

TOASTMASTER

February 2008

**The
Splendid
Gesture**

**Gesturing
then and now.**

Speaking in Business

Five lessons in corporate communication.

**An Interview with
Hardball TV Host
Chris Matthews**

Vision...



Reality



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Graphic Design SUSAN CAMPBELL

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TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL

P.O. Box 9052 • Mission Viejo, CA 92690 U.S.A.
 (949) 858-8255 • Fax: (949) 858-1207
 Voicemail: (949) 835-1300
members.toastmasters.org

CONTACTING WORLD HEADQUARTERS

For information on joining or building a club, visit: www.toastmasters.org
Article submission: submissions@toastmasters.org
Letters to the Editor: letters@toastmasters.org
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Melissa Austin Associates
 2600 Ladybird Dr. • Calabasas, California 91302
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Shaping Ourselves as Leaders – Without Titles



✦ Back in 2004, your Board of Directors established a Big Audacious Goal (BAG) to guide the development of Toastmasters International for years to come. Our “BAG” is: Toastmasters International is recognized throughout the world as the undisputed expert in communication and leadership development. Now that’s pretty big and audacious! Yet we are best known for our ability to help people become better communicators, less so for leadership. Most people who come to our clubs do so because, first and foremost, they want to develop communication skills. Not many guests open with: “Hi! I’d like to become a better leader. Can you help me?”

The good news is that the answer is “yes,” even for those who do not identify themselves as leaders! Do you know that right now about 80,000 of our almost 240,000 members are in leadership roles, ranging from club officer to International President? That means one in three of our members is learning leadership by actually doing it. So what about the other 160,000 members who are not in formal leadership positions? What about those who say: “I just want to be a better speaker... not interested in leadership, thank you very much”? From time to time I meet people in Toastmasters who make a similar point: “Chris, I’m not here to be a leader.” Read on!

Recently I came across an article in which Robin Sharma, leadership guru and author of *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, shared his idea that each of us has the power to craft world-class careers for ourselves and lead remarkably successful lives. In his view, leadership is a way of being; it’s about inspiring all those who surround you to realize their gifts and stand for personal greatness, and it’s about connecting to people... deeply, genuinely and passionately (Isn’t that what we do in Toastmasters?). He sums up this philosophy in one simple phrase: “Lead without a title.” Lead without a title! Now that is one of the most powerful leadership insights I’ve come across in a long time!

In other words, regardless of status or position or title – or none of the above – leadership is for everyone. We all influence our circle of friends and family, colleagues and club members, and we can influence these people in a very inspirational way, thanks to Toastmasters International. Aren’t you glad you have the opportunity to experience the inspirationally shaping influence of Toastmasters every time you participate in your club meeting?

Chris K. Ford, DTM
International President

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The Toastmasters Vision:

Toastmasters International empowers people to achieve their full potential and realize their dreams. Through our member clubs, people throughout the world can improve their communication and leadership skills, and find the courage to change.

The Toastmasters Mission:

Toastmasters International is the leading movement devoted to making effective oral communication a worldwide reality.

Through its member clubs, Toastmasters International helps men and women learn the arts of speaking, listening and thinking – vital skills that promote self-actualization, enhance leadership potential, foster human understanding, and contribute to the betterment of mankind.

It is basic to this mission that Toastmasters International continually expand its worldwide network of clubs thereby offering ever-greater numbers of people the opportunity to benefit from its programs.

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Do you have something to say? Write it in 200 words or less, sign it with your name, address and club affiliation and send it to letters@toastmasters.org.

Rules Rule!

I enjoyed Jodi Bailey's article on "Handling the Hostile Crowd" (September), especially the part about laying out the parameters ahead of the talk. I attended a speech on a particularly controversial subject and the presenter announced that she would take no questions until she had finished, explaining that there would be plenty of time to answer them at the end of the meeting.

One frustrated audience member asked why. The speaker said she wanted to give the complete talk so that everyone understood her project. She stuck to her rule and got her points across while the questioners [later] got their points across. The meeting went smoothly.

Bob Ziller • New Richmond Toastmasters
New Richmond, Wisconsin

Sifting Through the Site

Although it's taking time to get used to, I'm starting to like the new Web site. I'll look forward to digging into it more in the coming weeks!

Major Mark Pearson • 1500 Speakers Toastmasters
Arlington, Virginia

Three Cheers for Bad Ears

I just wanted to say thank you for the very entertaining article by Marion Amberg (December). Oh, how it made me laugh!

I thought I was the only person who misheard things. It has caused my husband endless frustration – that is, when it hasn't had us in fits of laughter! I could really relate to Marion's plight and am relieved to know there are others in this boat.

Karen Rowell • Five-O-Five Club • Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Not a Monster-In-Law

Since no one else has responded about John Cadley's article titled "Some Free Advice" (October), I will. I try to keep a sense of humor, a sort-of 'perspective without prejudice,' since I became a mother-in-

law. But I really believe Mr. Cadley's analogies were a little over the top. Do we really need, in the official publication of an organization such as ours, an offensive lumping-together of mothers-in-law with castor oil, shingles, root canal treatment, income tax and lima beans? Sorry, but I don't see the humor there, I just see a perpetuation of an unnecessary and unattractive concept – the mother-in-law as ogre.

