

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | AUGUST 2016

TOASTMASTER®



Geoff Regan:

Canada's Speaker
of the House taps his
Toastmasters skills.

Hit Your Mark
with Passionate
Storytelling

How to Make
a Midstream
Career Move



Leadership and Transition

From 2015 to 2016, and now on to 2016-2017—times of transition in Toastmasters. Each program year, more than 100,000 volunteers lead our clubs and the organization. Many now leave their leadership positions, and many take on new ones. Including me.

At the conclusion of our International Convention this month in Washington, D.C., I will take on the role of Immediate Past International President. A year later, at the convention in Vancouver, I will leave the Toastmasters Board of Directors. Many of you face similar transitions.

At this month's convention, Mike Storkey will step into the role of International President. At times I have struggled with transitions like this one, but it is part of the role of a volunteer leader. I'm eager to support Mike and all our new leadership teams as they begin their work to serve our clubs and members. I expect that, from time to time, I'll be asked for my views, and sometimes I'll offer an observation or opinion for consideration.

I trust our new leaders to commit to our mission and deliver results for our members and clubs.

I hope you've noticed recent stories in the *Toastmaster* magazine about members who use the skills they've learned in clubs to advance other causes: Jimmy Thai helping poor children in Vietnam, for instance. This month's issue features an article on Geoff Regan, the Speaker of the House of Commons in Canada. I hope you take pride in the role Toastmasters has played in enabling these individuals to contribute to our broader world and society, and I hope you see much opportunity for yourself and the members in your club.

I trust our new leaders to commit to our mission and deliver results for our members and clubs. I'm confident our club leaders will continue to provide excellent environments where members can achieve amazing results inside and outside of Toastmasters.

Author Annie Dillard wrote, "How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives." Consistent with this idea, I will always be a Toastmaster. I want to keep my communication and leadership skills sharp. And to be strong as a leader or speaker, we need a base of knowledge, a place to practice our skills and a way to get feedback on our performance. I can't think of a better place than Toastmasters to access these three elements.

It has been my pleasure to serve as International President. I look forward to seeing many of you at the convention in Washington, D.C., and celebrating your achievements.

JIM KOKOCKI, DTM
International President

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We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

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Connecting with other members is an important part of the club experience. These clubs found fun ways to interact in an outdoor setting.



The NTU Alumni Toastmasters club meets onboard a yacht at Sentosa Island in Singapore.

◀ The Chinese English Bilingual Toastmasters club in South Korea organized a joint meeting with the Shanghai Humor Bilingual Toastmasters from China. This is the second year the two clubs have met together.



◀ Members of the Victoria Toastmasters club in Hong Kong held an outdoor meeting with family and friends while taking a walking tour around Muiwo, Lantau Island, in Hong Kong. Members are pictured at the Muiwo Ferry Terminal.



Members from the Imperial, Addis Ababa, Jupiter and Blue Nile Toastmasters clubs in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, traveled to the Gulele Botanical Garden for a mid-year event.



Send your fun club photos to photos@toastmasters.org. Include a description, your club name, number and location. Photos must be in jpeg format with a resolution of at least 300 dpi (dots per inch) or 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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The veteran member of Parliament overcame a speech impediment to thrive in politics.

By Paul Sterman

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Career Transitions

From PR to education to the wine business: How I channeled my skills to make a move.

By Jennifer L. Blanck, DTM

Valuable tools for club officers

Here are some resources and tools to help you succeed:

www.toastmasters.org/Resource-Library

You can also find some valuable e-learning tools in Leadership Central. Just click the Club Officer Tools tab and select Club Officer Roles.



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE



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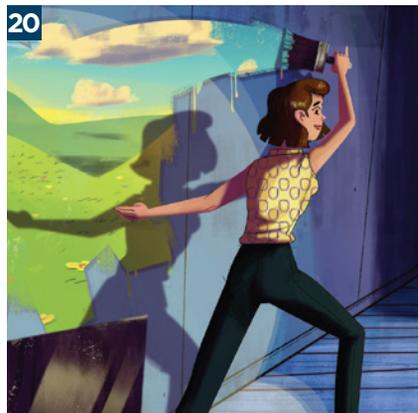
How positive thoughts can transform your life.

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TRAVELING TOASTMASTER

▶ MEMBER MOMENT

The Pursuit of Movement

BY SHANNON DEWEY



Siawn Ou

Siawn Ou is a self-described vagabond who uses the power of movement to connect with his audience.

Born in Beijing, China, Ou came to the United States with his family at age 6 and later moved to Hong Kong to finish high school. Returning to the States at 18, he attended college at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, worked in Boston, then left life in the city for surfing and business school in Malibu, California. After receiving an MBA from Pepperdine University, he moved to South Korea to teach English. Currently, he lives in Sacramento and is a member of State Street Sacramento Toastmasters.

Last year, Ou gave a TED Talk about the art of letting go through movement, with acrobatics as part of his speech.

Why did you join Toastmasters?

I've always been a writer, so putting thoughts on paper is a natural process for me. It was expressing thoughts in speech that was my unexplored art form. When I saw that the company I started working for had a Toastmasters club, I knew it was a perfect opportunity to develop my vocal communication and test my writing grits.

How has Toastmasters helped you?

I just got promoted to officer at State Street Corp. [a leading financial services company] and switched departments to work as a trainer. My new manager is in our Toastmasters club and he saw the evolution of my public speaking abilities firsthand. He recognized that I have a talent for presentation, which was a big factor in his decision for hiring me.

Toastmasters helped change my view on communication. It's taught me how to write with the intent of being heard instead of being read. That was a huge change for me.

**Why do you call yourself a “movement enthusiast”?**

A movement enthusiast is someone who explores and practices different movement arts. I gravitate toward aesthetic movements like acrobatics, martial arts and dance. I got into movement around my 31st birthday, as kind of a challenge to my adult self. I came from a breakdancing background but was always too scared to learn all the aerial and acrobatic movements. I now offer workshops where I teach a variety of skills, from handstands to movement flow to upper body conditioning.

How did you get involved with TED?

State Street has a partnership with TED, and each year the company opens up applications to its 30,000-plus employees to give a TED Talk. In the end, just 11 people were selected. I was lucky enough to be one of them.

I was flown to Boston to perform my talk at the House of Blues. Boston is where I grew up, so it was surreal to return to my hometown after nine years to one of the biggest moments of my life. The crowd was incredibly receptive.

How did Toastmasters prepare you for your TED moment?

Toastmasters was a great testing ground. I still remember the look of absolute shock on one of the members when I opened my speech. I could tell immediately what worked and what didn't. By the time I left for Boston, I knew I didn't need to change a thing. That's pretty rare for a writer.

When I was crafting my TED Talk, I considered using a Power-Point for visual aid. Then I thought, why not just *be* the visual aid? Using the body to articulate parts of your speech brings a rare element to the story. With my TED Talk being about movement, I took great liberty to make it dynamic using whatever physical tools I had.

Do you have any advice for members?

Make it about the art. When you focus on what you're creating instead of yourself, the work begins to take on a life of its own. My TED coach (yep, we had coaches) told me in our first meeting that I needed to make this talk bigger than who I was. Once I accepted this and started taking the ego out of it, I allowed my performance to manifest on its own. All I had to do was get out of the way.

To learn more about Ou, visit www.pursuitofmovement.com. You can also view his TED Talk, “The Art of Letting Go ... of the Floor” at bit.ly/28WAZn2.

▶ **SNAPSHOT**

2015–2016 International President Jim Kokocki, DTM, serves cake to children at the graduation ceremony of the Youth Leadership Program at the Ajax Outspoken Speakers club in Ajax, Ontario, Canada, last November.



▶ **SPEECH SURVIVAL TIP**

“And the Winner Is...”

How to graciously accept an award.

Being gracious requires thought and preparation, whether you’re accepting a Toastmasters award or community recognition. Practice, practice, practice and rehearse your acceptance speech. Time yourself, memorize key people to thank, allow for the unexpected and follow these tips:

- When the award presenter announces your name, come forward promptly—don’t rush or leisurely stroll to the stage. If you are already on stage, step toward the award presenter.
- Stand near the presenter but avoid blocking the award. Don’t stare at the award or reach for it before the presenter extends it to you. When accepting your award, stand slightly sideways toward the audience, then reach for and take it with the hand nearest the presenter. This way you avoid reaching in front of yourself or turning your body away from the audience.
- After receiving the award, hold it in full view of the audience. If it is too large or heavy to hold, place it on the lectern, step to one side, and begin your acceptance speech. When you have finished speaking, carry the award as you leave the stage.

Three ingredients that every acceptance speech should include are:

1 Gratitude. Be modest. Thank the one or two people who played a major role in your achievement. Your acceptance speech should be heartfelt but not self-congratulatory.



2 Recognition. Show your appreciation and be gracious. Recognize the organization giving the award. Tell about its work and its importance to others and to you. Acknowledge the good work done by your competitors and thank the organization that selected you for the award.

3 Sincerity. Show your personality. Your acceptance speech should come from the heart. The best thanks an audience or organization can receive is an honest and unexaggerated expression of gratitude.

Learn more about acceptance speeches by exploring the *Special Occasion Speeches* manual in the Toastmasters International Advanced Communication Series.

▶ **MEET MY MENTOR**

Giselle Braeuel, ACS

BY MARY NESFIELD



FROM LEFT: *Giselle Braeuel, ACS, Pamela MacDonald-Wolk, CC, CL*

If you visit the West End Toastmasters club in Kanata, Ontario, Canada, chances are you'll be greeted warmly by mentor Giselle Braeuel, ACS. A member since 2003, Giselle welcomes everyone and ensures that they "know the ropes."

Originally from the small town of Volmarstein, Germany, Giselle immigrated to Canada in 1954. Now working on her seventh *Competent Communication* manual, she also enjoys photography—her former occupation—and participates in a creative writing workshop. She has self-published five books of poetry and a book of short stories.

