme of World Autism Awareness Day at the U.N. was “Assistive Technology, Active Collaboration.” With this in mind, I took the opportunity to use my skills as a Toastmaster to discuss why it's imperative that people with autism receive direct, explicit instruction

when it comes to learning how to interact with the police and first responders. One way people with autism can learn about police interactions is through video modeling—a learning style that features the use of video recordings and images to teach communication and social skills. People with autism can and do learn through video modeling, and it has proven to be effective in improving interactions. In addition, first responders should be trained on how to instruct and interact with a person with autism. When both parties collaborate and better understand one another's expectations, the relationships get stronger and the outcomes are better than ever.

With my platform as a professional speaker, I want to teach audiences all over the world how to bring about and create opportunities for people with autism and other disabilities so they may shine. Thankfully, Toastmasters has helped me to be more articulate, improve my impromptu speaking skills, and find both the confidence and the calmness to speak on vital issues impacting the autism community at the U.N. and beyond. In just the last year, I became an Accredited Speaker and a human potential coach through the Human Potential Institute. My accomplishments highlight how, with the right support and opportunities, people with autism can and do shine.

On behalf of people with disabilities, let me say that we are capable of so much more than the world gives us credit for, and it's time for society to help us not only come to life, but live a life of happiness, purpose, and prosperity! **T**

THOMAS ILAND, DTM, AS, is a professional speaker and certified human potential coach from Los Angeles, California, and a member of three Toastmasters clubs.

Podcasting With Purpose

Tips and tricks to get your podcast started.

BY THOMAS MALUCK



Many performers dream of fame and fortune resulting from their talents, but in the world of podcasting, you will need to temper those expectations. Hold on to that ambition! However, thousands of podcasts start—and end—every month. There are plenty of podcasts started by a couple of friends who enjoy talking to each other but burn out several months later when the show costs more time and money than they believe it is worth. If you are considering starting a podcast, there are three important questions to ask yourself.

1 What is my purpose?

When my podcasting co-host, Kristin LaLonde, asked if I was interested in starting a podcast about comics and libraries, I examined my purpose in joining her. I enjoy advocating for comics as educational and entertaining material, and there are always more comics to endorse, so that motivation took care of itself. Speaking to other librarians and comics experts sounded exciting—as they tend to be a motivated, well-read bunch—so that aspect also won me over. Lastly, I wanted to learn more about using hardware and software to record and tweak digital audio

files. When you ask yourself the purpose of podcasting, consider the message you want to deliver, the expertise you want to build, or the skills you want to acquire.

Speaking with purpose will carry you far.

As of this writing, Kristin and I co-host *The Secret Stacks* podcast at a monetary loss. After four and a half years, we have recorded 56 episodes, accounting for more than 10,000 downloads, or less than 200 downloads per episode. Those are relatively paltry numbers, but we have a purpose and enjoy what we do, and the perseverance that results from acting with purpose has carried us further than if we wanted lucrative sponsorships and mass adoration (not that we would complain). Once you figure out your purpose, you will be ready for the second and most complex step in podcasting: the technical stuff.

2 How will I record and broadcast my show?

Good news: Podcasting is relatively easy! There wouldn't be millions of shows competing for attention if it was difficult.

Creating a professionally produced show loaded with quality content and personality is much trickier though.

There are lots of great guides for selecting recording equipment, from microphones to pop filters and sound-absorbing panels. There are also performance guides to help you avoid certain verbal tics or storytelling tropes that turn off audiences. National Public Radio's student guide to podcasting, for example, has lots of good advice (bit.ly/TI_NPR).

Additionally, when it comes to editing the audio on a computer, the free software program Audacity is fairly easy to learn and includes all the essential editing tools you need. Online tutorials are available to guide you along, such as Audacity's own (bit.ly/TI_Audacity) and The Audacity to Podcast (www.theaudacitytopodcast.com).

Podcasting doesn't have to be an expensive endeavor when you start out. Use technology you probably already have on hand before you spend money and rearrange your house. The microphone for my first year of recording was a basic pair of headphones with a tiny plastic arm that housed a microphone. Once, I recorded impromptu podcast interviews at a conference by talking to willing guests



in a quiet corner of a hotel lobby. I simply plopped my smartphone on the table between us as the microphone.

When plotting out the structure of your podcast, make room for feedback. You control your content, but your listeners are in control of the stop and unsubscribe buttons. For example, Kristin and I solicit feedback via email and social media, and one of our most effective pieces of listener feedback was to cut down our episode lengths. While we enjoyed running our mouths for over an hour and a half, most people seemed comfortable with 45 minutes per episode. Planning out an episode's topics and segments up front will help keep your editing focused on little tweaks instead of cutting entire conversations.

Speaking of editing, can I tell you a secret? Editing podcast audio is like a balm for my public speaking nerves. While I might cringe hearing my audible pauses and prolonged attempts to remember a specific word or name, those moments can all be erased and smoothed over from the editing chair. Kristin and I had no idea we started so many sentences with a tongue click until we were removing them. It's like using a time machine to fix a conversation—we can stop ourselves from making embarrassing mistakes and keep only the constructive and entertaining segments. Playing editor with your own audio will also make you a better grammarian and Ah Counter in everyday life.

3 What do I say, and how do I say it?

This question might be the hardest to answer as it gets to the heart of public speaking. A lot of podcasts crumble under the opposing forces of wanting to say something but not being sure how to express it, settling for meager chitchat and speculation. Maybe you can get away with that if you have a velvety smooth voice, but everyone else needs to speak

HAVE YOU HEARD THE TOASTMASTERS PODCAST?

Starting as a District podcast in 2008, the *Toastmasters Podcast* became Toastmasters International's first official podcast two years later. The hosts, who are also Toastmasters, interview interesting members from around the world, covering a broad range of topics on leadership and communication (www.toastmasterspodcast.com).

In the April online edition, hear tips from the *Toastmasters Podcast* hosts on starting your own podcast. Visit the online edition at www.toastmasters.org/Magazine to read the article and listen.

with more intention and skill. This is why speaking with purpose will carry you far. There's a handy investigative tool that will help you frame your topics and interviews. Ask yourself the following questions:

- ▶ What do I want people to know and what problem does that knowledge solve?
- ▶ If my knowledge doesn't solve the problem, what is the question that will lead me to the knowledge I want?
- ▶ If I don't know what to ask, is there someone else I can ask for their expertise?
- ▶ If the expert doesn't have all the answers, where do they turn to find out more?

The Toastmasters Connection

Toastmasters offers plenty of options for experimenting with different public speaking approaches—which is why clubs offer a great training ground for future podcasters. For starters, club participation will increase your comfort level in a speaking role—whether you're just starting in a relatively quiet role, such as grammarian or timer, or leading the meeting as a Toastmaster of the Day or main speaker. Additionally, giving and receiving evaluations, an important club activity, will help you identify and polish a speaking style all your own. Podcasting success requires the ability to assume a performance role as an everyday occurrence. That kind of confidence comes

from lots of practice—which is exactly what the club setting offers.

Not surprisingly, Toastmasters has recognized podcasts as a compelling new speaking platform by adding it to the many skills to be mastered in the Pathways learning experience. Developing and delivering a podcast is a Level 4 elective in many path choices, giving members a new outlet for creative expression.