Alison Watson, DTM • Southern Cross University Club
Lismore, New South Wales, Australia

A Judge With a Grudge

I've read every issue of the *Toastmaster* since joining in the fall of 1990. This article piqued my interest because speech contests are a passion of mine. As Chief Judge for District 42, I was horrified by Cliff Suttle's comments in "Size Up Your Audience" (December 2007). He writes:

"Some clubs and club contest judges already understand that they are looking to advance someone to the next level who can win at the next level. These clubs and judges may be looking for the big speech as opposed to the smaller, flatter speeches."

As judges, we are to judge – without prejudice – the current speech on the current day. We are to judge according to the criteria for the contest without consideration of who the speaker is, how they have performed in the past or speculation on the future. All Toastmasters judges training I have ever attended has emphasized this point.

To consider what the contestant "might" do at another level appears to me a blatant contradiction of the code of ethics. If this is happening within Toastmasters, I trust that we can do more to educate our judges so that it is stopped immediately.

Connie Paus, DTM • Wild Oats Toastmasters
Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada

"Inconvenient Truth" Politically Biased

I admit that I am fascinated by the power of propaganda and the speaking skills required to achieve action from it. However, I'm a bit surprised that the *Toastmaster* would present the politically biased piece "An Inconvenient Truth" (December) without providing appropriate balance.

Theories presented in the book and movie are controversial and, unlike espoused by the political movement behind them, not completely accepted by the scientific community. The article did have good presentation suggestions, but I expected a far less political charged piece from this organization.

Lisa M. Madsen, Ph.D., ATMB • Pall Toasties • Port Washington, New York

I disagree with the *Toastmaster's* editorial decision to devote space to Al Gore's presentation, "An Inconvenient Truth." Even if we disregard the questions about his credibility (his excessive personal energy use; his profiting from the purchase of "carbon offsets,") and his information (the disputed "hockey stick" graph; a misleading photo of supposedly "stranded" polar bears,) we are stuck with his statement "The debate is over."

Gore's continuing campaign to stifle opposing voices would seem to make him the antithesis of what Toastmasters represents – a training ground to help its members speak their minds.

Aristotle's advice on rhetoric recommended that the speaker convey emotion, logic and credibility. Al Gore and his presentation appear inadequate in two of the three. The magazine space could have been devoted to more useful material.

Kyle Word • Toasters Toastmasters • Lubbock, Texas

An Armenian professor finds her future in America.

Nara Venditti:

Helping Fellow Immigrants Succeed

In 1990 when Nara Venditti's plane landed at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York City, the Soviet immigrant clutched 75 cents, which was all that remained of her life savings. As the plane approached the airport, she gazed down in wonder at the Statue of Liberty.

"The statue is a symbol of hope around the world, and I was exhilarated to see it and know that I had finally arrived in America," says Venditti, who had left behind everything she knew – including her family and a prestigious job as a university professor – to find a better life in the United States.

At the time Venditti, an Armenian born in the Southern part of the Soviet Union, had no plans for the future. She only knew that she was lucky to have arrived.

"It was the end of the Cold War and I took a huge risk by leaving, because things were so unstable in the Soviet Union," she says. "Getting out of Moscow at the time was like leaving on the last helicopter out of Saigon. The iron curtain had fallen, but it could have gone up again at any minute."

Though leaving had its dangers, Venditti did so to ensure a better life for herself, and her daughter and mother, who later followed her to America. "The situation in the Soviet Union at the time was very hopeless," she says. "I couldn't see a future for myself or my daughter, so leaving was worth the risk."

Today the self-made entrepreneur, speaker, author and educator knows she made the right choice and credits much of her success to Toastmasters. "When I arrived in the U.S., I had to build my professional life from scratch," she says. "My Toastmaster[s] membership helped me come full circle and offered opportunities I never dreamed of before."

Not only has Venditti made a successful life for herself in the U.S., she also helps other immigrants and foreign-born residents through her company, Succeed in America, in Danbury, Connecticut. The goal of Venditti's work, which focuses on business communication and workplace-based English language skills, is to help immigrants understand and accept American values so they can successfully transition into the workplace. She offers workshops on the subject and provides educational materials, such as her books, *How to Get a Job in the USA*, which is written from a foreigner's perspective, and *Ameri\$peak: A Mini Dictionary of the Most Common Words and Phrases You Need to Know to Communicate Effectively in American English*. She also appears in television shows on cultural understanding in the global workplace.

Looking back on her arrival in the United States, Venditti laughs at her naiveté. "When my plane landed, I remember thinking, 'America, get ready. I'm here,'" she says. "I didn't realize at the time that I wasn't ready for America."

As a third-generation educator equipped with a doctorate in applied linguistics from one of the best universities in Russia and a knowledge of English, Venditti says, "I thought I had the credentials to quickly establish myself in my new home. But I was wrong. I had difficulty understanding the American



Nara Venditti

workplace culture and that getting a job is all about marketing yourself properly.”