Pamela MacDonald-Wolk, CC, CL, finance director for the National Golf Course Owners Association Canada, knew about Toastmasters more than 20 years ago. She didn't get the chance

to join until 2010, when she spotted an open house sign in front of her local library. She joined the West End club, and that's when she met Giselle.

What drew you to Giselle?

Giselle reached out to me when I joined and showed me how things worked. After a while, we got to know one another, and I asked her to be my mentor.

What makes Giselle an exceptional mentor?

Giselle is highly regarded at West End as a master storyteller and entertainer who expertly weaves her sense of humor into real-life stories. She leads by example—attending every meeting, committing to roles and preparing speeches regularly. She has served several terms as vice president membership and is arguably West End's unofficial "über-mentor." Often stepping up as a speech contest participant herself, she encourages others to challenge themselves as well. In this way, she inspires everyone, and I see positive results when I push myself to do the same. Because of her, I am comfortable delivering formal speeches and stepping into any role.

What is your favorite thing about Giselle?

She is genuinely interested in everything and everyone, and people of all ages are drawn to her. Giselle has the unique gift of instantly connecting with people. She is truly an inspiration to all our club members.

NOMINATE YOUR MARVELOUS MENTOR!

Do you know an exceptional mentor who has positively influenced you? Send a 200-word description and photo (1 MB or larger) of you and your mentor to MentorMoment@toastmasters.org.

▶ **PATHWAYS TRANSLATIONS**

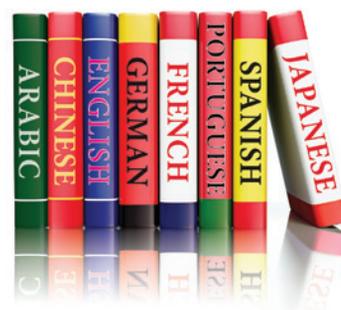
Toastmasters Pathways

The global effort to translate the revitalized education program has begun. You will have the opportunity to develop more skills than ever before through Toastmasters Pathways, the organization's new learning experience. All program materials will be translated into the following languages: Arabic, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Portuguese and Spanish.

This massive project involves the contribution and support of people from all over the world—a team of professional translators and editors, project coordinators, linguists, and editorial, design and technical personnel at World Headquarters, as well as in-country Toastmasters volunteer reviewers.

Toastmasters Pathways will also comprise online interactive learning tools—including videos, quizzes and activities—all of which will be translated.

For more information about the Pathways learning experience, visit www.toastmasters.org/Pathways. Select the Translations tab on that site to learn more about Toastmasters' translation reviewers program and volunteer reviewers. For more information, or to inquire about participating in the program, please email translations@toastmasters.org.



▶ VISITING A CLUB WHILE TRAVELING

A Tale of Two Cities



"I am a member of Club Toastmasters YWCA in Québec City, Canada. On a recent trip to Sweden, I had the opportunity to attend a regular meeting of Stockholm International club. I was given a warm welcome by club members and also had the honor of acting as general evaluator: a unique opportunity to experience and appreciate the know-how of the club's dynamic speakers and to highlight the different ways our respective clubs in Québec City and Stockholm embrace the Toastmasters formula. Bravo and thank you to the Stockholm International club!"

—MARIE-FRANCE FERLAND, ACB, ALB

(Standing in second row pointing from behind man in green shirt)

▶ THE CLUB EXPERIENCE



Members of the Pinnacle Advanced Toastmasters club in Colombo, Sri Lanka, welcome guests to its themed annual meeting with a traditional Namaste greeting. This year, the club celebrated "Bollywood Night" and the best of the Hindi Film Industry—from its music to its stars to its iconic cinema. A fellowship with song, dance and games followed. From left: Trishma Pinto, DTM, Mario Wickramarachchi and Chathura K. Sooriya-Arachchi, ACG, ALB.

Master Table Topics

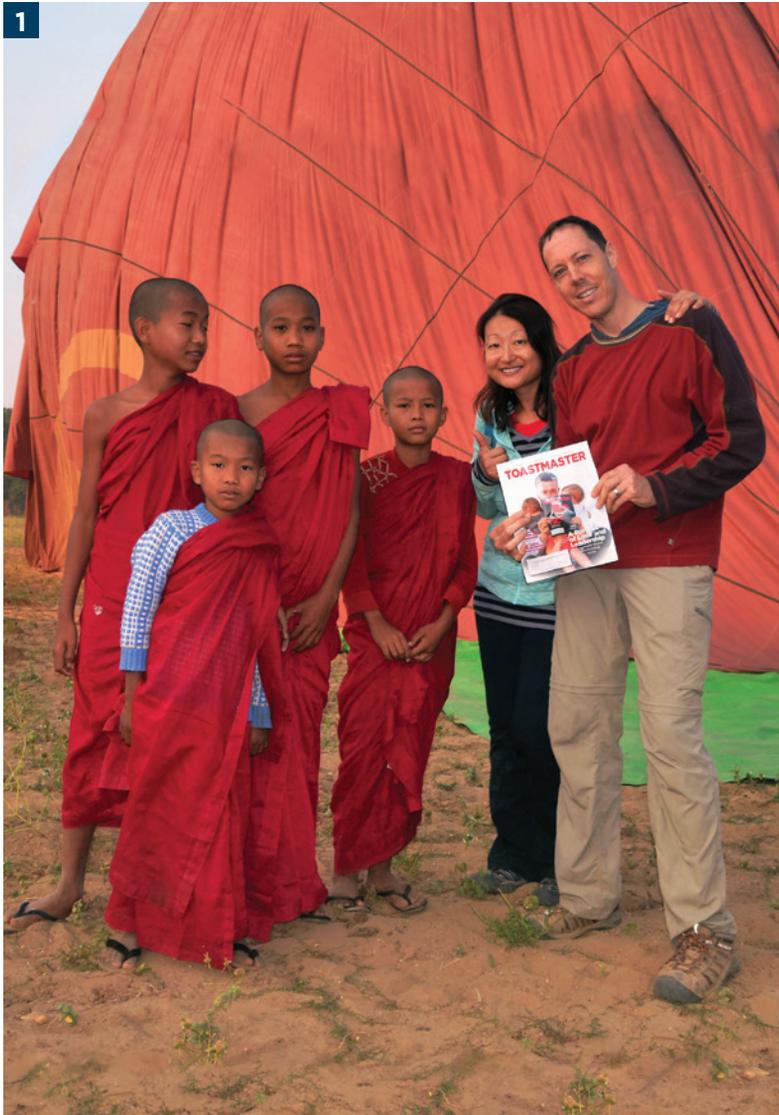
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TRAVELING TOASTMASTER



- 1 | **MARK WALSH, CC, AND HIS WIFE, TERRY, FROM KAUAI, HAWAII,** meet novice monks after a hot air balloon landing near the monastery in Bagan, Myanmar.
- 2 | **JODI VOLLMER, FROM IDAHO FALLS, IDAHO,** visits the Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming, USA.
- 3 | **MIGUEL MANRIQUE DE LARA CADIÑANOS, CC, ALB, FROM MADRID, SPAIN,** visits the Oriental Pearl Tower in Shanghai, China.
- 4 | **A. FAYE BOYKIN CALHOUN, DTM, FROM PLEASANT GROVE, ALABAMA,** stands on a balcony overlooking the United States Virgin Islands.



View more photos on Toastmasters International Official Fan Page on Facebook.



PICTURE YOURSELF HERE! Pose with the *Toastmaster* magazine during your travels and submit your photos for a chance to be featured in an upcoming issue. Visit www.toastmasters.org/Submissions. Bon voyage!

The Rewards of Giving Back

Helping the athletes of Special Olympics Ireland has enriched and inspired our club.

BY PAT COWLEY, DTM

Like many members, I worked my way through the manuals, served in various roles and sponsored a club. However, what I value most from my 13 years in Toastmasters is how my club has reached out to benefit others. Seven years ago, we were asked to assist with a workshop on public speaking for the athletes of Special Olympics Ireland.

Special Olympics is a worldwide athletic organization for people with intellectual disabilities. The athletes participate in sports events, including every two years at the Special Olympics World Games, and participants can be interviewed or invited to give talks in schools. Those over age 16 can gain experience with public speaking through the Special Olympics Athlete Leadership Program, and they can even win bronze, silver and gold awards.

Sounds a bit like Toastmasters!

Like many projects that start small, our club's involvement in the program expanded as more club members volunteered their time. The workshops that Tara Toastmasters has helped with have been run by the Eastern Region of Special Olympics Ireland and the National Athletes Leaders Forum. It is possible in one day to have up to 80 Special Olympians in the three different sessions we conduct. In July 2015, Team Ireland sent 88 athletes to compete in the summer games in Los Angeles together with nearly 7,000 athletes from 170 nations.

We do not join Toastmasters just to speak at Toastmasters, but rather to be able to use our skills in other areas of our lives.

Joanne Kelly, regional development officer for Special Olympics Ireland, says, "Before Tara Toastmasters was involved in Athlete Leadership, we had fewer than 70 athletes taking part in the Leadership Program. Today we have 210. I believe the facilitating of workshops by Tara is a massive factor in this."

This expansion happened for two reasons. First, we received good feedback both from the Special Olympics staff and from the athletes' mentors (each athlete has a mentor, often a family member, who accompanies them to the events). Second, we had several club members volunteering to conduct the athletes' workshops. We have now built up valuable expertise in our Tara members and we can easily adapt our program to suit the level of athlete experience (some may have done workshops with us before and others may be first-timers).



Athletes, mentors and ambassadors of Special Olympics Ireland pose during the Athlete Leadership Forum. Tara Toastmasters facilitated workshops on public speaking to assist the intellectually disabled athletes.