Pressing Play

There is no one road to podcasting, and your show will evolve as you learn the ropes and incorporate feedback. The most successful podcasters share a personal sense of fulfillment in common that can lead them to unexpected places. Kristin and I were gobsmacked when we received an invitation to present in Canada at the Quebec Library Association Annual Conference as a result of our podcast. Whatever preparation and equipment you choose to use in your podcasting odyssey, I hope you do it with purpose and find yourself on a surprising adventure. **T**

Thomas Maluck is a teen services librarian at Richland Library and member of Richland Library Staff Toastmasters in Columbia, South Carolina. He reviews comics for *No Flying No Tights and School Library Journal*, and he discusses comics on his podcast, *The Secret Stacks*.

Want to **Speak With Passion?**

Knowing why you care is key, especially in workplace communication.

BY ALLISON SHAPIRA

In Toastmasters club speeches, we tend to choose topics we are passionate about—such as our hobbies or our families—or have an interest in learning. However, many of us struggle to keep that same energy and enthusiasm when we go back to the office and have to deliver an engaging speech about something corporate or bureaucratic.

When my team and I lead trainings in public speaking, we ask speakers one particular question before they prepare a speech or presentation to help them find their sense of purpose. Whether we are leading trainings on-site in Asia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, or North and South America, we always ask: “Why you?”

“Why you?” is one of the most important and least utilized questions in public speaking anywhere in the world. That question unlocks your authentic voice, builds your confidence to speak, and engages your audience, especially in a professional context.

It isn’t, “Why are you qualified?” or “What is your title?” Those are external validators. Rather, it’s “Why do you care ... about the subject of your speech, about the work you do, or about the impact you have on others?”

Your “why you?” is probably not “so I can make more money” or “so I can look good in front of my boss.” It’s deeper than that. It comes from a sense of purpose around why you do what you do. It’s what attracted you to your industry to begin

with, or what keeps you there 20 years later. It’s tied to a sense of pride in your work.

Uncovering Your “Why You?”

Sometimes “why you?” can be hard to find. I remember an experience I had many years ago coaching my friend Patrick, whom I met while dancing tango in Washington, D.C. On the dance floor, Patrick was a gregarious man with a fabulous sense of humor and boundless energy.

One of the best places to include your “why you” is in the beginning of your speech or presentation.

In his day job, Patrick worked in real estate development. One day, he asked me to coach him on an upcoming presentation to a community board. During our session, I sat back and waited for “Tango Patrick” to regale me with his presentation just like he did on the dance floor. But when Patrick stood up, he changed completely. His shoulders slumped, his smile drooped, and he sighed loudly while leaning on one hip and weakly gesturing at his slides behind him. He was afraid that he was a boring speaker.

When we talked about “why you?” Patrick came to a startling realization. I asked him why he cared about his work. It turns out, he didn’t. He hated his job. He

mistrusted his boss. He didn’t like the industry.

He wasn’t a boring speaker; he was just bored.

If you are bored with your subject or unhappy at your job, it’s going to be difficult to give a powerful speech. In those cases, you have a couple of options. You can change careers, which is what Patrick did: He quit his job and realized his dream to revitalize an abandoned building in his city. But maybe you have three kids to support and a mortgage to pay. Instead of searching for what you’re passionate about, think about what you do like about your work. Find something that gives you a sense of pride or purpose: Maybe you like solving puzzles for clients, or perhaps you are passionate about mentoring others. If you need to give a financial analysis presentation, instead of just talking about the numbers, talk about what those numbers mean to your audience.

Let’s contrast Patrick’s story with that of another client named Stacey. I was helping Stacey prepare for an upcoming sales call when I asked her, “Why you? Why do you do what you do?”

She responded, “Well, I like serving others.”

“Why?”

“Because I believe in service.”

“Why?”

“Because that’s what my parents taught me.”

“Tell me more.”

“Growing up, my parents ran their own business. Every single day, I saw them get up early to serve their customers, putting others’ needs before their own. I think about that experience every day when I wake up, and I want to teach that to my children as well. That’s why I do what I do.”

Do you see how we had to dig down a few layers? We had to move past her generic answers to arrive at the deeper drivers of her behavior.

Asking “why you” unlocks your authentic voice, builds your confidence to speak, and engages your audience, especially in a professional context.

You’ll notice “why you?” often comes back to family or childhood, and you may feel strange about sharing a personal story in a business setting. But we are not robots; we are humans doing business with other humans. We are driven by personal motivations, and we have values that guide our actions. When you share those motivations with others, even in a professional environment, you connect on a personal level and establish trust. And trust is the foundation of any relationship, professional or personal.

Defining Your “Why You?”

One of the best places to include your “why you?” is in the beginning of your speech or presentation. Stacey used that story about growing up in a family-owned business at the beginning of her pitch to a small-business prospect. It built her confidence because it reminded her why she cares about her work. Hearing that story, her prospect is more likely to think, “Yes, she understands where I am coming from. I can trust her.”



Consider including your “why you?” at work when introducing yourself to a new group of colleagues or when presenting to leadership. If you are leading a team, ask everyone to answer the question as it relates to their work. Sharing their answers with one another will help them bond as a group.

If you’re stuck, here are three questions to ask yourself:

- ▶ Why do you care about your audience or about the event where you’re speaking?
- ▶ Why do you care about your subject or your organization?
- ▶ What are you most proud of in your work?

Defining your “why you?” is the key to finding a sense of purpose in all of your communications.

- ▶ It helps you choose language that is authentic to you rather than falling back on corporate jargon or taglines.
- ▶ It animates your body and voice. When you truly believe in your message, that sense of purpose can infuse your entire person.
- ▶ It builds your confidence. Young professionals and seasoned executives

alike confess to a lack of confidence when speaking, worrying, *What if others in the room know more than I do?* or *What if the audience is wondering why I have the authority to speak?* Connecting with “why you?” reinforces your credibility.

Before your next speech or presentation at work, write down your answer to that question and repeat it before you walk into a room. It will help you calm your nerves, build your confidence, connect with your audience, and speak with as much purpose as you do in your Toastmasters club. ■

Allison Shapira is a former opera singer and the founder/CEO of Global Public Speaking, a training firm in Washington, D.C. She teaches at the Harvard Kennedy School, gives musical keynote speeches around the world, and is the author of *Speak with Impact: How to Command the Room and Influence Others*. She was a member of the Boston Toastmasters Club in Boston, Massachusetts, and the IDB Development Speakers Club in Washington, D.C., and co-founded both the Crimson and Harvard Toastmasters clubs in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



How Does **Humor** Translate?

Sparking laughter in different languages is a complex challenge.

BY SHAELYN BERG

Think about a joke you heard recently, one that really made you laugh. Maybe even one you told. Now consider telling that same joke to someone from another country or culture, or even to someone from a different part of *your* country. Would your listener find it funny?

Humor, along with idiomatic phrases, gestures, body language, appearance, and many other factors you use in your speeches and in your day-to-day life, can literally get lost in translation when presented in a different language, or to an audience from a culture different than your own.

“Something may be humorous in certain regions but deadly serious in others,” says Goetz Mueller, DTM, Chief Reviewer for Toastmasters International’s German Translation Review Team, one of 10 teams of members around the world who have worked extensively analyzing Toastmasters Pathways content in different languages.