At first Venditti didn't realize that her main obstacle was communication. “English language proficiency is not enough,” she says. “People's eyes would glaze over when they couldn't understand what I was trying to say because of my accent and the way I phrased my thoughts.”

It took Venditti three months to find a job after arriving in the United States. “I was so focused on survival that I was obsessed with finding work,” says Venditti, who landed her first position, which required knowledge of the Russian language, through a Californian she had previously met in Armenia.

Before finding that first job, Venditti had several failed interviews, including one with Harvard University. “The position was for an instructor of Russian, which I was qualified for, but the interview didn't go well because I didn't know what I was doing,” she says. “Even the way I dressed was incorrect. I showed up looking like I was about to dance in a long brown skirt with an amber belt, dangling earrings and boots. I also asked all of the wrong questions at the wrong times.”

Finally, after several years of observing corporate America, Venditti noticed that those in leadership positions are great communicators. “On an especially frustrating day I headed to a Barnes and Noble bookstore and found a book on communication skills,” she recalls. “As I leafed through its very valuable advice on how to become a better speaker, I thought, Theory is great, but I need systematic practice to improve. How am I going to get the experience? While I was contemplating this, I found the authors' last and most important recommendation: Join Toastmasters!”

Within a week Venditti had joined the Wooster Height's Toastmasters

club in Danbury, Connecticut. “Determined to take care of my shortcomings as soon as possible, at my first meeting I scheduled 10 speeches back to back.”

Venditti went on to help found the Diversity-USA Toastmasters club and Barnum Square Toastmasters, and says, “Joining Toastmasters was the best thing that could happen to me.”

“There was an opening at the company where I was working, and I wanted the job, which required

“When my plane landed, I remember thinking, ‘America, get ready. I’m here.’ I didn’t realize at the time that I wasn’t ready for America.”

that I give a presentation,” she says. “I got the job.”

Richard Hastings met Venditti at the Wooster Heights club when she joined in 2000. He's seen her communication and leadership skills grow over the last eight years. “Nara is the poster child for Toastmasters,” he says. “She really is the quintessential success story. She left everything behind in a country with a lot of restrictions, came to the United States and turned to Toastmasters to improve her lot in life.”

Having seen results in her own life, Venditti is dedicated to helping other U.S. immigrants. “Communication breaks down when there are no cultural connects,” she says. “There are so many more things to consider besides knowing the language – such as what to wear, how to handle yourself, appropriate gender interaction and even how to properly shake hands. And this applies to cultures throughout the world.”

Eva Agolli immigrated to the U.S. from Albania in 1998 because of dim prospects in her country caused


by civil war. She met Venditti in 2003, and her life immediately improved.

“I was working as a waitress and Nara told me about Toastmasters, which I began attending,” says Agolli, who also took some of Venditti's programs at a local university.

Eventually Agolli earned her real estate license and found she liked being a realtor, but Venditti pushed her even further until she found her dream job, which combined real estate, her education and work she

had done in Albania. “If it hadn't been for Nara and Toastmasters, I wouldn't have found the perfect job,” she says.

Venditti plans to continue helping immigrants like Agolli with even more programs and publications. She teaches non-native participants how to communicate in English and do well in the American workplace. She also coaches international professionals using video and phone technology.

Venditti's programs are so well received that she recently held courses at Yale University and was invited to present at Harvard: Proof that with Toastmasters' help she's definitely come full circle! 

Julie Bawden Davis is a freelance writer and longtime contributor to this magazine. She lives in Southern California. Reach her at Julie@JulieBawdenDavis.com.

Editor's Note: Do you have an inspiring story of how the Toastmasters program has helped you? Tell us at letters@toastmasters.org.

Speaking in Business

By Pat Rocchi, ACB

Five lessons in corporate communication.

My employers gave me an unexpected crash course in communication. I was working for a large global company when they transferred me from the sunny climes of Daytona Beach, Florida, to upstate New York. My new assignment was to manage the internal and external communications of a leading power-generation business.

After a few weeks on the job, my boss revealed why they needed me: I would be implementing the announcement of 13,000 layoffs and other actions designed to save the business in an era of worldwide competition. After recovering from this startling development, I spent the next two years communicating to local and national media, employees and their families and a stunned community about the background of these changes, the organization's steps to become more competitive, and our eventual recovery and success.

The communication principles I learned on this job and in subsequent corporate assignments have helped shape my skills as a Toastmaster. I have dealt with many issues that concern global economics (e.g., industry trends), contention (strikes) and even mortality (an employee death by accident). We in Toastmasters view ourselves as more than speakers, which is evidenced by the change in our educational awards designations from

Toastmaster to Communicator. To further develop my fellow members into better communicators and leaders, I'm sharing some of my experiences that helped elevate my own platform and leadership skills:

1 GET SMART! – Maintain a broad base of knowledge on topical issues. Over the last few years, major world events changed our lives. In his book, *The World Is Flat – A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, Thomas L. Friedman cites events such as Y2K, the attacks on the World Trade Center on 9/11 and the rising global competitiveness of countries such as India and China.