The objectives for every workshop are to help the athletes practice public speaking. I start a typical workshop with a welcome. Next we have a relaxing musical "warm-up" period. After that, I introduce four Tara Toastmasters who speak for one minute each on the importance of smile, voice, eye contact and gestures. We repeat these words in a PowerPoint loop throughout the day.

Our team provides three types of sessions:

1. **The Ice Breaker:** We talk to all athletes in our group about themselves. Next, each athlete speaks to the group (or to the whole room, if time permits).
2. **Storytelling:** Each athlete chooses a prop—for example: a picture card, toy or teddy—and is asked to tell a story about it. Speech structure is taught but we also emphasize the use of exaggeration and having fun.
3. **Interviewing skills:** For the more experienced athlete we introduce the use of a microphone.

All of our club members have gained from their involvement in Special Olympics Ireland. It is heartwarming to arrive and be greeted by name by the athletes. Our workshop "template" is simple and could be followed by any club.

As we say in Tara: We do not join Toastmasters just to speak at Toastmasters, but rather to be able to use our skills in other areas of our lives. We are certainly richer for our involvement in Special Olympics Ireland. **T**

PAT COWLEY, DTM, is a member of Tara Toastmasters in Dublin, Ireland. She is a recently retired school librarian. Her hobbies include bridge, reading, playing tennis and enjoying her eight grandchildren.

Communication Guru

Lisa B. Marshall

Popular podcaster distills the art and science of presentations.

BY MITCH MIRKIN, CTM



Few people think as deeply about the art and science of communication as Lisa B. Marshall does.

But the popular podcaster, blogger, author, presenter and consultant is no ivory-tower academic. Marshall boils it all down for the rest of us in plain English. She distills the scientifically tested theories of Ph.D.s writing in esoteric journals into evidence-based tips that people can use every day in the workplace and any other place they communicate.

Her podcast *The Public Speaker* has earned more than 17 million downloads since its debut in 2008. A podcast series she started more recently, in 2013, *Smart Talk*, features “Inspiring Conversations with Exceptional People.”



“There are so many different areas, and it’s a challenge to keep up with all the latest ideas,” says Marshall. “That’s one of the reasons I do my *Smart Talk* podcast. I usually interview academics, primarily people who have new books out in the areas I’m interested in. So that way I keep up and I build my network. It’s a win for my audience, but also for me.”

One customer review on iTunes said the series is “highly recommended for improving communication and leadership skills.”

Tell us about your Toastmasters background.

I started in Toastmasters when I was 18. I felt the ability to communicate effectively was important, and I thought Toastmasters was a great place to learn how to do that. The club where I got my start, and which I still consider my home club, is Camden County Toastmasters in Haddonfield, New Jersey. I was also active in the Silver Tongues Toastmasters club, in Burlington, New

Jersey. Later on I moved to New York and was quite active in the Schenectady and Albany, New York, areas.

What do you see as the foundation of good communication, regardless of the setting?

My tagline for many years was “helping individuals and organizations to be clear, concise, compelling communicators.” For me, these three terms—clear, concise, compelling—are the overarching principles no matter what the context, personal or professional. We need to use language that is understood by the receiver and that delivers a specific, organized message in a way that resonates with and positively influences the receiver. There are many rules you can follow to become clear, concise and compelling, and those rules apply whether you’re in a personal or professional setting.

To focus on one of these aspects, what is one way to become a more compelling communicator?

When you want to be compelling, when you want to persuade someone, you need the heart and the head. The head is statistics, facts, data. The heart is stories, emotion. Some people are really strong on telling the emotion, but they don’t include the facts and the figures. Others are really strong on facts and figures but have no space for the story. When you combine the two, that’s what the research says is most effective.

Telling our stories is especially important. We are in the best position to influence people when they know and like us, and share similar objectives. We achieve that by sharing our stories. When our stories resonate with someone else, when someone can put themselves in our shoes, that’s when we’re most

“When our stories resonate with someone else, when someone can put themselves in our shoes, that’s when we’re most influential.”

– LISA B. MARSHALL



A workshop leader for more than a decade, Marshall helps organizations with teambuilding, conflict resolution, messaging and delivering better presentations.

influential. You first must build that relationship—and that includes telling your stories.

Advertising offers good examples of this. There was an extremely successful Volkswagen ad that ran during the Super Bowl in 2011. It included no words, just music, and showed a kid dressed up like Darth Vader from *Star Wars*, running around the house trying to use “the force” to turn on things. Then he’s outside trying to start the car, and the dad, looking out from the kitchen, uses the remote to start it. The kid gets all excited, thinking it was “the force.” In this ad, there were no facts, no talk about the car’s features. It wasn’t even so much about the car at all. It was purely a story about a kid and a family. But the company knew this would be effective. In terms of viral appeal, the ad went up on YouTube a few days before the Super Bowl, and it had more than 12 million views before the game even started. In terms of sales, it’s been reported that the campaign helped Volkswagen to exceed the original launch target by 22 percent.

What are some of the topics you get asked about most often?

The number one question I get on *The Public Speaker* is “How do I introduce myself?”—whether in a social setting, at work or in a job interview. It comes mainly from young people. With texting and Facebook, there’s no preamble. It’s just the task, the transaction. A young man goes to pick up his girlfriend—he doesn’t have to go inside and meet the dad anymore. He just texts “I’m here” and the girl runs out the front door.

The second most downloaded piece was on “small talk.” People say, “I’m uncomfortable with it,” or “I’m introverted,” or “I don’t like small talk.” However, it turns out the research shows people feel

better after they have small talk, after they have some engagement with those around them. We’re built for that. And it actually serves an important function: Small talk is what leads to significant talk. It’s what helps us say, I’m open, I’m here to listen, and I want to be part of your conversation. That’s the purpose. A lot of people say, “I don’t like small talk because it’s plastic, it’s fake.” But it’s not the actual words that are important. This communication is about stating that you’re open to building a relationship with the other person.

Besides joining Toastmasters, how can people become more aware of how they communicate?

Very often, people think they’re good communicators, but they realize when they run into trouble that maybe they’re not. It takes time, as we see the reactions of others and get their feedback. Eventually, we become more aware of our effective and ineffective behaviors. But we can speed up the process. One tool I was introduced to years ago and still use today with clients is the DISC Index. You take a 10-minute quiz and get a 22-page report that tells you what your dominant communication style is, and what it is when you’re under stress. I’ve set up a special page on my website so *Toastmaster* readers can do the test for free: lisabmarshall.com/toastmasters. It’s helpful for both professional and personal communication. It’s a way to understand what your style is and to use it to your full advantage. ■

To learn more about Lisa B. Marshall’s work, visit lisabmarshall.com.

MITCH MIRKIN, CTM, is a member of Randallstown Network Toastmasters, based in Baltimore, Maryland. He works as a writer and editor for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.



Be Confident When Called On

Speaking tips to help you thrive when caught off guard.

BY MATT ABRAHAMS

On the first day of the business-school class I teach, my students fear me. Not because I am mean or unsympathetic, but because, like my fellow professors, I wield a tool that is simultaneously humbling and scary. The “cold call” is an age-old device to test students’ acumen on the spot. You simply point to a student and ask him or her to respond immediately to a question.

I am not a fan of cold-calling in my teaching, and when I explain this to my students, you can hear the collective sigh of relief. However, I immediately tell them that we will work together to hone their impromptu speaking skills so they will be more comfortable and confident when confronted with cold calls or a litany of other spontaneous speaking situations in the future.

To me, spontaneous speaking refers to any situation where you are asked to speak off the cuff and in the moment. The reality is that spontaneous speaking is much more prevalent than planned speaking (e.g., presentations). Think of being called on to introduce someone to others, or having your boss ask you for feedback on a new idea, or handling questions at the end of a meeting. These situations occur all of the time.

As all Toastmasters know, Table Topics is a great way to practice this skill. Among the many members who praise the benefits of Table Topics training is Jeremy Donovan, DTM, co-author of the book *How to Deliver a TED Talk*.

“Over the last 20 years, I have relied on countless Toastmasters skills to accelerate my career, but by far the most helpful have been the impromptu speaking skills that I developed practicing Table Topics,” he says.

To boost your skills, combine your Table Topics practice with the following three steps.

1 Get out of your own way. The first thing that gets in your way when speaking off the cuff is *you*. Your desire to do well, to give the right answer, to have your feedback be meaningful and memorable, actually works against you. Before you speak, you likely judge what you intend to say and weigh it against your internal criteria: *What I plan to say isn’t* ___ (fill in the blank ... *insightful, helpful, worthy, relevant*, etc.). This pre-speaking evaluation inhibits you.

Rather than striving for greatness, dare to just accomplish the task at hand—answer the question, provide the feedback, introduce your colleague. Reduce the pressure you put on yourself and you will increase your chances of doing well. Simply put: Setting greatness as your goal gets in the way of you getting there.

Of course, this is easier said than done. You are working against the muscle memory you've developed over the course of your life with a brain that reacts very quickly to help you solve problems. But by giving yourself permission to respond in the moment, rather than get it "right," you can get out of your own way and speak well.

2 See it as an opportunity, not an obstacle. You must also change how you perceive the speaking situation you're in. See it as an opportunity rather than an obstacle or a threat. For example, when I coach executives on handling the Q&A session after their presentations, they often view the session as an adversarial experience—they versus the media, investors, whomever. I work with these senior leaders to change their perception. A Q&A session is actually an opportunity—to clarify, to understand, to dialogue and engage.

If you look at impromptu speaking as an opportunity to explain and expand, you will interact with your audience in a more connected, collaborative way.

By giving yourself permission to respond in the moment, rather than get it "right," you can get out of your own way and speak well.