Speakers who present in different countries also need to be sensitive to using appropriate humor. Cultural context plays a crucial role in determining what is funny—and what isn't. Dean Foster, an expert on cross-cultural business communication, once received this input from a colleague before delivering a speech in Hong Kong: Start your speech by expressing humility, a trait greatly valued in that culture. The colleague suggested that Foster go as far as apologizing upfront in the event his speech failed to meet the audience's expectations.

"As an American, I viewed this strategy as the kiss of death for my presentation, wanting instead to open with a humorous anecdote about cultural differences, the topic of my talk," Foster wrote in a 2016 *Toastmaster* magazine article.

He explained his dilemma to the audience and said he was trying to accommodate both cultures. He then apologized ... for not having any jokes to tell. The line got a big laugh.

Sarcasm or Self-Deprecation?

Even deciding on which style of humor to use can be fraught with complications, said Foster, the author of a series of books about global etiquette. For example, he wrote, "Humor based on self-deprecation (making yourself the butt of the joke) is appreciated in the West, but in Asia, instead of generating a laugh, self-deprecation will more likely elicit quiet empathy and discomfort with the unfortunate situation that you are experiencing."

Pay attention to visual humor too, he said: "Pratfalls and physical humor play well in some cultures, but not well in others (generally speaking, yes in France and Italy; no in Malaysia)."

Two often-heard mottos in Toastmasters are "Know Your Audience" and "Practice, Practice, Practice." Both of these principles come into play with cross-cultural humor. If you don't know if your listeners will be receptive to your jokes or offended by them, try out your material ahead of time. Comedy writer Nick Jack Pappas, a speaker at the 2019 Toastmasters International Convention, recommends first testing your humorous speeches on a variety of people to get their feedback.

Practice in front of people you trust—like your Toastmasters club or friends and family—to hear their honest responses on whether the material is appropriate. Make sure your group is diverse, with people from other cultures and races.

Something else to consider—not only in regard to humor but cross-cultural communication in general: Body language and nonverbal communication can mean different things in different cultures. Communication "such as gestures or facial expressions can be a tricky thing," says Mueller, the German reviewer.

For example, making the "OK" sign with your hand—creating a circle with your thumb and forefinger—is viewed as a positive gesture in English-speaking countries. But be careful: It is considered offensive in such countries as Russia, Brazil, and Germany. And in Japan, that same gesture symbolizes money.

Finding the Funny in Common

Some humor, of course, does not need translation. Nimble speakers can tackle topics people around the world find funny. That's been a strength of top participants in Toastmasters speech contests: They strike universal chords.

You don't have to be a culture expert to increase your ability to communicate across languages and regions.

In his winning speech for the 2013 Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking®, Chicago resident Presiyan Vasilev, an immigrant from Bulgaria, focused on a universally recognized dilemma: getting stuck with car trouble. In his case, it was a flat tire. First, he broke a cardinal rule of changing a tire: Choose a level spot to park your car. He had pulled over on a slope. He mimed his lengthy and futile attempts to fix the flat, and then recounted a vivid moment of clarity as he reflected on the mess. "I told myself, *You are ... an idiot.*"

In the 2018 World Championship of Public Speaking, second-place winner Zifang "Sherrie" Su regaled the audience with a romantic story of her Toastmasters journey. When the Chinese woman first joined a club, she was befriended by a man named Jim, and they grew closer. She confronted that timeless conundrum: to stay friends, or seek more? Jim urged her to take a risk on a romantic relationship. His argument for why they would succeed: "We are Competent Communicators."

Now that's a language every Toastmaster understands.

Humor in Pathways

When Toastmasters International introduced a humor path last year in the Pathways learning experience, it presented quite a linguistic challenge for the organization's Translation Review Teams. How to navigate the culturally complex terrain of humor in different languages?

The Engaging Humor path is available to all members in English, Arabic, French, German, Japanese, Portuguese, Simplified Chinese, Spanish, and Traditional Chinese. After a path



is developed in English by Toastmasters World Headquarters staff and translated by professional native-speaking translators, Translation Review Teams help review the translated path for cultural accuracy and appropriateness.

Sahar Nassar, translations project coordinator at Toastmasters International, described issues translating certain humorous examples used within the Engaging Humor path. “It was challenging with non-European languages, especially with cultural references.” For example, use of language ridiculing people or mentions of alcohol, which might add to a humorous speech for some Western audiences, are seen as offensive in other languages and cultures.

There was also the matter of finding the right translation for certain English-language words. Nassar explained that a common English phrase used in a joke within a path video—which was part of the speaker’s punchline—was not easily translated into Arabic. The team at World Headquarters was using the English word “shoot,” in the context of expressing frustration over something, but in Arabic, it’s inappropriate to use this word. So instead, they chose an Arabic euphemism for “shoot”—“You are cursed”—that did the trick.

The Simplified Chinese Translation Review Team faced its own obstacles. Liana Kwan, DTM, is the team’s Chief Reviewer. “The biggest challenge was in finding the equivalent cultural term to represent the jokes in Mandarin. There are many aspects that need to be considered, such as linguistic equivalence, paradigmatic equivalence, stylistic equivalence, and also textual equivalence.”

Geographical factors were also key, says Kwan, who lives in Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia. “The jokes in Indonesia Chinese and the jokes in Mainland Chinese will not be the same because of the different cultures. My team members on the Chinese Translation Review Team come from several different countries, where they have different cultural backgrounds that may influence their judgment of equivalent cultural terms to represent English jokes.”

Rui Henriques, DTM, Chief Reviewer for the Portuguese Translation Review Team, describes a challenge dealing with Brazilian Portuguese versus European Portuguese. Working on a different Toastmasters project, his team found a problematic phrase: *a man wearing a suit*. “In Brazilian Portuguese we use *treno*. It is used in European Portuguese but is not sufficiently widespread to ensure everyone understands. In European Portuguese we use *fato* for suit. However, *fato* is also *fact*.”

To resolve any potential mistranslation, the team recommended changing the example to *a female wearing a dress*. *Vestido*, or *dress*, carries the same meaning for all Portuguese speakers.

Henriques, of Vermoim, Maia, Portugal, who is also an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, says part of the challenge of translating Toastmasters material is to ensure the path doesn’t sound too English. “The goal is that the end product can be read as a stand-alone Portuguese version.”

Phrases or individual words can present challenges not just across countries but *within* them too. Mueller, the German

FINE-TUNE YOUR FUNNY BONE

Eager to practice your punchlines? If you want to incorporate more humor into your speeches, try the Engaging Humor path—the 11th path in Pathways. Its projects, which include titles such as “Know Your Sense of Humor” and “The Power of Humor in an Impromptu Speech,” provide tips on writing humorous speeches, using effective timing and pacing, crafting strong openings, and even how to cope when your jokes fall flat. (Hint: Don’t get upset with the audience.)

Like the other 10 paths in Pathways, Engaging Humor features an array of online tools to help strengthen your skills. Videos feature insights from experts such as Darren LaCroix, 2002 World Champion of Public Speaking, and longtime stand-up comedian Judy Carter, author of *The Comedy Bible*.

Use the path to sharpen your humor chops, develop your confidence, and better connect with your audience.