It is important to understand such historical markers so that we can apply their lessons to new situations in our world. For example, I wrote a successful motivational speech for my current CEO that he delivered to the medical segment of our company. I referred to the profitable future of healthcare-related industries due to





the increasing ages of baby boomers and the treatments they would require, and the speech painted an optimistic picture of the medical products market. Maintaining such a wide knowledge base can also help you prepare interesting and informative club speeches. There are many ways to stay in touch: Subscribe to and read a variety of news papers and business publications regularly, whether they are daily, weekly or biweekly publications. Arrange to receive Internet business news on your computer every day. Most importantly, turn off your television and read as much as you can!

2 TABLE TOPICS, ANYONE? – Keep up your extemporaneous speaking skills. Nothing focuses your attention quite like the reporter and camera operator who show up unannounced at your office door. It is important to keep abreast of the facts of your industry and any contemporary situations you are facing. This helps you com-

municate your side of the story coolly and with control. A nervous spokesperson is like blood in the water for that subset of journalists who behave like sharks.

I find that my work and Table Topics combine to sharpen my off-the-cuff speaking. Filler words are distracting and dilute our messages. Table Topics help Toastmasters minimize or even eliminate those habits outright. (You will want to thank all those Ah Counters who helped break you of the tendency to use filler words.) Practicing extemporaneous speaking can also help you learn to look squarely and confidently at your audience, whether that is a group of fellow Toastmasters or a television audience. This is also a good time to have your facts at the top of your head so you can draw on them effortlessly (revisit point number 1 above).

You don't need to be a company spokesperson to benefit from these skills. Chances are you'll be called on at your workplace to give an impromptu project update



growing costs and rising competition. That requires a different message than communication to customers who want to know if they can depend on the same level of quality and service or even if the business will be around tomorrow.

In the same way, you'll want to tailor the content of your various Toastmasters speeches to match your club audience. For example, your fellow club members are unlikely to be interested in the intricacies of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act unless they are all accountants.

4 WRITE EFFECTIVELY – Choose your words carefully, creatively. Jim Ylisela recently wrote in ragan.com, an online newsletter for communicators, that communication to various audiences “should be tailored to what they need to know, and what’s most important to them.”

I find that many corporate scribes choose their words as though their audiences are interchangeable, each possessing the same level of knowledge and interests. This usually reduces all messages to a bland pabulum that serves no one in particular.

In my experience, you can easily alienate an employee audience by serving up the same baloney about “benchmarks,” “synergies” and “value added.” Like most audi-

A nervous spokesperson is like blood in the water for that subset of journalists who behave like sharks.

or some other unplanned presentation. Practice Table Topics as often as you can to stay sharp and look your best in front of co-workers and management.

3 RIGHT MESSAGE, RIGHT AUDIENCE – Speak to your stakeholders. John P. Kotter’s book, *Leading Change*, says that “The real power of a vision is unleashed only when those involved in an enterprise have a common understanding of its goals and direction. That shared sense of a desirable future can help motivate and coordinate the kinds of actions that create transformations.” But to achieve transformational communication, it is important to create a variety of messages that address the concerns of your individual stakeholders.

Stakeholders might be defined as those who have a particular interest in your company or organization. These may include employees (whose fortunes are tied to the success of the company), local government (whose economy may be linked to your employment or to services provided to the community) or investors (who care about the current and future value of your share prices). For example, you may need to motivate employees to work more efficiently in the face of

ences, employees have self-interests. While they probably care for the company, they are likely more interested in the status of their jobs and how to keep them. Similarly, investors are much more concerned with the value of the stock than bromides about customer service.

These experiences have raised my awareness of how my words affect my various audiences. As Toastmasters we are all different. Members of community clubs may have limited knowledge of business terms but have interests tied to the local community. Audiences outside of Toastmasters also have their unique sensibilities. For example, if you find yourself speaking to a group of healthcare professionals, you should know they’re generally not interested in the language of economics, despite the financial challenges facing hospitals. They are, however, responsive to language about their chosen mission: the provision of medical care.

I once wrote a speech about changes in the defense industry. To make a point about the exacting standards of the customer, the United States government, I showed a slide detailing the specifications for a cookie. A cookie! It needed to be so many centimeters high and a certain

diameter, exactly. What's more, the icing needed to be free of "spectral reflection," meaning the icing shouldn't shine too much. I had the speaker deadpan to the audience, "I never heard a child turn down a cookie because it had too much 'spectral reflection.'" It wasn't a line you'd hear on Comedy Central, but the audience howled. Why? Because it was the language of their profession, and it had relevance to them.

In general, know your audience and their hot buttons when constructing your speeches. Use warm, caring words when appealing to their emotions and sensibilities. Use action-oriented words to drive them to action. Use clear language with ample definitions when instructing them. In all cases, use terms and examples to which they can relate. Above all, remember that one size does not fit all when choosing language.