Let's say you are at a corporate dinner, and your boss turns to you and says, "You know our guest better than the rest of us. Would you mind introducing her?" Respond by saying, "Great, thank you for the opportunity." And do think of it as an opportunity rather than thinking, *Oh no! I better get this right.*

Improvisation exercises provide a great resource for this type of situational reframing. One of the tenets of improv scenes between partners is the phrase, "Yes, and ..." This mindset guides improvisers to not only embrace the scenario offered by their partner but to expand on it, rather than to shut down the partner's suggestion. The "Yes, and ..." philosophy opens up myriad opportunities not just in spontaneous speaking but in life.

Patricia Ryan Madson, the author of *Improv Wisdom*, says, "A 'Yes and' approach to life keeps you open to possibilities that you otherwise might have never seen, or worse yet, prevented yourself from taking advantage of."

3 Leverage structure. Now that you've moved out of our own way and reframed your situation as an opportunity, what do you do next? Simply put: You respond. However, you don't respond with a stream-of-consciousness rambling. Rather, you

respond in a structured manner. Some call this telling a story. Structure is important because it increases the audience's ability to process the information.

According to John Medina, a biologist and the author of *Brain Rules*, structured information is processed approximately 40 percent more effectively and efficiently—it's understood more easily and retained longer—than non-structured information.

Many structures exist, but here are two of the most useful.

■ **Problem-solution-benefit.** You start by addressing what the issue is, the problem. You then talk about a way of solving it, and then describe the benefits of following through on your plan. This structure is persuasive and effective. I used the "problem-solution-benefit" structure with this article. I started by explaining the challenge of impromptu speaking and then moved to potential ways to address the problem, and I'll end by describing the benefits of adopting these strategies.

■ **What? So what? Now what?** You start by talking about what "it" is (e.g., what you're answering or giving feedback about), then you discuss why it is important to the recipient(s), and finally, you explain what the next steps are (i.e., how the recipient can apply the feedback or answer).

I often use this structure when providing feedback to MBA students in my Strategic Communication class. For example, after a student successfully presents her case analysis, I might say, "The portion of your talk that addressed the detailed steps of the communication rollout plan (the 'What?') were very helpful because they clearly laid out the metrics for success (the 'So what?'). Please leverage that type of analysis in the other aspects of your next case analysis (the 'Now what?')."

The reality is that when you are in a spontaneous speaking situation, you have to do two things simultaneously: figure out what to say and how to say it. These structures give you a format for how to present your message. When you become comfortable with the structures, you will be able to respond more quickly to impromptu situations.

The last day of my business-school class is very different than the first. We do an activity where each of my students stands up and gives an unprepared toast to something of value they are taking away from our time together. Invariably, they express their gratitude for learning how to speak in spontaneous situations ... and the best part is, they excitedly demonstrate their ability to present this way in the toasts they give!

By getting out of your own way, reframing your situations as opportunities rather than threats, and leveraging structures, you can become a more compelling, confident and connected spontaneous speaker. ■

Matt Abrahams is the author of *Speaking Up without Freaking Out*, a lecturer at Stanford University's Graduate School of Business and co-founder of *Bold Echo, LLC*.



Meet Geoff Regan, Canada's Speaker of the House of Commons

The veteran member of Parliament overcame a speech impediment to thrive in politics.

BY PAUL STERMAN

Not long after he was elected Canada's new Speaker of the House of Commons in December, Geoff Regan gave a public shoutout to Toastmasters. He tweeted this message to his 7,000-plus followers: "Thanks to speech therapy and fantastic Toastmasters, I gained confidence to pursue career in politics."

A one-sentence tweet—but a story much larger than that. As a youth, Regan struggled with a speech impediment, an experience that scarred his self-image. The son of a prominent politician, he benefited from speech therapy in his early 20s and later joined Toastmasters, where he was a dedicated member for nearly 10 years. In an interview, he spoke passionately about the experience.

"I became far more at ease speaking in public, not only because of prepared speeches I had to give but also because of my participation in Table Topics, in business meetings, doing speech evaluations, and serving in all the roles that members play in club meetings," says the 56-year-old politician.

Besides the tangible skills he learned—skills he says have been critical to his political success—Regan gained something else.

"The most important part of my Toastmasters experience, the number one thing I learned, is that working toward a worthwhile goal builds self-esteem," says the veteran member of Parliament, who lives in suburban Halifax in Nova Scotia. "When you set a goal, like working toward your next speech or participating in a speech contest, you learn and grow. You build self-esteem and it makes you feel good about yourself."

The man who once anguished over his speaking now savors the political life—and the opportunity to express himself. Heather Bradley, Regan's director of communications, says of her boss, "He is really a joy on the speaking front. He loves to deliver speeches, so our speechwriter is in heaven!"

Taking the Lead

Regan says one of the most valuable things he learned in Toastmasters was how to lead a meeting. He'll need every ounce of that ability in his current job. Canada's House of Commons—which along with the Senate comprises the Parliament—has 338 members. It's the Speaker's job to maintain order in the House, using parliamentary procedure—and an umpire's touch—to keep members in line during discussions and debates.



Geoff Regan, 56, is Canada's Speaker of the House of Commons. He wears the traditional Speaker's robes in the House chamber.

Photo credit: Jean-Marc Carisse

Regan's job is particularly challenging because of the nature of the House of Commons, which meets in the national capital of Ottawa. As members of the Canadian media have noted, House sessions in recent years have become increasingly divisive and unruly, punctuated by members heckling and insulting speakers.

Like a true Toastmasters alum, Regan has vowed to bring a more courteous and respectful environment to the proceedings. After being elected Speaker by his House colleagues December 3, in a secret-ballot vote, he delivered an eloquent speech.

"We must elevate the tone in the House and restore decorum. Mutual respect, despite our differences, is essential," said Regan, who gave his speech in both French and English.

"My role as your Speaker is to be fair, and I want to assure you I intend to be fair and I intend to be firm. I will not tolerate heckling. We don't need it."

Why is greater civility so important to Regan?

"I worry about the image that people have about politics and politicians," he says in the recent interview, noting that people

are tired of bickering and boorish public officials. "So I want to do whatever I can ... to combat the cynicism about politics. That's always been a priority for me."

A member of the Liberal Party, Regan is the first Speaker of the House from Atlantic Canada in nearly a century. (The coastal region encompasses the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador.) For Jim Kokocki, Toastmasters' 2015–2016 International President, Regan's success is particularly special.

"My role as your Speaker is to be fair, and I want to assure you I intend to be fair and I intend to be firm. I will not tolerate heckling." — GEOFF REGAN

"I'm proud and excited to see Geoff Regan, a former Toastmaster and fellow Atlantic Canadian, selected as Speaker of the House in Canada's Parliament," says Kokocki, who lives in Saint John, New Brunswick.



As Speaker of the House, Regan must maintain order during discussions and debates. Photo credit: Canada House of Commons

All in the Family

For Regan, politics is a family affair. His wife, Kelly, is a cabinet member in the Nova Scotia government. (The couple have three children.) His father, Gerald, served as head of the Nova Scotia government through most of the 1970s and later was tapped as a cabinet member under Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau.

Geoff Regan says he was inspired by his father's work in politics. "Growing up, I saw my father working very hard and believing in what he was doing—working to help people—and I saw that as a very worthwhile activity and a noble calling."

He adds of his father, "My dad was a very good speaker, so I had big shoes to fill. But it put extra pressure on me. It was pressure I put on myself."

As a youth, he was painfully self-conscious about his speech impediment. Regan struggled to speak clearly, to get full sentences out and be understood. Part of the problem, he says, was "speaking quickly and trying to get ideas out in a big rush. Speech pathologists call it 'cluttering'—jamming the words together because you're in a hurry."

The speaking difficulties took a toll. "It made me less likely to engage in some conversations, to speak out in some situations. It affected my self-esteem, no question about it."

When he was 22, Regan went to a speech clinic to get help. He diligently practiced speaking exercises and learned to visualize, relax and slow down his speech.

A PENCHANT FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

Geoff Regan, Canada's Speaker of the House of Commons, isn't the only Toastmaster to flourish in the world of politics. A long list of members or former members have made their mark in that arena, whether as lawmakers, speechwriters or diplomats.

Political leaders have included Pat Roberts, a long-serving U.S. senator from Kansas; Linda Lingle, who served two terms as the governor of Hawaii; and Paramasivum Pillay Vyapoory, CL, elected earlier this year as vice president of the Republic of Mauritius, an island nation in the Indian Ocean.

Others have served on city councils, including Dan Winterburn, DTM, a member of the Jacksonville (Oregon) City Council from 2010 to 2014, and Danny Nguyen, a member of the Missouri City (Texas) City Council from 2010 to 2014. Anaheim, California, has two former members on its City Council: Tom Tait, the mayor of the city, and Lucille Kring.

Two of Toastmasters' Past International Presidents shined in the political field. John Lau, DTM, International President in 2012–2013, served as a Supreme Council member of the People's

Progressive Party of Malaysia, a component party of the Malaysian federal government.

Gary Schmidt, DTM, International President in 2009–2010, served as a top aide to two U.S. senators from his home state of Oregon, Mark Hatfield and Gordon Smith. His responsibilities included writing speeches and speaking at political events like town hall meetings.

Toastmasters have also served as high-ranking diplomats. David Y.L. Lin was Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Republic of China (Taiwan) from 2012 to 2016. Thabo Khasipe served as an ambassador for the Kingdom of Lesotho, a country in southern Africa.

In a 2010 speech to a club in Honolulu, then-governor Lingle said, "I encourage everyone who is even thinking about running for office to join Toastmasters. It will give you a level of confidence that you wouldn't already have; it will give you a built-in support base among your fellow Toastmasters, and it will enable you to stand up and be effective in front of any audience and communicate ideas that are worthwhile."

His sister, Nancy Regan, a Canadian television personality, says her brother's struggle to overcome his impediment made him a stronger, more sensitive person. "Apart from being a really hard worker and really disciplined, he also has this uncommon sense of compassion because of what he went through," she said in a Canadian TV segment about her brother.