To get started on this path online, visit the Pathways webpage on the Toastmasters International website: www.toastmasters.org/Engaging-Humor-Path.

reviewer, hails from Weissach, Baden-Württemberg, Germany. He is a native speaker of German and Swabian (a language spoken in southwestern Germany). “Even within two languages in one nation, like Swabian and German, certain expressions can have significantly different meaning,” he says.

“The jokes in Indonesia Chinese and the jokes in Mainland Chinese will not be the same because of the different cultures.”

—LIANA KWAN, DTM

For example, one particular phrase, when uttered in Swabian, is a statement of astonishment. However, used in German, it is profane and rude. If you speak English, Mueller points out, you will probably find similar scenarios in using words and phrases across American English, British English, Indian English, Australian English, and New Zealand English.

Taking the Initiative

You don't have to be a culture expert to increase your ability to communicate across languages and regions, whether with humor or other content. As a Toastmaster, you have access to tools that can help you improve your self-awareness. Many of Pathways' paths offer projects such as “Active Listening,” “Connect With Your Audience,” and “Understanding Emotional Intelligence.” Each of these provides strategies for communicating with, and expanding your awareness of, other people.

And of course, clubs meet in over 140 different countries, which means you have a network of individuals to converse with, learn from, and engage with to improve your own skills. Consider visiting a club in another country if you are traveling there for work or a vacation. Members who have done so say the experience is fun and enlightening.

You can also meet and converse with other members on social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, or even at District conferences or the Toastmasters International Convention.

Mueller says that his experience as a Translation Reviewer has taught him to pay more attention to his words, actions, and how he comes across to others. “In an ever more related and connected world, communication and consciously expressing yourself are becoming more important.” 

Shaelyn Berg worked for the Pathways development team and is now a content developer at Kaplan Professional, an education services company. She is a frequent contributor to the *Toastmaster* magazine.

THE TRANSLATION REVIEW PROCESS

Behind translated paths (and other Toastmasters material) are teams of committed volunteer members who devote hours to ensuring materials are suitable for and localized to speakers and members in their regions. Each of the 10 languages currently offered by the organization has a team of Translation Reviewers and Chief Reviewers.

When analyzing the translations of paths and other content, these teams look at everything from Toastmasters terminology to grammar to the suitability of subject matter. They also help with the development of glossaries of frequently used terms, their definitions, and the appropriate translation. They ensure that the translations are true to both the Toastmasters experience and the native language and local culture.

Reviewers work on text within the path, resource documents, video dialogue, and more. They review the translation to ensure native speakers will understand, relate to, and enjoy the path.

After Reviewers finish their work, the path is sent to a professional linguist to touch up grammar and style before it goes back to World Headquarters to be designed, tested, and released to members for use in the club.

For Toastmasters Translation Reviewers, the work is time-consuming and challenging, but it brings personal gratification. “I appreciate the opportunity to get to know members from around the world and sharpen my skill set at the same time, through serving as a Translation Reviewer,” says Liana Kwan, DTM, Chief Reviewer for the Simplified Chinese Translation Review Team. “I find that it helps with my personal growth.”

Rui Henriques, DTM, Chief Reviewer for the Portuguese Translation Review Team, adds, “Knowing that we are providing a service to members around the world who cannot understand English, and who need materials in their mother tongue to fully benefit from the Toastmasters experience, is reward enough!”

—Shaelyn Berg

Leadership Is About Behavior, Not Titles

Learn seven techniques to help you better communicate and connect as a leader.

BY KAREN FRIEDMAN

Once had a boss who said his door was always open. It was, if you were important. I was not that important to him, so whenever I needed to speak to him, his door was closed. When I knocked, he often pointed to something he was doing that was clearly more important and shooed me away.

Given that I was younger and less seasoned than today, his behavior was upsetting and hurtful. He made me feel insignificant, and I questioned whether my contributions to his workplace had any value.

Now, with more years of experience behind me, I understand that he was simply an ineffective and uncompassionate leader. He had a big boss title, but leadership is not about titles. Leadership is about behavior. How you behave as a leader comes down to communication. Do you look people in the eye? Do you slam doors? Do you say one thing and do another? You are communicating through your behavior every second of every day whether you are aware of it or not. If you want to create an environment where people feel valued, then begin by treating others the way you'd like to be treated, and lead by example.

My dry cleaner is a great example of someone who shows leadership behavior. If I have a tough stain, they go the extra mile to remove it. If a button is missing on an article of clothing, they sew it back on without charge. In the heat of summer, working without air conditioning, instead

of complaining they enthusiastically ask how my family is holding up in the heat. Unlike my former boss, my dry cleaner understands how to lead by example.

Your ability to inspire largely depends on how well you can communicate your vision and connect with others. From my observations as a leadership communication coach, mastering these seven communication skills can help you become a better leader.

1 Listen, really listen. When someone is really listening to you, they will maintain eye contact and often angle their body toward you, which signals they are in the conversation (although that can differ in various cultures). Engaged listeners typically don't fidget, tap their fingers, or check their cellphones.

At work, poor listening skills can translate to poor performance, poor relationships, and poor productivity. It takes more concentration and focus to listen than speak. True listening indicates interest in others and makes them feel valued.

2 Sit in your listener's seat. What would you care about if you were the listener? As a former reporter, every time I covered a story, I asked questions that my reader, listener, or viewer might ask. When you communicate, it's important to do the same so you tailor your message to address the needs and concerns of the person you're communicating with. How

does what you're saying benefit, impact, or affect your listener?

I recently coached an organization's leadership team for a meeting where they were going to announce layoffs of nearly 2,000 people. While practicing, instead of immediately delivering the bad news, providing information, and explaining how the company was going to help employees move forward, company leaders spent the first 10 minutes showing slides and talking about new technology, company goals, and how the move would save money.

He had a big boss title, but leadership is not about titles. Leadership is about behavior.

If they had actually communicated it this way, the audience would have likely turned on them. Employees want to know what happens to *them*. Will they get a severance? How will they pay their bills? We advised the team to dump the slides, make a clear point, and have a compassionate conversation that focused on the employees.

3 Be your best self. In the *Journal of Positive Psychology*, researchers demonstrated that people who imagined a "best possible self" for one minute and wrote down their thoughts generated a significant increase in the positive effect on others.



Basic acts of kindness can positively impact others more than you think. I experienced this firsthand when I was seated next to a 99-year-old woman on a plane ride.

I had work to do and didn't want to talk with my seatmate yet wanted to be polite, so I said hello and asked her how she was doing. She burst into tears and said, "Not well." Her husband had died, and she had no family nearby. She had never traveled by herself before and was scared. We talked. I helped her to the bathroom and off the plane, then stayed with her until she was safely seated in a wheelchair and an airline attendant took her to retrieve her bags.

Your ability to inspire largely depends on how well you can communicate your vision and connect with others.

Days later, I received an email from her that read: "Just a note to thank you for being so friendly and helpful to me on our flight!" To me, it was nothing. To her, it meant a lot.

4 Be aware of body language. Be aware of nonverbal cues you may be communicating to others. Are you looking people in the eye when they speak to you and you speak to them? Are your arms crossed? Hands behind your back or shoved in your pockets? Do you check texts and emails when someone is talking to you? Are you standing up straight? Negative body language can send a variety of silent signals and alienate people even if that's not your intention. For example, closed body language may indicate you're not approachable or interested. Poor posture might suggest a lack of confidence. Looking up as you think might be interpreted as boredom.