5 MEASURE UP – Evaluate your effectiveness. Often, the most important part of a Toastmasters meeting is the evaluation portion. This also applies to the corporate world. Business types are fond of saying, "If you don't measure it, you can't manage it." Likewise, if we don't go to our audiences and learn how well we performed,

we can't be sure if we succeeded or if we'll be able to repeat that success in the future. So I learned to take surveys and seek out anecdotal evidence of how well my speeches did. Likewise, take your evaluations seriously at Toastmasters. It is the only road to improving your organization and delivery.

The company to which I was transferred in New York State did weather the storm. It not only survived, but most of its competitors of the time are now either diminished as players or out of the power-generation business altogether. Management acknowledged that much of the success was due to my ability to articulate a cogent, coherent and consistent message that rallied the troops and calmed our customers and communities. In turn, I took away a core set of beliefs that I find relevant every time I put pen to paper or set foot on a podium. **T**

Pat Rocchi, ACB, a four-time champion of Toastmasters District 38, is an award-winning corporate writer and video producer. He recently launched a new career as a professional speaker. Reach him at patrocchi@comcast.net.



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The Seven Secrets of Inspiring Leaders

How to inspire employees, investors and customers.

By Carmine Gallo

For the past year, I have interviewed renowned leaders, entrepreneurs and educators who have an extraordinary ability to sell their visions, values and themselves. What I've found are seven techniques that you can easily adopt in your own professional communication with your employees, clients and investors.

1 Demonstrate enthusiasm constantly. Inspiring leaders have an abundance of passion for what they do. You cannot inspire unless you're inspired yourself. Period. Passion can't be taught. You either have passion for your message or you don't. Once you discover your passion, make sure it's apparent to everyone within your professional circle. Richard Tait sketched an idea

on a napkin during a cross-country flight, an idea to bring joyful moments to families and friends. His enthusiasm was so infectious that he convinced partners, employees and investors to join him. He created a toy and game company called Cranium. Walk into its Seattle headquarters and you are hit with a wave of fun, excitement and engagement unlike anything commonly seen in corporate life. It all started with one man's passion.

2 Articulate a compelling course of action. Inspiring leaders craft and deliver a specific, consistent and memorable vision. A goal such as "We intend to double our sales by this time next year," is not inspiring. Neither is a long, convoluted mission statement destined to be filed

away and forgotten. A vision is a short (usually *10 words or less*), vivid description of what the world will look like if your product or service succeeds. Microsoft's Steve Ballmer once said that shortly after he joined the company, he was having second thoughts. Bill Gates and Gates' father took Ballmer out to dinner and explained he had it all wrong. They said Ballmer saw his role as that of a bean counter for a startup. They had a vision of putting a computer on every desk, in every home. That vision – a computer on every desk, in every home – remains consistent to this day. The power of Bill Gates' vision set everything in motion.

3 Sell the benefit. Always remember: It's not about you, it's about them. In my first class at North-

western University's Medill School of Journalism, I was taught to answer the question, Why should my readers care? That's the same thing you need to ask yourself constantly throughout a presentation, meeting, pitch or any situation where persuasion takes place. Your listeners are asking themselves, What's in this for me? Answer it. Don't make them guess.

4 Tell more stories. Inspiring leaders tell memorable stories. Few business leaders appreciate the power of stories to connect with their audiences. A few weeks ago I was working with one of the largest producers of organic food in the United States. I can't recall most, if any, of the data they used to prove that organic is better. But I remember a story a farmer told. He said when he worked for a conventional grower, his kids could not hug him at the end of the day when he got home. His clothes had to be removed and disinfected. Now, his kids can hug him as soon as he walks off the field.

No amount of data can replace that story. And now guess what I think about when I see the organic section in my local grocery store?


You got it: The farmer's story. Stories connect with people on an emotional level. Tell more of them.

5 Invite participation. Inspiring leaders bring employees, customers and colleagues into the process of building the company or service. This is especially important when trying to motivate young people. The command and control way of managing is over. Instead, today's managers solicit input, listen for feedback and actively incorporate what they hear. Employees want more than a paycheck. They want to know that their work is adding up to something meaningful.

6 Reinforce an optimistic outlook. Inspiring leaders speak of a better future. Robert Noyce, the co-founder of Intel, said "Optimism is an essential ingredient of innovation. How else can the individual favor change over security?" Extraordinary leaders throughout history have been more optimistic than the average person. Winston Churchill exuded hope and confidence in the darkest days of World War II. Colin Powell said that optimism was the secret behind Ronald Reagan's charisma. Powell also said

that optimism is a "force multiplier," meaning it has a ripple effect throughout an organization and increases the effects of the other six secrets. Speak in positive, optimistic language. Be a beacon of hope.

7 Encourage potential. Inspiring leaders praise people and invest in them emotionally. Richard Branson has said that when you praise people, they flourish; criticize them and they shrivel up. Praise is the easiest way to connect with people. When people receive genuine praise, their doubt diminishes and their spirits soar. Encourage people, and they'll walk through walls for you.

By inspiring your listeners, you become the kind of person people want to be around. Customers will want to do business with you, employees will want to work with you, and investors will want to back you. It all starts with mastering these seven secrets. 

Carmine Gallo is a communications coach for the world's most admired brands. He is the author of *Fire Them Up!: 7 Simple Secrets to Inspire Your Colleagues, Customers and Clients* (John Wiley & Sons).