A New Chapter

After graduating from St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia, Regan earned a law degree from Dalhousie University, also in Nova Scotia. One day at a political convention in the province, he was talking with Rod Doiron, a man who knew his father. The man urged Regan to run for office.

"I said, 'I'm interested but I don't think I could because I'm not comfortable speaking in front of audiences,'" Regan recalls. "He said, 'Well, I have a solution to that: Toastmasters.'"

Regan later joined a club in Halifax. Doiron was a member of the group and mentored Regan. (That club has since been folded into a different Halifax club.) Regan embraced the Toastmasters experience, giving speeches, taking on meeting roles and earning

"The most important part of my Toastmasters experience, the number one thing I learned, is that working toward a worthwhile goal builds self-esteem."

— GEOFF REGAN

his Competent Communicator award. He participated in speech contests and served as club president one year.

After practicing real estate and commercial law for a number of years, Regan entered the world of politics, spurred by the confidence Toastmasters helped him develop. He served in local positions before being elected a member of Parliament in 1993, representing the district of Halifax West. But four years later he suffered a setback when he was ousted in his bid for re-election—a period that he jokingly calls "my involuntary sabbatical."

However, Regan rebounded, winning back his seat in 2000. He has remained a Parliament member ever since. He has served as Parliamentary Secretary in the House and as Canada's Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

Lessons Learned

By the time he was elected to Parliament, Regan had left Toastmasters, but he says the lessons he learned there continued to pay dividends. He cites a long list of Toastmasters skills that are key to political success: how to craft a persuasive argument, organize your thoughts, use evocative phrasing, evaluate what other people say, and connect with your audience, whether it's one person or thousands.



Regan delivers his acceptance speech on December 3rd after being elected Speaker by his House colleagues.

Photo credit: Sean Kilpatrick/The Canadian Press via the Associated Press

"These skills are valuable in all sorts of situations," says Regan.

Including a weekly session in the House of Commons called Question Period. The Speaker of the House spends the first 30 minutes answering questions from Parliament members. Think Table Topics—just on a much grander scale.

Regan says he truly enjoys being Speaker and relishes the challenges of his role. When he reflects on his political ascent, he does so with a certain sense of wonder.

"If you had asked me, when I was 19, 20, 21, if I thought it was likely I'd ever be elected to the House of Commons, let alone as its Speaker, I would have had grave doubts.

"Toastmasters had an enormous role in making that possible." ■

PAUL STERMAN is senior editor of *Toastmaster* magazine.



Emotion Reigns

How passionate storytelling makes a message unforgettable.

BY KELLY SWANSON

I was speaking to a group of hotel managers in a program on how to motivate their employees to provide better customer service. In the opening, I pointed out that according to a 2016 Gallup poll, only 34.1 percent of American workers are engaged in the workplace.

And then I told them a story. It was about a woman I had heard singing as she worked in a hospital, and how I had heard her voice all the way from the parking lot. “Some sweet morning, when this day is over, I’ll fly away.”

They were loud, staccato, jubilant notes of a life well lived. When the automatic glass doors to the building opened, I could see her standing there holding her mop as if it were a beloved dance partner, as if her faded cotton dress were made of the finest silk. I watched her all throughout the day as she touched the lives of many. In the cold antiseptic corners of that hospital I saw pain find healing, watched sorrow meet comfort, and saw hopelessness find hope all wrapped up in a faded cotton dress and comfortable shoes. That day, a woman full of blessings who smelled of bleach showed me what service looks like—and it didn’t come in a list, but in an attitude.

The program continued on, and at the end I asked my audience who among them could remember what I had mentioned earlier about the poll and the percentage of employees it indicated were engaged in the workplace. Two hands went up. Then I asked if anyone could remember the song the woman in my story was

singing. Almost every hand went up. Nobody could remember the fact, but everyone remembered the story. That showed me how facts aren’t tied to emotions—but story is. It is the greatest tool we have to connect and engage.

Are all stories equal? No. I’ve watched speakers tell stories that captivated the entire room, and I watched them tell stories that put everybody to sleep. Just having a story is not good enough. Apply the following tips to your stories and watch what happens.

Understand how and why story works

Once you understand the psychology behind stories and their impact, it gets easier to write the ones that are most effective for you. It starts with an understanding that listeners don’t take action without first having a visual. Therefore, their thoughts are not stored as words, but as images.

For your data to have a lasting impact, it must be wrapped in an image for the listener to truly connect with, store and access later. The story does all the work. The point drives it home. Story trumps data.

Stop looking for a good story

So many speakers ask, “Is this a good story?” That’s the wrong question. Don’t go looking for a “good” story. Look for one that your audience will connect with. An experience they can relate to. Then work on making it a good story.

Meridith Elliott Powell is a professional business speaker who uses stories as part of her presentations. “Stories are more powerful when you are not always the hero in the story,” she says. “Your audiences learn so much more when they can relate to you. So when you are vulnerable in the story—when you are the one learning rather than teaching the lesson—it has far more impact.” Look for stories that make a connection and make them good.

Craft a good script and a good delivery

Every story has two major components—a stellar script and an awesome delivery. You can’t have one without the other. Every word makes a difference with its ability to add power or take it away. Every gesture, pause, voice inflection and expression has that same power. Use it.

Don’t wing it.

Don’t step outside of your story and simply talk about it. Stand inside of it and live it again.

Include emotions

When listeners connect with your story, they aren’t connecting with the facts from your life. They are connecting to how you felt along the way. They may not share your experience of moving to a new country, and therefore can’t relate to it. But if you say you were sad to leave your family, that you felt alone, that you felt invisible, that you weren’t sure what to do, people can relate to those emotions. The emotions are your experience, and the bridge that helps listeners step into your story and connect with your journey. Don’t just tell what happened, speak about how it made you feel.

Show; don’t tell

A story is as powerful as its details. These details paint the scene and the characters. The details you share (the character descriptions, accents, sounds and smells) allow the listener to step into your story instead of just hearing about it. If the listener can’t see the scene, they can’t connect with it. They want specifics, not generalizations. Don’t speak about how hard it was for you in the 80s. Talk about a specific moment in time when something happened.

Less is more

Telling a story in five to seven minutes is a challenging task and worth the labor, because it forces you to choose the words that count. Like songs, our stories should be tight—every word chosen should serve a purpose—every word should audition its way in. Treat every word like it’s a note in your song.

Act it out

The most common mistake speakers make is that they tell the story like they are reading a grocery list. Don’t step outside of your story and simply talk about it. Stand inside of it and live it again. Act it out whenever you can. Don’t plan gestures to match your story, just be expressive when you tell it. We do this naturally when we tell stories to our friends and family. It’s when we get onstage that we become stiff and unnatural. Tell a story in the same comfortable manner you would have if you were sitting at the kitchen table (without the ums and uhs). Relive the story as you tell it. ■

KELLY SWANSON is an award-winning storyteller, comedian, motivational speaker and author. She teaches the art of connection and engagement through the power of story. Visit www.StoryCraftingCamp.com.

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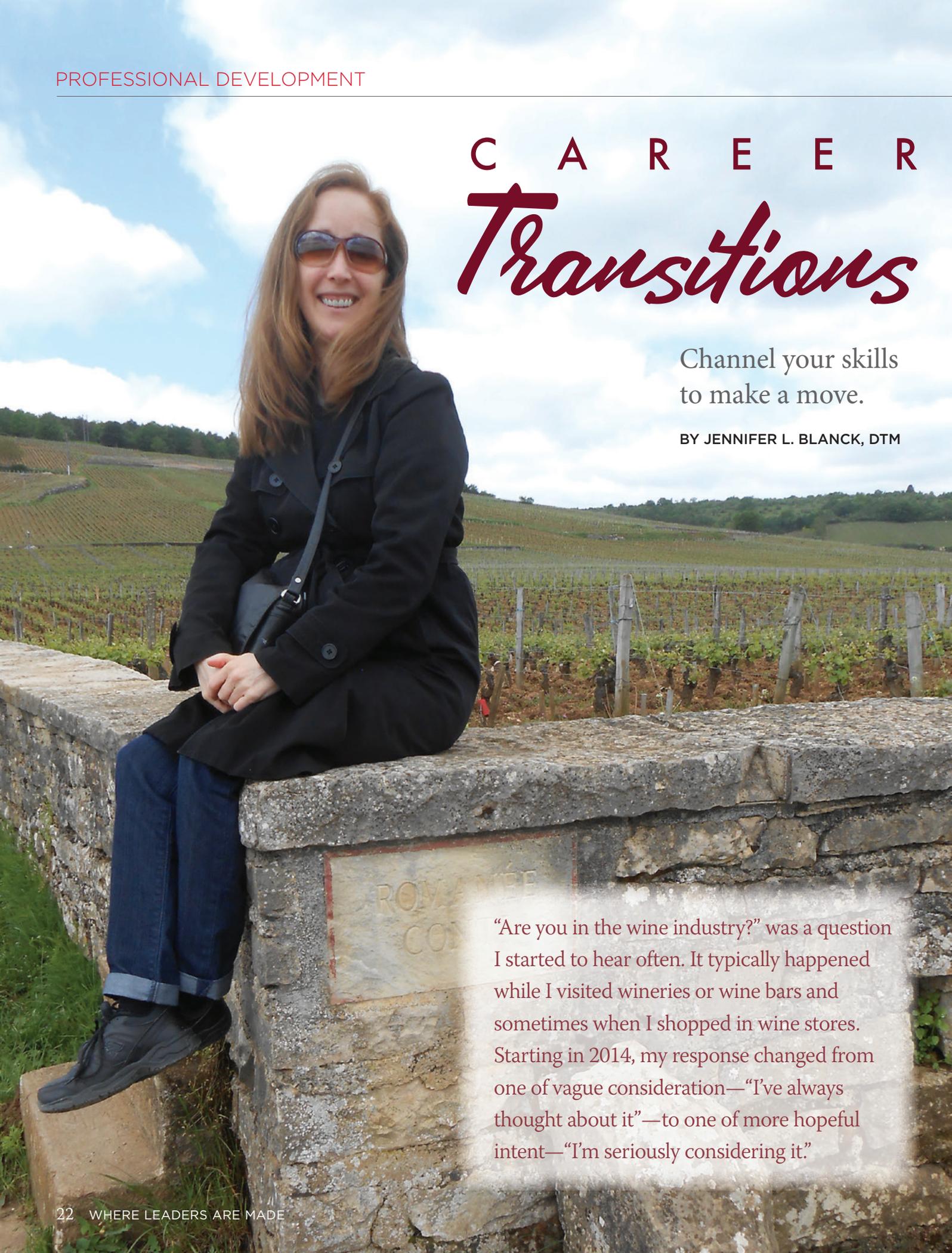
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C A R E E R *Transitions*

Channel your skills
to make a move.