I once worked with a woman who raised her eyebrows every time she answered a question. Colleagues perceived her as disapproving and negative. Nothing could have been further from the truth, and she never understood why this perception existed. When she saw her habit on video during a coaching session, she was very upset, but relieved to learn why some found her intimidating and unapproachable because now she could work on it.

5 Express empathy. At a recent communications training, my company was role-playing a scenario in which a patient could not afford her medicine and died. At a meeting in this scenario, the parent approached a representative from the drug company that made the medicine and blamed them for her daughter's death. Instead of immediately empathizing with her loss, the spokesperson rattled off a prepared message stating the company's priority was to discover and develop innovative medicines.

Too often, corporate messages are devoid of empathy, and spokespeople are afraid to go off script. Expressing sorrow does not mean you're accepting blame. It says you feel for their situation.

6 Don't bury the lead. In journalism, there is a saying: "Don't bury the lead." It means you should write the most

important fact first. The same should apply to verbal communication in the workplace. People do not want to wade through a bunch of data to figure out what's important. Look for ways to engage quickly through storytelling and stating important facts first so you give people a reason to listen. If you grab attention quickly, they'll say: Tell me more!

7 Be a storyteller. Information is important, but information alone doesn't create emotional connections. A brief story or example helps listeners visualize how your product or service is relevant to their lives. Stories help us feel. If we feel, we care. If we care, we listen. When we support facts with anecdotes, those facts become more meaningful and memorable.

Powerful leaders encourage input and feedback. They understand strong communication skills inspire confidence in others. While titles may bring power and profits, titles don't earn loyalty, trust, or respect. Only behavior will accomplish that. **■**

Karen Friedman is a business communications expert, syndicated columnist, and author of *Shut Up and Say Something* and *Ordinary People: Extraordinary Lessons*. Find out more at www.karenfriedman.com.

Seven Seconds of Terror

How I survived (and even thrived) after forgetting my lines during a keynote speech.

BY ED TATE

I could hear the words of encouragement coming from an audience of thousands when I was giving the keynote speech at the 2016 Toastmasters International Convention in Washington, D.C.

“Come on, Ed, you can do it!” “Take your time. You can remember your speech!”

It was my worst fear. It was every speaker’s worst fear: I forgot my opening line. I blanked out ... for over seven prolonged and painful seconds. Seven seconds of terror.

This had never happened to me before. My panic rose as thoughts swirled in my brain: *I am in front of a live audience of over 2,000 people; thousands more are watching online via streaming video; to top it off, I am a World Champion of Public Speaking, and this definitely shouldn’t be happening!*

I had been thrilled five months earlier when I was asked to be the keynote speaker. This was my moment to thank Toastmasters for a career I love and for completely changing my life. Since winning the World Championship of Public Speaking® in 2000, I have become a full-time professional keynote speaker and executive coach. I help organizations and individuals win high-stakes sales presentations. I’ve spoken around the world in 25 countries and on five continents. I met my wife in South Africa, and today we have a beautiful daughter. This would be my moment to thank the organization.

But still, I was nervous. Yes, Toastmasters helped launch my career. However, this audience would have tens of thousands of evaluators! I prepared for this keynote speech as intensely as I had for the World Championship. In fact, I felt more pressure for this one. In 2000, there were no expectations. No one knew who I was. This time, it was different.

I wanted people to remember this speech, not because a world champion had lost his place but because they had a memorable experience.

As my memory faltered and I stood on stage in silence, judgments swirled in my brain: *This blunder will ruin my reputation around the world! I will never recover from this!* Yet somehow, miraculously, the following happened:

- ▶ I received a standing ovation.
- ▶ Hundreds of people told me what a remarkable speech they thought it was.
- ▶ I sold thousands of dollars in products at the convention bookstore.
- ▶ I got an offer to speak at the convention again in the future.
- ▶ Anecdotally, half of the audience members thought my forgotten line was a speaking technique.

So what made the difference between how the speech began and how it ended? And why did that painful beginning happen in the first place? Looking back, I realize I made three critical mistakes. But then I turned it around and took three corrective steps to right the situation.

Mistake #1: Breaking My Preparation Routine: My regular day-of-speech routine is to rehearse backstage until I’m called up on stage. However, on this occasion, I was asked to take photos with the media. Afterward, Toastmasters audience members began to line up, and I wasn’t going to say no. Before I knew it, the Opening Ceremonies had started. My wife and I were seated in the front row, center. I knew if I left, it would be noticed, and I didn’t want to be rude. So I stayed, committing my first critical mistake: breaking my preparation routine.

Mistake #2: Playing the Comparison Game: The opening act was a group that performed music and sketch comedy. Their performance was amazing, and the audience’s energy was soaring. I thought to myself, *I have to follow this!* I then committed the second critical error: I began to play the comparison game.

Mistake #3: Shifting My Focus: I was so distracted by their presentation, I lost focus on my own. To keep up the audience’s energy and transition to my



presentation, I decided to comment on something in their performance. In their program, they had referred to a “power stance,” and I went with that. I had now committed the third critical error: I shifted my focus from my presentation to theirs.

I’m introduced. I take the power stance. I get the laugh ... but forget my opening line. Seven long seconds follow.

At first, I panicked. Then I took a deep breath, and my preparation kicked in. I remembered not only my opening line but my entire speech.

The “Mindset-Shift”

I made three corrective shifts to regain my footing.

(continued on next page)



Ed Tate strikes his fateful power pose at the beginning of his 2016 Toastmasters International Convention keynote speech.

WHEN YOUR MIND GOES BLANK

The thought of forgetting your lines strikes fear into speakers and actors everywhere. Preparing, practicing, and finding a good routine can help prevent a memory lapse. Here are a few tips from Toastmasters experts.

After his memory lapse on stage, Ed Tate developed a technique he calls “The Tate Rapid-Recall Technique” (or “what to do when you forget your lines”) to help others in similar situations. Among his suggestions:

- ▶ **Take a deep breath, or several of them.** Rather than feed your fear, fuel your confidence. Oxygenate and relax.
- ▶ **Refocus.** Remember your purpose in speaking to this audience. You are here to give them a gift—the gift of your experience.
- ▶ **Use your notes.** Pause, find your place in your notes or outline, make eye contact with your audience to reconnect, and calmly resume your presentation.
- ▶ **Practice helps make perfect.** Rehearse in front of a camera and watch every video. Pay attention to places where you falter. Those are the areas that need more work.

Veteran speech coach Darren LaCroix, 2001 World Champion of Public Speaking, also recommends putting in plenty of practice beforehand and giving your speech out loud more times than you might think necessary. His other tips include:

- ▶ When rehearsing, anchor parts of the stage to specific parts of your presentation. This helps you internalize while giving your audience clarity.
- ▶ Eye contact is critical. Scan your audience to appear confident as you gather your thoughts. Some speakers prefer to make eye contact with a single person to do this.

Professional speaker and speech coach Patricia Fripp suggests the following:

- ▶ Find a signature phrase to use throughout the speech. Many professional speakers do this. If you find yourself blanking, repeating your key phrase gives you a moment to regroup.
- ▶ When you realize you’re stumped, pause to review your key points until you’re back in the flow. If you’re using PowerPoint, move forward to your next slide.