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How a resourceful group of company clubs avoided foreclosure.

AT&T Makes the Right Choice

By Craig Harrison, DTM

Homeless! We associate the word with individuals and societies. Yet for 24 corporate Toastmasters clubs scattered across North America, “homeless” described their potential reality when host AT&T informed them they would no longer be allowed to meet on corporate premises as a result of a change of policy. Welcome to the realities of club management. And there but by the grace of all host organizations goes your club, be it of the corporate or community variety.

What would you do if you learned your club would lose its meeting space imminently? This is the story of how club leaders, their districts and World Headquarters staff used their communication and leadership skills to solve a problem and convince their host’s leadership team to let them meet happily ever after.

It Could Happen To You...

Toastmasters currently has 11,300 clubs meeting regularly across the globe. And 60 percent of these clubs are considered corporate clubs, meeting in host companies, in skyscrapers, training rooms, classrooms, factories and various other types of structures. Corporate clubs

traditionally meet on company premises. Yet as space becomes scarce – with security and confidentiality concerns rising and company policies changing – meeting space may not be as stable as previously thought. Consider the recent case of AT&T’s 24 Toastmasters clubs:

The AT&T Network

Toastmasters have met in AT&T offices for almost half a century. The first club began meeting in Columbus, Ohio, in 1961. Currently AT&T has clubs in 11 U.S. states as well as in Toronto, Canada. Some are open to the general public while others are for employees only. Over the years, AT&T talent has won contests, served on the





◀ Home arranged, at last. Left to right: Afternoon Teletalkers leaders Ying Sang Man, ACS/CL, Mariza Seril, JoAnna Bradley, ACB, Andy Stone, CTM, Rebecca Wong, Jim Breedlove, Nicole duPuis, ATMB/AL, pose in front of a model of the AT&T campus in San Ramon, California.

in AT&T facilities that weren't strictly for conducting AT&T business. Suddenly, Toastmasters clubs were no longer eligible to meet on company premises.

All Circuits Are Busy

All across North America club officers were suddenly scurrying to find alternate locations, considering holding joint meetings with other clubs or even pondering disbanding. Some wrote letters to their local managers at AT&T sites, extolling the virtues of their corporate clubs to the executives of each corporate campus. Other club officers engaged their district

“Actually, it’s been a good experience overall. Now we have a centralized list, centralized contacts, and have in writing that AT&T supports what Toastmasters can do.”

– Nicole duPuis, ATMB

Toastmasters Board of Directors and contributed greatly to the Distinguished Club program. The relationship has benefited both parties.

A Change of Plans

This past fall, AT&T implemented a new real estate policy requiring an approval process for all meetings

leaders to intercede on their behalf and state the case for the value of allowing clubs to meet onsite without complication. Still other club officers filled out forms asking for exceptions to the corporate real estate policy. Meanwhile, employees were still encouraged to keep developing their communication and leadership skills through participation in Toastmasters!

Tipping Points:

How corporate clubs can foster stronger relationships with their host corporations.

By Craig Harrison, DTM

- Become familiar with your company's policies regarding outside groups, its meeting protocols, etc. Does your club qualify? Use corporate language to describe your club to ensure it's regarded as the resource it is.
- Meet regularly with your Human Resources management to keep them apprised of your club, its members' progress and contributions to your organization's well being.
- Invite upper management to visit your club for special occasions, such as officer installations, awards events and anniversary functions, (and don't forget about demo meetings and chartering functions for new clubs).
- Encourage your company's leaders to periodically present to your club. They can use your club for dry runs of their own presentations, help communicate company initiatives, or inspire members with their own communication and leadership successes.
- Use your company's internal communications (such as e-zines and newsletters), intranet and other resources to celebrate successes and promote your club and its value to your organization's operations.
- Elicit quotes from your training and HR directors about the value the club provides for communication and leadership development. Use these quotes on fliers, brochures and on the club's Web site.
- Periodically host an open house for your club to recruit new members and allow management to share in the success of the club. (Remember, success has many parents!)
- Keep your club in the mind's eye of your organization through "desk drops" of fliers, posters on breakroom and cafeteria bulletin boards and elsewhere throughout your organization's campus and its facilities.
- Offer training for non-members, through Speechcraft or Success-Communication modules that contribute to your organization's well-being.
- Offer to place fliers and brochures into the new-employee orientation materials given to new hires.
- Cultivate advocates at every level of your organization to champion your club. Recognize them with ribbons, certificates and public praise.
- In your own annual reviews, cite the difference Toastmasters is making in your success as an employee.

Each of these tips helps you maintain good relations with your host organization. Help your VPPR implement them all and watch your club's profile soar!

Calling AT&T

Ying Sang Man, ACS/CL, a senior technology consultant with AT&T in San Ramon, California, is both an officer with Afternoon Teletalkers and District 57's Division F Governor. She says, "Officers of our club conferred with two other teams onsite: Ring Masters and Telesarians. A Telesarian member knew someone in Human Resources. I wrote a letter to HR that found its way up the ranks to Halle Holland, AT&T's Executive Director of Change Management." And that's how company leaders in Georgia became aware of the homeless Toastmasters situation across North America.