BY JENNIFER L. BLANCK, DTM



“Are you in the wine industry?” was a question I started to hear often. It typically happened while I visited wineries or wine bars and sometimes when I shopped in wine stores. Starting in 2014, my response changed from one of vague consideration—“I’ve always thought about it”—to one of more hopeful intent—“I’m seriously considering it.”



Jennifer Blanck enjoys a special tasting in Domaine des Lambrays' cellars in Burgundy, France, as part of the wine business program she enrolled in to make a career change.

In 2015, I decided to make the career move from higher education to the wine industry. I enrolled in the School of Wine & Spirits Business in Dijon, France, to learn about the industry and the career options. To ensure the transition goes well, I will rely on one of the most valuable career tools I have: Toastmasters.

I know Toastmasters will help me because it helped me during my first career transition—from public relations to higher education—and I'm not alone. Members all over the world have relied on the skills they develop, the confidence they gain, the accomplishments they achieve and the people they meet in Toastmasters to successfully transition to a new career field.

Developing Skills and Confidence

Laurie Hallam, ACB, of The University Toastmasters in Canberra, Australia, has also made two career transitions with the help of Toastmasters. Originally an electronics technical officer for the Australian government, he switched his focus to become a military technical writer. Later, he changed to a university communications educator, teaching for 23 years before retiring.

In both cases, Hallam attributes the skills and confidence he developed in Toastmasters as essential to his success. He says, "There is something about having to speak while standing before an audience that improves clarity of thought and raises self-esteem." Also, through Table Topics he improved his interviewing skills, something he needed when applying for the teaching position. Facing eight interviewers, Hallam channeled all of his skills to obtain the position. These types of situations, he says, showcase one of the best things about Toastmasters: "You learn to think on your feet while under pressure."

Of course, communication skills are not just helpful for obtaining a job. They also help you perform in the position. Hallam not

only had to teach many of the skills he learned through Toastmasters—such as giving effective evaluations and using meeting procedures—he also had to lead by example.

Employers worldwide are in search of people with excellent communication and leadership skills. Surveys and reports from the U.S. National Association of Colleges and Employers, UK Prospects, Business New Zealand, the World Bank and the Results for Development Institute all show communication and leadership skills among those most sought by employers.

In April, while speaking at the University of Maryland's Robert H. Smith School of Business, Marriott International President and CEO Arne Sorenson emphasized the importance of communication skills at the highest levels.

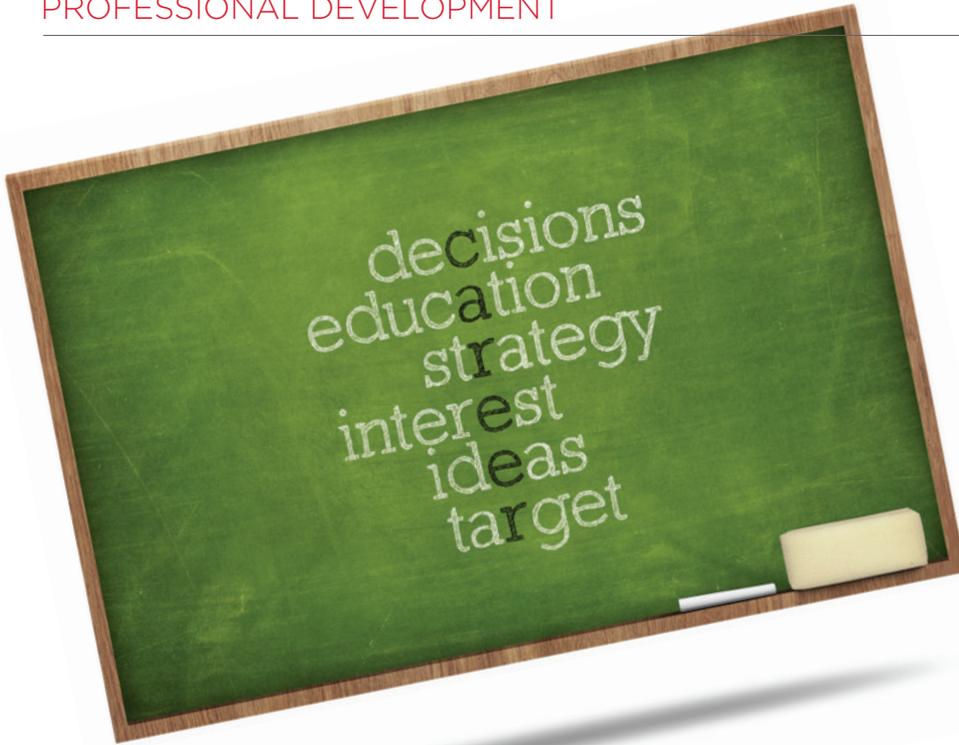
"People need to be able to communicate, and particularly if they're going to take big jobs," said Sorenson.

He said he considered his communication skills one of the keys to his success. He also discussed the importance of leadership, stressing collaboration and teamwork—two skills Toastmasters know quite well.

Using Speeches as a Guide

Confidence gained as a member also helped Shawn Wang, CC, successfully transition careers within, and then beyond, the finance sector. At first, Wang moved from a financial policy-related position in the Singapore government to trading—two areas he describes as "worlds apart." His second transition took him out of finance altogether. He now works as a product manager for a tech startup. Wang, a former member of the Leng Kee Advanced Toastmasters in Singapore, got the position by simply asking the startup CEO for the job.

"That forwardness and comfort in my own skin was definitely something I developed in Toastmasters," he says.



However, he credits his club speeches as the key motivator to making his first transition. He says, “The more I talked about my job in my speeches, the more I realized I was settling.”

Wang realized he was staying in his government position because it was comfortable, and that he wanted something more. He recommends people reflect on the topics they’re presenting and their level of engagement with those topics. If you find yourself talking about anything *but* your current job or field, that might be a sign.

In fact, when I first joined Toastmasters, I was working in public relations. The *Public Relations* manual was one of the first two I obtained after completing the *Competent Communication* manual. Almost 20 years later, I’ve only completed one speech in that manual.

Gaining Experience

Lazola Belle, ACB, ALB, a member of the Rosebank Toastmasters in Johannesburg, South Africa, transitioned first from an information technology professional in banking to a consultant, and then later to a combination facilitator, trainer and speaker. He also serves as a program manager for a small business that prepares young graduates for employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. He credits Toastmasters for helping him deliver a more organized message, making the interview process “a breeze” and, even more so, providing an outlet for gaining the experience he needed to make a career change.

Once he knew he wanted to be a facilitator, Belle began applying for jobs; the only problem was he didn’t have any facilitation experience. He developed a plan and started taking on increasingly challenging Toastmasters officer roles, including at the district level. While employed by a consulting company, he helped

revive its dying corporate club. In doing so, he learned more about the company and connected with its corporate leadership. His success in rebuilding the club helped him develop a reputation for facilitating, mentoring and promotions, which led to his first professional facilitation opportunity.

Belle advocates focusing on the leadership aspects of Toastmasters, because, as he says, “No leader sits in a corner and says nothing.” He values the organization’s learn-by-doing approach and risk-free environment. When he’s been asked “Where have you shown leadership?”

during interviews, he can point to many areas in Toastmasters. For example, he says, “In 2015-2016 I was division director. In my division, there were 400 members. One of my goals was to grow that to 500. I achieved that.”

That kind of description works well in interviews and in your curriculum vitae (CV), where it’s important to provide relevant context and scope to your accomplishments. When I transitioned from public relations to higher education, Toastmasters was an important entry on my CV. In fact, one of my interviewers

“The more I talked about my job in my speeches, the more I realized I was settling.”

— SHAWN WANG, CC

mentioned it specifically, and my Toastmasters experience became a focal point of the discussion. Toastmasters remains a valuable CV and interview item for me, helping me showcase a number of relevant skills and accomplishments and indicating the initiative I take in my own professional development.

Making the Move

Making a career transition can be challenging, but that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t do it. In fact, when asked if they would do anything differently, both Wang and Belle said they would have made the move sooner. Wang highlights the importance of actively listening to other members, because their speeches and experiences may have relevance to your own life even if you don’t realize it yet.

Belle suggests getting involved beyond club meetings, even for new members, whether that means serving on a committee, volunteering for a role at a speech contest or becoming an officer.



Lazola Belle, ACB, ALB, in Johannesburg, South Africa, gained experience in the Rosebank Toastmasters club to prepare for a new career as a facilitator, trainer and speaker. Belle credits Toastmasters for helping him deliver a more organized message.

Hallam says, “On reflection I could have improved my chances of a successful career transition by progressing more quickly through the Toastmasters program. The program teaches so many new skills.”

He recommends attending Toastmasters conferences for networking opportunities.

Take advantage of the skills developed, confidence gained, opportunities given, accomplishments achieved and contacts made in Toastmasters. I’ve already channeled my communication and leadership skills to help me with my return to school, and I

know I will rely on Toastmasters when I begin my job search. I look forward to a time when someone asks, “Are you in the wine industry?” and I can answer, “Yes, I am.”