PRESENTATION SKILLS

(continued from previous page)

Correction #1: Pausing and Taking a Deep Breath: After a few deep breaths, I started to refocus.

Correction #2: Refocusing My Attention: I refocused the attention away from myself and to the audience. I tried to move away from the disappointment I was feeling in myself and instead focus on why I was there and why people chose to hear me speak.

Correction #3: Shifting My Mindset: I decided to approach the speech differently. Rather than focusing on delivering a memorized speech, I began thinking of the presentation as a conversation with 2,000+ of my best friends. If you're talking with friends, you rarely, if ever, memorize what you're going to say, and you certainly don't follow a word-for-word presentation. This "mindset-shift" technique has changed the way I speak forever.

Rather than focusing on delivering a memorized speech, I began thinking of the presentation as a conversation with 2,000+ of my best friends.

Once I made those corrections, I immediately relaxed and found myself in a state of flow. I wanted people to remember this speech, not because a world champion had lost his place but because they had a memorable experience.

I recently asked someone who was in the audience that day, my friend Mark Brown, who is also a Toastmasters World Champion of Public Speaking and a previous International Convention keynote speaker, what went through his mind as he watched my struggle.

"I remember feeling fear, concern, pain, and worry. I remember saying to myself, 'Come on, Ed. Relax. You know this. Just take a breath, find your place in your script. You will be fine.'"

He added, "The audience was so supportive, and I felt them willing you to succeed. I was particularly impressed with the calm and professional way in which you interacted with the audience when you asked, 'Have you ever done this?' Then you composed your thoughts and continued to the end without any more 'hiccups.'"

So, yes, I forgot my opening line in front of over 2,000 people. I didn't die. It wasn't fatal. In fact, forgetting my line had many positive unintended consequences that I never imagined. If I can make a mistake like this and live to write about it, you can too. **T**

Ed Tate is an award-winning international keynote speaker and the 2000 World Champion of Public Speaking. Since 1998, Tate has helped corporations, entrepreneurs, speakers, and salespeople hone their presentation and speaking skills. Find out more at www.edtate.com.

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What Was I Saying?

What to do when your train of thought is derailed.

BY DIANE WINDINGLAND, DTM

You've just delivered a dramatic, beautifully crafted sentence, and you gaze out at all the faces staring back at you. Then it happens. Your mind goes completely blank. You stare back at the audience for what seems like an eternity as you frantically grope for the next phrase. You can't believe it, but you have no idea what to say next!

Losing your train of thought can happen even if you have been diligent in your preparation and did your best to memorize your speech. Memorizing your speech can actually *cause* problems, like sounding too rehearsed or unnatural. It can also lead to an increased risk of “blanking.”

Proactively practice a “blanking” recovery plan like this one. It's like a disaster drill for public speaking.

Imagine that every time you practice your speech with the exact same words, you are creating a deep rut, a well-worn path in your memory with no alternate paths. When you present the speech in a stressful situation (even a different room or in front of a different audience), you can be thrown off your well-worn path. And, without alternate paths, you become lost. If you “internalize, don't memorize” your speech, as the 2001 World Champion of Public Speaking, Darren LaCroix, suggests, you can reduce the likelihood of blanking.

Having recovery tactics in place will greatly reduce your anxiety, and you may be able to recover without your audience

realizing you had a memory lapse. After all, they don't know what you are going to say next, so if you change it up a bit, they may think you planned it that way.

Recovery Tactics

Pause. Pause for a couple of beats. Give yourself a moment to remember where you were. The audience will likely think you paused for effect.

Rewind. Repeat the last sentence or phrase. This gives your mind both time to think and a little “restart” jolt. One way to do this is to end the last sentence of one point with a word or phrase you will use to begin the next point. For example, “There are only three things to worry about: bad food, bad people, and bad breath. Bad breath is a bigger problem than many people realize.” The phrase “bad breath” is positioned at the end of the first sentence to serve as a trigger for the next sentence.

Fast-forward. Jump ahead to content you *do* remember. At some point in your speech you may remember what you were going to say earlier. You can work it in when it occurs to you, and you may even prefer the new arrangement.

Take a sip of water. You will look in control and relaxed even if your mind is racing. (If possible, drink from a glass instead of a bottle—you'll look more professional.)

Check your notes. It's best to have just a few key words in a large font, or some kind of brief outline, as opposed to a page full of detailed notes, so your panic won't intensify as you scan them.

Smile. Smile like you have a secret and just look at the audience for a while. You will look confident, and the audience will anticipate your next phrase almost as much as you are.

Have back-up content. Having a short, relevant anecdote to share is a good idea for any presentation and allows for flexible timing.

Get the audience involved. Initiate a short Q&A session or have audience members pair up to discuss an important point or do an activity. While they do that, you can review your notes.

Make fun of your memory lapse and build rapport. “I have completely blanked!” (laugh). “Has that ever happened to you? Now, where was I?”

Practice recovering. Proactively practice a “blanking” recovery plan like this one. It's like a disaster drill for public speaking.

Don't freeze like a deer in headlights and get run over by rising panic. Use these recovery tactics or create your own recovery plan for the next time you lose your train of thought.

Editor's Note: *This article originally appeared in the December 2018 Toastmaster magazine.*

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

Create a Connection

How to use the 3 C's for powerful social interactions.

BY JOHN KERWIN

There's no greater feeling than truly connecting with another person. I do this in my job as a celebrity interviewer, but it's no less gratifying when you connect with someone during everyday encounters.

Throughout my career, I've developed "The 3 C's of Interviewing," which can help you connect with anybody, anytime, anywhere. I call this technique **Comfort**, **Connect**, and **Compel**, and the tips apply to social settings, parties, and any place where you interact with others, including the online world.

Comfort

It's hard to get people to open up and relax if they're not at ease. If you find yourself chatting with someone who seems preoccupied or distracted, don't push on. Stop the conversation and ask if everything is okay.

I once conducted an interview with someone who was clearly distracted and kept shifting in his seat. After failing to figure out what was wrong, I came right out and asked, "You seem uncomfortable—is everything okay?" He said, "To be honest, I have to go to the restroom." So I said, "So do I," and we took a break. After that, he was completely relaxed, and we had a successful interview. By addressing his distraction directly, rather than ignoring it and plowing forward, I helped him refocus and relax.

Another time, I was at a party talking with someone who suddenly realized she

had lost her cellphone. Rather than force the conversation to continue, I helped her retrace her steps until we found it inside her jacket in the coat room. She was relieved, and I felt I had not only helped her feel more comfortable but had made a friend.

If you find yourself chatting with someone who seems preoccupied or distracted ... stop the conversation and ask if everything is okay.

Sometimes a simple smile will make a person feel comfortable, as could telling someone who appears to be nervous, "I don't know why these things make me nervous." Now they have an ally. Search for something that will relax the other person, and you'll be on your way to connecting with them.

Connect

Believe it or not, I'm naturally shy. But I've learned that finding a person's "spark" is the key to connecting. The spark is whatever a person is most passionate about in life. It may be their new baby, their new career, a love for art, or maybe, like my Aunt Betty, a passion for origami elephants. If you find their spark and are curious about it, you've found the kindling that creates a connection.

I once interviewed a tough-guy actor who wasn't connecting with me. He was stoic, giving me brief answers, and not making eye contact. I was going nowhere until I noticed a little airplane on his tie clip. I asked him if he flew. He answered, "It's everything to me. When I'm flying, alone in the sky, it's like I'm at one with God." After that, the interview was a snap. I had found his spark.