Halle Holland was a champion for Toastmasters and routed Man's request to another Toastmasters advocate, AT&T President Long Distance Julie Ann Arca. Soon the corporate relations team at Toastmasters World Headquarters and high-ranking AT&T leaders were in discussions to obtain an exception to the real estate rule. Central to the discussions was International Director

Lee Holliday, DTM, who had previously formed three AT&T clubs and remains an active member of Cingular Speaking Sensations of Alpharetta, Georgia.

At AT&T, Holland, Holliday and another AT&T executive, Rick Bradley, all championed Toastmasters for its value to AT&T: "As employees develop their communication and leadership skills through Toastmasters, they become more effective and productive," says Holliday. "Toastmasters is a great value from a cost perspective as well."

Once AT&T recognized that Toastmasters qualified as an "employee resource group," it was easier for AT&T management to endorse the value of allowing all Toastmasters clubs at AT&T locations to continue to meet as before.

Side Benefits

The specter of losing their meeting locations challenged each club's officer team to ponder contingencies. According to area governor and AT&T associate project

manager JoAnna Bradley, ACB, this wasn't necessarily a bad thing. "As a project manager, I am big on contingency plans. Clubs should always have a backup plan!"

Bradley warns that this kind of thing could happen at any company and recommends that club presidents check with Human Resources to "make sure they know you're meeting and confirm your club is in compliance." She also says, "When starting a new club, find out what guidelines and specifications already exist. That way you avoid unwelcome surprises down the road."

Afternoon Teletalkers President Nicole duPuis, ATMB, in San Ramon, California, recognized wonderful side benefits from this situation: "Our club derived a PR advantage. More people in our location are now aware of the club. We were challenged to speak to vice presidents, get sponsors in place and speak to HR. Each helped us promote what we do. Now more people are aware of the value we provide."

She saw benefits within the club as well: "I witnessed an additional layer of commitment to the club. The specter of losing it made our members realize how valuable our club was to them. It added strength and commitment."

As for the AT&T network of Toastmasters clubs, duPuis added: "Actually, it's been a good experience overall, since we didn't know about the other clubs before. Now we have a centralized list, centralized contacts, and have in writing that AT&T supports what Toastmasters can do."

Leadership in Action

In the end, the potential crisis led to a deeper appreciation among AT&T's leaders for the ongoing value of development and skill Toastmasters clubs provide. And club officers were able to bring a real-life problem to a satisfying conclusion. AT&T recognizes Toastmasters as a national treasure and not a club of secrets. Also,

"As employees develop their communication and leadership skills through Toastmasters, they become more effective and productive."

Toastmasters officers reached out and built new relationships with key leaders at many levels of this worldwide corporation, including other clubs. And when AT&T employees hear the word Toastmasters now, you could say it rings a bell! Congratulations to all. 📌

Craig Harrison, DTM, founder of Laugh Lovers of Oakland, California, is a professional speaker and principal of Expressions Of Excellence! For more resources visit www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com.

Editor's Note: *If your club encounters problems with its sponsoring organization that you can't resolve at a local level, please contact the corporate relations team at World Headquarters at bwallace@toastmasters.org.*

Making Your Case for Toastmasters At Work

By Craig Harrison, DTM

To transform non-Toastmasters decision-makers into champions for your club, consider the following tips:

- Use existing Toastmasters materials to help decision-makers understand Toastmasters' powerful communication and leadership programs. Create a kit with protocol brochures and pamphlets and present it to them.
- You can list URLs for Toastmasters Web sites, such as those for clubs, districts and toastmasters.org. Or use quotes and language from these sites to promote your club to management.
- Gather testimonials from existing and previous members. Focus on the benefits they experienced through participation. Make sure to list each person's title with the organization. Put these in your club's materials, and on your club's Web site.
- Hone your own story to tell anecdotally about the difference Toastmasters has made in your professional development. Use Table Topics to practice a two-minute version. Use the setting-situation-solution format to let listeners experience the end result, solution, benefit or outcome of club participation.
- Consider writing and publishing short case studies that showcase how communication and leadership skills make the difference at work: with clients, on projects, in meetings, etc. (Use the setting-situation-solution format.)



By Suzanne Frey

“Toastmasters changed my life. They really did. Put me on the stage. I don’t know what I would have done without that positive boost.”

A Conversation With Chris Matthews

Recently, the *Toastmaster* asked Chris Matthews, well-known “Hardball with Chris Matthews” American television talk show host, journalist and outspoken political commentator, to discuss his experiences as a Toastmaster and speechwriter, his thoughts on political oratory, and the communication skills of the current crop of candidates and politicians. Matthews is the author of a new book, *Life is a Campaign*, as well as four other books, and hosts the weekly *The Chris Matthews Show* in addition to the weekday *Hardball* show on MSNBC.

Toastmaster: *Your book, Now, Let Me Tell You What I really Think, mentions you were once a member of Toastmasters, while working as a staffer on Capitol Hill in the 1970s. How did you find out about Toastmasters and why did you join?*

Matthews: During my years on Capitol Hill, I was always working on my speechwriting and public speaking skills. I accepted every speaking opportunity regardless of the group.