As novelist and philosopher Ayn Rand said, “The question isn’t who is going to let me; it’s who is going to stop me.” 

JENNIFER L. BLANCK, DTM, is a charter member of the Skylarks Toastmasters club in Budapest, Hungary. She has worked in career development for more than 15 years and is a regular contributor to the *Toastmaster magazine*.

CONSIDERING A CAREER CHANGE?

If you’re planning a career switch, these tips can get you off to a good start.

Conduct a resource assessment. Take stock of your experiences, accomplishments and skills, including your Toastmasters activities and volunteer work. Highlight the ones that are transferable or directly related to your new field. Consider your contacts, including those in your club, district and networks, such as the LinkedIn Official Toastmasters International Members Group.

Make a plan. How will you get from here to there? Set realistic goals—weekly and/or monthly ones—and continue moving forward. Be open and flexible in your learning; you might find a path you haven’t considered.

Target your message. Tailor your marketing materials, including your CV and elevator speech, to your new field, updating the materials as you learn more.

Every employer looks for skilled communicators and leaders, so show initiative by highlighting what you’ve learned in Toastmasters.

Talk to people. Learn about potential paths, resources and opportunities. Attend conferences, trainings and events (in Toastmasters and elsewhere) to meet new people and expand your network. Use Toastmasters speaking opportunities to explore possibilities, test interest and practice your pitch. Ask accomplished people in your new field to review your marketing materials to ensure you’re sending the right message. Find a mentor. Stay motivated and be accountable for your goals by partnering with someone considering a transition or looking for a new job.

Have patience. Hang in there—transitions don’t happen overnight. Be good to yourself and recognize that a little perseverance goes a long way.

Do it!

An Attitude of Gratitude

How positive thoughts can transform your life.

BY LAUREN PARSONS, CC, CL

Gratitude. It's the ultimate cure for a bad mood, stress and worry. Thankfulness moves a person from pessimistic, depressive thoughts to feelings of happiness, joy and contentment. We all want more of that in life, right?

Every action we take is the result of a thought. Our thoughts are incredibly powerful; they shape our lives. Age-old wisdom tells us to be "transformed by the renewing of your mind." Genetics and our environment are not the key determinants of happiness, we are. The way we look at the world determines how we feel. When we choose to lead our thoughts, we can create a fulfilling life.

The reason gratitude is so powerful is this unchanging principle: ***What we focus on increases.***

As a wellbeing coach, I have had many clients over the years who when asked to tell me what they want, automatically answer with a story about their current problems and a long list of what they *don't* want. The trouble is that our subconscious brain doesn't hear the word "don't," and we tend to get stuck wherever our focus is.

Rather than saying *I don't want to feel so tired and flat* we can instead say *I want to feel happy and energized*. By watching our self-talk, we can catch ourselves when using "don't" phrases and replace them with what we *do* want. This transforms our thought processes, our words and our actions.

While you can't always control the thoughts that pop into your head, the great thing is that you can choose what to focus on. Your brain isn't able to focus on two things at once, so if you are feeling down and you then practice gratitude, your perspective shifts and everything changes. Stress hormones decrease, growth hormones increase and your muscles relax. It even transforms the way you move, breathe and interact with others.

Imagine what a difference that could make for your next speech or your work performance when chairing a meeting or pitching to a potential client.

Gratitude is an essential precursor to happiness. Psychologist Shawn Achor's worldwide studies have shown that writing down three things daily that you are grateful for can permanently adapt neural pathways in just 21 days, transforming genetically predisposed pessimists into long-term optimists. It all starts by focusing on gratitude, which re-programs our brains to scan the world for the positive rather than the negative. When our brain

is positive we are 31 percent more productive, 23 percent less stressed and 39 percent more likely to live to the age of 94.

Happiness comes down to our personal perspective, and gratitude is an essential precursor to happiness. The glass is both half full and half empty at the same time. It just depends on how we look at it. Whether we view our lives as full of good and wondrous things and see the best in people depends solely on the outlook we choose.

Saint Francis of Assisi famously said "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference." Even in the most challenging times it is possible to be grateful for our blessings. We may not be able to change the facts of a situation, but we always have the power to choose how we perceive them and in turn how we respond.

"Before I was paralyzed, there were 10,000 things I could do. Now there are 9,000. I can either dwell on the 1,000 I've lost or focus on the 9,000 I have left."

– W MITCHELL

An example of someone who epitomizes this is W Mitchell, an inspiring man who was nearly killed in a blazing motorcycle accident that left him with burns on 65 percent of his body. Years later he was paralyzed in a plane crash and is now confined to a wheel chair with a disfigured face and tiny stumps in the place of fingers. Yet he has chosen to embrace the positives of his situation and use it as a platform to inspire others.

Now an international speaker, Mitchell passionately spreads the message of his book *"It's Not What Happens To You, It's What You Do About It."* He encourages us all by saying "Before I was paralyzed, there were 10,000 things I could do. Now there are 9,000. I can either dwell on the 1,000 I've lost or focus on the 9,000 I have left."

An attitude of gratitude allows us to move forward positively in any situation. It is like rising up to your full height, lifting your



chin and looking up rather than hanging your head and forlornly following your gaze down in a negative spiral.

Gratitude shifts our focus from the things we lack to what we already have. Sometimes we need a reality check as we take the smallest things in life for granted. Did you know that if you have food in your refrigerator, clothes on your back and a roof over your head, you are richer than 75 percent of the people in this world and that if you can read this article, you are more blessed than the more than 775 million people that cannot read at all?

How many other things can you be thankful for today? Think of all the opportunities your Toastmasters club gives you to extend and better yourself both through speaking and leadership opportunities. Not to mention being part of this inspiring international organization.

I love how the Toastmasters program focuses on gratitude and improving performance through positive feedback. Yes, the constructive recommendations are essential for growth, but for most speakers, it is the commendations, where we praise and thank people for their efforts, that result in ongoing participation and positive change.

I am grateful for the culture of positive feedback that Toastmasters creates; it helps us capitalize on our strengths. I enjoy seeing members in my club grow confident as they try new things and learn from their experiences.

I hope that by practicing gratitude in and outside of your club you will see great benefit in your own life.

Four practical ways to embrace an attitude of gratitude today:

Cast grateful thoughts backward and forward

First thing in the morning (e.g., while showering, eating breakfast or brushing your teeth) focus on these two thoughts: Think about one specific thing you are thankful for from yesterday and replay it in your mind, then think ahead to one thing you are looking forward to today. The key is to be intentional with this practice and tie it into a daily task so you remember to do it.

Say thanks

Make a point of thanking at least one person every day. This could be by email, in a card, in person or on the phone. You could praise a colleague, your boss or even a client. Specific immediate feedback is one of the best management tools because people do more of what they are thanked for. This works in personal relationships too. When was the last time you thanked your club president, timer or general evaluator for their efforts? It will not only make their day, it will also boost your own mood. Think of the positive effect that could have on your entire club.

Share grateful words

Set aside a specific time to tell someone what you are most grateful for each day. This could be a family member at the dinner table or a friend who becomes your gratitude partner. Take turns describing in detail the best thing about your day and explaining how it made you feel, and why. This allows your brain to replay the scene and doubles your happiness factor. The brain doesn't distinguish between the real and replayed version so you reap all the physiological benefits twice over.

End the day by writing

Before going to sleep, write down some key things you are thankful for. Aim for three to five but don't put a limit on it. Journaling has a profound effect on happiness because it replays the positives, keeps you focused on what you want and gives you a reference to look back on, which can be handy in challenging times. Once you start, you will often find that your list is longer than you first imagined. It may also initiate ideas for future speech topics which you can share, creating a positive ripple of gratitude.

I invite you to choose the strategy that most appeals to you. Start using it every day for a week and you will see immediate and significant changes in how you feel. This will change how your life unfolds and create a positive spiral leading to even more gratitude!

Remember that you choose how you perceive your world. One grateful thought at a time, you can boost your happiness, improve your health and be more successful. ■

LAUREN PARSONS, CC, CL, is a member of Silverstream Toastmasters in Upper Hutt, New Zealand, and an award-winning Wellbeing Specialist who equips and inspires people to boost their health and happiness, for life. Get a free copy of Lauren's e-book and register for updates at www.laurenparsons.co.nz.

Member Achievements

Speaking engagements, awards and history give these Toastmasters a reason to celebrate.

Selina Griffin, CC

Aylesbury Speakers • Aylesbury, England

It Takes a Village

“And first place for the District 91 Humorous Speech Contest for 2015 ... Selina Jones.” When I heard my name (my married name is now Griffin), I gasped. I couldn’t believe I had won!

But I hadn’t won on my own. This was a team effort. It all started in my club contest, as each speaker drew their order. Fellow contestant Richard said, “Just remember, whatever place you draw, that’s the best one.” I would speak second. When I won, I beamed as I received my first trophy—in anything, ever!

At the area contest I recognized Elizabeth, a formidable opponent. I drew to speak first. *That’s ok*, I thought, as I remembered Richard’s advice. When I won, Elizabeth took me under her wing and invited me to speak at her club to practice and receive feedback before division.

At the division contest, my heart sank when I saw the stage—a recessed area surrounded by walls and pillars. I walked around onstage to devise a plan. In my speech, I had a bit about going into a basement, so I planned to step down off the stage, adding drama.

And then I was up. I took a deep breath, sank my weight through my feet to feel grounded and began. I addressed the audience left, right and center. After I won, a man from another club approached me and said, “I will be there to support you in the finals.”

The finals! I made time to explore and plan my staging. The division contest chair, who was present for the district contest, gave me one last pointer: feel and act as if you own the stage. I drew my place, walked up, grounded myself, addressed every section of the audience and became the 2015 District 91 Humorous Speech Champion.

It takes a village to win a speech contest.