Another time I interviewed a child celebrity who was the star of a television show. She was 10 years old and was giving me only one-word answers. "What's it like starring on a show?" "Fine." "Are your parents proud of you?" "Yes." Most people have probably experienced this lack of connection with children or perhaps teenagers. Finally, I asked, "What would you do if you had a free day and could do anything?" She said, "Scrapbooking." I asked if she could show me what that was, and we got some materials and started scrapbooking together. This led to her coming out of her shell. After that, she talked nonstop about her TV show, her friends, and her family. Scrapbooking was her spark.

When I'm in a social situation where I don't know people, I like to use humor to break the ice: "I, myself, am a wedding crasher." "I don't normally dress up, but it's laundry day and this suit was all I had left." "Don't tell anyone, but underneath this suit and tie, I'm Superman." Another option is to ask open-ended questions: "How do you know the host?" "Which



appetizers do you recommend?” “Is this your first wedding?”

Jose Angel Manaiza Jr., DTM, president of the District One Toastmasters Speakers Bureau in Southern California, always listens to others, asks questions, and often punctuates his responses with a big “Wow!” I love watching him connect and get people to share their stories. It reinforces my belief that being genuinely curious about people leads to strong connections.

Compel

The third way to connect is to be compelling—to say and do things that engage and interest the people you’re speaking with. I was at a college graduation ceremony, and as I was talking to some new graduates, they started complaining that the commencement speech was a disappointment. They felt the speaker was describing his own specific experience, which provided no value to their lives, and that the speech was self-congratulatory rather than useful.

Instead of nodding and agreeing, I asked what they would have done differently. This led to each one giving a mini speech, which they found harder to do than they had thought. Then they started critiquing each other, and soon they were laughing. I gained insight into what they had learned and, in turn, helped them feel better about their experience.

It helps if you arrive at an event with conversation starters to sprinkle into the conversation and make connecting with people easier. Sometimes I gather random fun facts or make note of a recent survey or international happening. I’ll find some wedding jokes if it’s a wedding. I used to bring a trick coin and do a magic trick if



John Kerwin interviews fellow Toastmaster and American Idol alum William Hung at a District 1 Toastmasters event. Photography credit: Natalia Melnikova.

there were children at a party. Or I bring a small novelty toy that makes applauding or laughing sounds. When someone says something interesting, I push the button for applause or laughter. People are naturally compelled by party tricks.

Practice connecting with people whenever you can. It’s a skill that gets better with practice. At my Toastmasters club, Coachmasters, in Culver City, California, we have social nights preceding select meetings. This gives members a chance to mingle and connect with others, including guests.

When you talk to others at club meetings, be sure to be inclusive. If you see someone hovering, make it your mission to welcome them into your group and engage them in conversation using some of the techniques mentioned above. Leaders in particular have a powerful opportunity to help members and guests shed their nervousness and feel more connected.

Today’s technology makes it easy to stay home, surf the internet, and

become isolated. There’s never been a time when it’s been more important to connect with others. It takes an effort, but the rewards are great. This is one reason why I love Toastmasters. It’s all about connecting: connecting with the audience when you speak, connecting with other members, and connecting with new visitors.

If you follow the 3 C’s—making sure the person you’re talking to is comfortable, connecting with them by finding their spark, and then compelling them and drawing them in—you will be able to connect with others like you rarely have before. You will also have mastered one of the most important skills of a celebrity interviewer. And you never know when that might come in handy. **T**

John Kerwin is an award-winning interviewer and coach, specializing in interview preparation. His upcoming book is entitled *Talk Big: How to Interview Celebrities and Make Them Love You*. Find out more at www.johnkerwinkidsshows.com.

Make Your Compliments Count

Praise goes a long way when it's authentic and specific.

BY JOEL SCHWARTZBERG

Publicly praising a colleague is an idea that benefits both them and you. For them, it's a signal of encouragement that can boost their morale and inspire more exemplary work. For you, it shows that you're a team player who cares about supporting your coworkers. That's a workplace win-win, whether the expression comes in a speech, during a meeting, or within an email. And opportunities for appreciation have only increased with the rise of workplace social media platforms like Yammer, Slack, and Facebook Workplace.

"Thankfulness moves a person from pessimistic, depressive thoughts to feelings of happiness, joy, and contentment," says well-being specialist Lauren Parsons, who calls gratitude "the ultimate cure for a bad mood, stress, and worry."

But while you have approximately 172,000 English words at your disposal to create a compliment, not all word combinations and phrases have the same impact.

The word "thanks" on its own certainly won't get you far. All it conveys is, "You did something I noticed." For the praise to have an impact, you need to say *why* you're thankful. But even the why can be expressed in both powerful and weak ways. To help you create truly meaningful tributes, see the four tools below, ranked from most powerful to "why bother?"

1 Stories (Most Powerful)

A story is a short but detailed narrative that illustrates the behavior you're praising:

"When we lost power at Thursday's Toastmasters meeting, we feared we'd have to cancel because Clementine was relying on PowerPoint. But she brought paper copies of her presentation, which enabled us to follow along. That demonstrates Clementine's ability to anticipate and prepare

for sudden challenges, something all good speakers should have."

Sharing a relevant and detailed story conveys an authentic understanding of your subject's effort and impact, and that authenticity can go a long way.

"Storytelling helps both leaders and presenters motivate, inspire, and influence their listeners," says Craig Valentine, professional speech coach and 1999 World Champion of Public Speaking. "It also helps them be remembered."

2 Examples (Less Powerful)

An example briefly shares an instance of laudable behavior:

"For example, last week Clementine brought paper copies of her PowerPoint presentation just in case the power went out, which it did."

An example provides justification for your praise and, as a result, reinforces the appreciation and turns it into a good model for others to follow. But in its brevity, an example doesn't project the level of insight conveyed by telling a story. An example provides evidence. A story conveys understanding. Stories are also more riveting than examples.

3 Generic Statements (Less Powerful)

In the context of appreciation, a generic statement is a basic declaration that explains, but does not illustrate or substantiate:

"Clementine's work ethic demonstrates a dedicated commitment to strong preparation."

A generic statement relies on words so broad that they can probably apply just as directly to other people and scenarios. Even if you choose your words carefully, no generic statement can hold a candle to examples and stories in terms of impact.

Imagine two wedding toasts—one contains a personal story illustrating a groom's devotion to the people he loves; the other simply says the groom "is a very devoted and loving guy." It's clear that, in terms of impact, the story is more captivating.

4 Adjectives (Least Powerful)

An adjective is a word that merely describes a person or act:

"Clementine is a great member of our Toastmasters club."

The least powerful form of a compliment, an adjective merely indicates someone has done something relatively positive. The descriptor is so brief and shallow that it holds limited value. Often these are what I call "badjectives"—words and phrases like "great," "very good," even "awesome" that seem useful but are so general that they convey little meaningful information.

The Switch Test

One way to know if your praise is powerful enough is to do "the switch test": Swap another person for the one you're praising and see if your remarks still apply. If they do, dig deeper for a specific story, or at least an example that demonstrates the attribute you're spotlighting. Remember: Powerful praise is unique to the person, making a distinct point. Weak praise can apply to many people, making it nearly pointless.