Selina Griffin and Roger Lord



Saleema Lookman

Saleema Lookman

Adventurers Club • Lake Balboa, California

Vet Tech Takes the Stage

As a registered veterinary technician I had attended numerous lectures, but being the one standing onstage and sharing my knowledge seemed an unattainable dream. And then, upon learning that my case submission had been accepted and that I would be speaking at the North American Veterinary Community Conference, I knew I needed help, especially since my presentation would be judged in a contest.

I joined the Adventurers Club and was overwhelmed by the supportive atmosphere. Toastmasters gave me the confidence, skills and practice I needed to prepare for this career-changing opportunity. I was pleasantly surprised to find that Table Topics (the meeting segment I found most challenging) had helped me feel less awkward while conversing and networking at the conference.

I even took my evaluator’s advice and walked away from the lectern! I excitedly professed to my fellow Toastmasters at the club meeting following my speaking debut at the conference.

Although I did not win the contest, I had an incredible experience and was invited to speak at another forum. I know I will continue to improve throughout my journey in Toastmasters.

Terry Lancaster, CC

Let's Talk Franklin Club • Franklin, Tennessee

The Trousers Debacle

At the National Automobile Dealers Association's annual convention, I stepped onto the stage as a speaker tossing fistfuls of dollar bills into the air in front of hundreds of business owners and managers. I dazzled them with brilliance throughout my hour-long presentation. I knocked it out of the park!

That's how my dream ended.

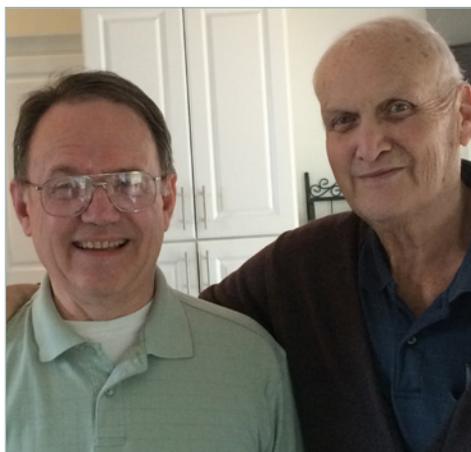
In real life, this story actually started as a nightmare. I had been invited to speak at this prominent sales conference and worked for months on my presentation. I arrived at the conference crazy nervous, but prepared—except I wasn't. Then I found out my luggage had been lost and I spent the entire first day of the conference wandering around in flip flops, shorts and a Charlie Sheen-wannabe shirt. Yet here I was, a marketing expert giving advice on million-dollar ad budgets, and I wasn't even wearing my big-boy pants.

On the second day, my luggage arrived and I went onstage in acceptable attire and tossed around some cash. Despite the trousers debacle, the audio-visual equipment snafu and the horrible realization that I couldn't read notes and make eye contact with the audience using the same pair of glasses, I went on to give a perfectly mediocre speech. No one threw rotten vegetables at me and I didn't throw up. But I did *not* knock it out of the park. On the plane ride home I decided that when I got back to Nashville, I would officially join the Let's Talk Franklin club that I had been visiting.

The simple act of going to Toastmasters and standing up in front of people every week dramatically changed the way I prepare for and perform a speech. I no longer seek to memorize every word or gesture and I'm no longer a slave to my notes or reading glasses. I can stand in front of any crowd and tell a story, not from memory but from the heart. And there is nothing more compelling than a good story well-told.



Terry Lancaster



Gary Shedd and Jack O'Malley

Gary Shedd and Jack O'Malley, ATMG

Community Toastmasters Club • Muskegon, Michigan

Half-Century Toastmasters

Community Toastmasters Club in Muskegon, Michigan, was chartered May 1, 1965. Fifty-one years is a long time for a club to remain active, but even more fascinating is that two men, Jack O'Malley and Gary Shedd, have belonged to that club for 50 years!

Back in 1966, Gary was new in his real estate practice and felt awkward and self-conscious as he worked with clients. His boss suggested Toastmasters as a way to help him relax and enjoy building client relationships. He joined and now credits Table Topics for teaching him how to think on his feet and talk to anyone about anything.

"Toastmasters helped me learn to listen to someone give a speech and not think about other things or myself," Gary says. "It carried over into my career, because I really have to listen to what my clients are saying so I can help them. And it's not just listening skills that I learned, it's also about being aware of their body language, vocal inflections and eye contact."

Jack also joined the club in 1966. He was selling office products at the time, and like his friend Gary, he joined because his boss recommended it. Jack says, "I was scared to death of speaking in public, but everyone in the club was so helpful." He almost quit several times, but the friendliness of the other members kept him coming back. He said women were not allowed in the club at first; however, once they did join, the club grew stronger.

The skills Jack learned in Toastmasters are invaluable to him. "I didn't pursue a lot of formal education when I was young, but Toastmasters has given me a 'Ph.D.' in speaking, listening and communicating," he says. "I am proud to be a 50-year Toastmaster, and I hope I have helped as many people over the years as have helped me."

Contributed by Sue Mills, ACS, ALB, Top O' The Rock Toastmasters club, Jacksonville, Florida. 



Mindfulness

How to attain peace, love and happiness by losing your mind.

BY JOHN CADLEY

A friend was extolling the virtues of mindful meditation, which he described as “a way to get out of your mind.” My first thought was that I didn’t need it—I’m already out of my mind. But that’s not what he meant. He said your mind is not a healthy place to be. It’s full of worries, fears and beliefs that often have no basis in reality and yet dictate the way we live our lives. I suspected this as early as 1980 when Apple went public at \$22 a share and my mind told me not to buy because who would be crazy enough to want a computer in their house?

Mindful meditation gets you away from all that by helping you achieve mindfulness, a state of full awareness in the present moment, undistracted by those countless random thoughts that stream through our consciousness. It sounds a bit like “living in the Now,” which I tried until the day I needed emergency dental surgery for an abscessed tooth and decided that Now was the last place I wanted to be.

Mindfulness, however, is somewhat different. Its purpose is to overcome its opposite—mindlessness—another word which resonated with me for reasons I’d rather not go into. My wife could tell you. Thankfully, I’m not alone. Apparently this is the way most of us live, our minds so cluttered with regrets about the past or worries about the future that we’re barely cognizant of what we’re doing in the present. As a man who goes looking for his car keys while holding them in his hand, I thought perhaps the practice of mindfulness would be useful after all.

So I bought a book. The introduction gave me great hope. It said: “This is a book about how you can find peace and contentment in such frantic and troubled times as these.” I’m happy just to find a parking space close to the downtown YMCA, so things could only improve from here. The introduction went on: “You are not your thoughts,” which was an enormous relief. If you knew my thoughts—and thank God you don’t—you’d understand.

Rather, my thoughts are simply “mental events,” floating across my mind like clouds in the sky, which I can observe objectively as they come and go, realizing they have no real significance. I tried this and it worked, except for one dark cloud that crosses my mind several times a day and never seems to leave completely—the one that says: *If I’d only bought Apple stock at \$22 a share!*

The first exercise in the book is to simply breathe mindfully for one minute. This means concentrating on your breath as it goes in and out. “After a while,” the book says, “your mind may wander. If you notice this, bring your attention gently back to your breath. After a minute, open your eyes.” I didn’t do so well on this. For every one second I focused on my breathing, my mind spent three seconds wondering when a minute would be up.

Then the book invited me to practice something called The Chocolate Meditation. This is a variation on the “stop and smell the roses” theme where you take the time to really enjoy the food you’re eating instead of gulping it down without even tasting it.

For every one second I focused on my breathing, my mind spent three seconds wondering when a minute would be up.

The book’s instructions were to choose a piece of chocolate, look at it, feel it, notice the texture and aroma, then put it in your mouth and let it melt slowly. I did this with a bag of Nestlé® Toll House Semi-Sweet Morsels. I experienced one piece as instructed, then another, congratulating myself on my discipline and restraint. Yes, I had truly experienced the essence of chocolateness in those tiny morsels. Too tiny. I was tempted to stuff a whole handful in my mouth like I usually do. But I didn’t. And then I did.

The body scan was next, in which I lay down and focused on each part of my body, from the tips of my toes to the top of my head. I didn’t make it. It was so relaxing I fell asleep somewhere around my abdomen.

If you’re reading this and thinking I’ve failed at mindfulness, that’s just *your* mind having a thought, which as we know is not necessarily true. And that’s exactly what I plan to tell my wife when she asks what happened to the Nestlé Morsels. We’ll see how that goes. ■

JOHN CADLEY, a former advertising copywriter, is a freelance writer and musician living in Fayetteville, New York.

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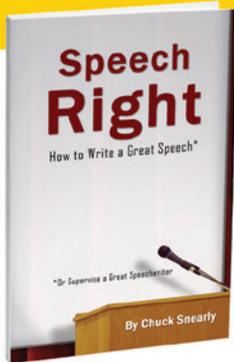
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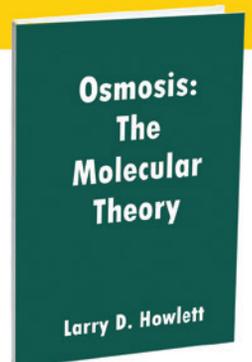
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For more than three decades author Chuck Snearly has been writing highly acclaimed speeches for leaders around the world, including the top executives at Ford Motor Company, Royal Dutch Shell, the Bosch Group and Dean Foods. In his book *Speech Right* the award-winning speechwriter will show you how to write a great speech – one that engages emotions, shapes opinions and makes things happen. Whatever your current skill level, *Speech Right* will help you write the speech right.

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For those that already understand osmosis, we suggest that you begin with the last chapter. The first chapters may sound like heresy. For others, beginning with the first chapter will take you through the many levels of understanding that we followed to develop the Molecular Theory of Osmosis.



Speech Right by Chuck Snearly and *Osmosis: The Molecular Theory* by Larry D. Howlett are available at amazon

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