This process certainly takes more time and work, but the amount of effort you put into your compliment correlates directly to the amount of impact it will have. **T**

JOEL SCHWARTZBERG is the senior director of strategic and executive communications for a national nonprofit in New York City. He is a presentations coach and author of *Get to the Point! Sharpen Your Message and Make Your Words Matter*.



When Good Isn't Good Enough

Take steps to stand out as a speaker.

BY BILL BROWN, DTM

Each one of us joins Toastmasters for our own reasons. Some of us want to improve our leadership skills, others our communication skills. For some of us, becoming a good speaker is enough. Still others among us may aspire to become a World Champion of Public Speaking, a professional speaker, or, perhaps, a top presenter within our company. In such cases, good is not good enough. We need to strive to be great. How do we do that?

The quick answer is become a master in the three areas of speaking: message, structure, and delivery. But again—how do we do that?

It all starts with an attitude. The Toastmasters system is great. It is easy, however, to just focus on, say, completing a path in Pathways, as if that is the end goal. Yes, we will improve, but to really grow, we must use the system as a “pathway” to our true goal. And, we must take responsibility for our own growth. This is true regardless of the level to which we aspire, but it is particularly true if we wish to achieve a higher level, such as becoming a paid speaker or flourishing in speech contests.

Let me suggest a three-step process to point you in the direction of your goal.

Step one: Become aware of what you don't know.

It is easy to think we are close to expert level. I remember hosting a radio show in college. I thought I was pretty good, and one night I recorded my show to find out just how good I was. When I listened to it, I made a startling discovery: My voice was bad—really bad. It was high-pitched and nasally. I couldn't stand to listen to

it, so I decided to improve, eventually discovering the technique for a broadcast voice.

We must take responsibility for our own growth.

Fast-forward many years. I was a Toastmaster and a District winner of the Tall Tales Speech Contest. Again, I thought I was good. Then I attended a meeting of the Founder's District Speakers Bureau, essentially a club for aspiring professional speakers. Our guest speaker that night was Darren LaCroix, the 2001 World Champion of Public Speaking. As part of his presentation, he gave an extended evaluation of one of the speakers. While kind, he was thorough and candid—for 30 minutes. He was not evaluating me, but my reaction was the same it had been that night at the radio station. I became aware of just how much I needed to grow and educate myself in every element of speaking, particularly speech openings and using the stage. And I made it my mission to achieve those goals.

Step two: Spend time around people who can inspire you.

If you are a member of a general Toastmasters club, you might want to join an advanced one as well. A good advanced club can provide a high level of feedback from a number of accomplished speakers. Or you might want to hire a coach or attend a workshop on speaking skills.

You can also plug into online resources available from a variety of sources, such as

Darren LaCroix and fellow World Champion of Public Speaking Craig Valentine, as well as Hall of Fame Speaker (and former Toastmaster) Patricia Fripp. I have gained something from the resources offered by all three and highly recommend them. In fact, part of my morning routine is listening to a short segment of Patricia's training. Not only are these good review sessions, they inspire me to keep improving.

Step three: Select a small group of skill areas and become expert in them.

Because of my experience in radio and voice-over narration, I decided to improve my speech delivery, studying it in depth. It is now my core area of expertise in training and coaching, and I am studying several additional areas in my continual quest to improve.

If you are looking to grow and don't know which speech areas to work on first, I suggest starting with delivery, structure, or openings. Growth in your speaking skills starts with a mindset—a decision to improve and an acceptance of responsibility for your own improvement. It then is followed by pulling together the resources that can help you grow and making a concentrated effort to achieve that growth.

But then again, that is true whatever your goals. Dedicate yourself to moving from good to great. Then fasten your seat belt and begin your journey. ■

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

With My Compliments

We hate them, we deny them, we don't believe them—and we can't get enough of them.

BY JOHN CADLEY



If you like this column, please don't tell me. That would be a compliment, and I, along with many people in the world (yes, it is a universal phenomenon), do not take compliments well. They usually evoke emotions contrary to their purpose—i.e., instead of making me feel good about myself, I feel bad. We've all heard of the super-successful 6-foot silver-haired CEO who receives daily praise for being a paragon of competence, confidence, and poise ... until he goes to his psychiatrist's office, curls up in a fetal position, and cries, "I have a private company jet and 2 million shares of stock, I sit in the VIP box at the Super Bowl, and my contract says if I get fired for gross incompetence they have to pay me \$40 million. I HATE MYSELF!"

I think we can all agree this is a person with low self-esteem. He doesn't think he deserves his recognition and rewards, feels guilty, and lives in constant fear that he will be exposed as a fraud. Now, this scenario may be on a grander scale than most of us experience, but the dynamic is the same. Compliments set off an internal negative feedback loop, which researchers describe as **Low Self-Esteem**→**Cognitive Dissonance**→**High Expectations**. In other words, someone tells us we're great and we immediately think of all the reasons we're not great (*they don't know I sleep with a night light*). This triggers a painful cognitive clash of opposites—someone's opinion of us versus our own—which in turn leads to the horrifying thought that their high regard implies high expectations for our performance.

Personally, nothing makes me more certain I will fail than hearing that someone thinks I will succeed.

All of this is what happens inwardly. Outwardly, we employ one of three strategies to avoid the embarrassment or insecurity a compliment can bring on. You can deflect it (*Oh, I'm really not that talented. I just got lucky.*) ... which is another way of saying your admirer is stupid. You can reciprocate (*I'm smart? YOU'RE the one who's smart!*), which is like a game of hot potato: Toss the compliment back before it requires something of you. Or you can simply discount it (*Oh, that was really nothing. A monkey could do it.*) ... which, again, is like telling your supporter they don't know the difference between you and Bubbles the Chimp.

Low self-esteem serves us well.

Does this mean we should never pay anyone a compliment for fear they will use it as a knout to lash themselves for their myriad failings? Hardly. It's true many of us aren't madly in love with ourselves, but we sure want others to be. In my own case, I said compliments make me feel bad. I didn't say why. It's because they expose my utter hypocrisy. The truth is, I crave compliments specifically because they allow me to say I don't deserve them, which is in fact ME complimenting MYSELF: **Look at how humble I am!** How's that for psychic whiplash?

Low self-esteem serves us well. If you deflect compliments, you're humble and people like you. If you welcome compliments, you're conceited and people hate you. Aren't humans great?

Then there are those people who struggle with *giving* compliments. They don't know what to say. Not to worry. The advice pages have plenty of suggestions. If it's someone you're attracted to, you might try, "If it was legal to marry food, I would still choose you over pizza." How ... romantic? For those who like to get right to the point, how about, "You're someone that I don't want to punch in the throat." What a nice thing to say.

Being that I'm partial by nature to the dark side, my favorites are back-handed compliments, the linguistic equivalent of a wolf in sheep's clothing. Everything sounds great until you realize you've just been torn to pieces. The master, of course, was Winston Churchill, who "praised" the United States by saying, "You can always count on the Americans to do the right thing after they've tried everything else." While the generally recommended response to a compliment is a simple "Thank you," in Churchill's case, the response would have to be, "Thank you—I think." Now that's my kind of compliment. **T**

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

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CLIENT SPOTLIGHT - BO BENNETT, DTM

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

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

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

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

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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