I joined the Capitol Hill chapter of Toastmasters. While other staffers were content just knowing their stuff, I forced myself to practice getting that stuff across to other people. I desperately needed to overcome my stage fright.

I couldn’t sleep at night. Whenever I had to speak publicly, it got to me. But practice makes perfect. I really think practicing is such an important part of everything. And now I’m good at it! I don’t get nervous at all – even when I did the

Tonight Show with Jay Leno and walked into a roomful of thousands of people, it didn’t bother me.

Oratory is everything. My hero, Winston Churchill, said, “If you can speak in public, you’ll have an amazing power, amazing independence.”

Toastmaster: *What did Toastmasters teach you that you didn’t already know?*

Matthews: I learned that being supportive of other people is very important. As a speaker, you have to know that there are people out there rooting for you – more than you might believe. There is a perceived threat that somehow the audience is out to get you. But they aren’t. They have no interest for you to do badly.... They came to [the presentation], they must want it to be successful.

A chapter in my new book, *Life is a Campaign*, is classic Toastmasters:

- Start with an ice breaker
- Next, give some anecdotes about people in the room,
- Then, in a few seconds, tell why you are there; what's the point of that talk.
- Then, give another warm-up, so the audience gets used to the sound of your voice and realize you are a good guy, that you care about them and connect with them.

Basically, there is a pattern. If you follow a very clear structure, you'll give a great speech. You don't have to worry about writing a great speech – it will compose itself if you follow this simple structure. And that sounds like classic Toastmasters. That's probably where I learned a lot of it.

Toastmaster: *How long were you a member of Toastmasters?*

Matthews: A while...maybe a year.

Toastmaster: *You say in your book that being a presidential speech-writer was the most fun job you had until landing the hosting job on Hardball. Is there a speech you've delivered or written that you are especially proud of?*

Matthews: There were two speeches in New York: The first was for the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick right after September 11. [New York Mayor Michael] Bloomberg, [Rudy] Giuliani, [former New York Governor George] Pataki and other big-name people were there. I spoke at the Sheraton, giving the main address – Bloomberg gave one, and I gave one. It was the best speech I ever gave. It all was about the victims of 9/11.

I also gave a speech at the Pennsylvania Society gathering in New York [in December 2005], about the opportunities of America and how this is a different country from most countries. It doesn't matter

who your family is, where you come from, but what matters is what you can do. Very different from Europe.

Toastmaster: *How about any speeches from your time as a White House speechwriter?*

Matthews: I also wrote for President Carter [promoting] a youth bill – a bill for helping young people in the spring of 1980. I wrote a lot of his political speeches; obviously they weren't that successful. They didn't work. I wrote for him a year and quarter as a speechwriter.

Toastmaster: *On Hardball with Chris Matthews, you are famous for your feisty, hard-hitting approach, forcing guests to answer questions they may not want to answer. Is this a persona you developed specifically for Hardball?*

Matthews: I can't let [guests on the show] get away with propaganda. There has to be a limit of what people can drop on television. Just because they have a mike, they can't just come on and dump stuff that hasn't been challenged. Live television is too uninhibited for that. You have to find a way to inhibit, to control and challenge [what people are saying]. Or else they'll just come and drop stuff. And people think, "It must be true because you let them say it." People tell me, "Why did you let them say that?" In fact, I'm liable, legally liable, for what people say on my show.

My goal is to cover the country's politics. My main weakness as a journalist is that I love politicians.

Toastmaster: *In one of your books, you say, "I'm a 'tumbler' – someone at a resort hired to stir things up." Do you "shake things up" to keep people from coming on your show with an agenda?*

Matthews: I love it when I can zing guests for using talking points... I

think people like to see people on television being challenged. The most comments I get from viewers are along the lines of, "Keep holding their feet to the fire; stay at them; don't let up."

Toastmaster: *What do you think of the public speaking skills of current politicians compared to those of previous generations?*

Matthews: They are not very good. I think Rudy Giuliani and Jesse Jackson are good. Giuliani is the best. He is the only guy who can hold a room – he can actually stop talking and the pauses, themselves, hold the room.... The Clintons were okay. [Former New York Mayor Mario] Cuomo was great. I thought Schwarzenegger gave a really good speech at the last [Republican National] Convention.

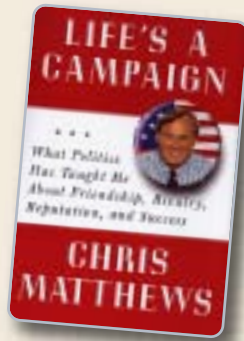
But there are not many good speakers this time. I think Obama is a great speaker. I saw him at the last [Democratic National] Convention. He is a great writer too. I think the two great speakers today are Rudy and Obama. Style has changed. All you have to do now is come on and answer questions. You can be somewhat impressive by just answering questions. But to be able to just stand there and hold the room for a half hour, that's truly impressive. People like Kennedy and Nixon, those guys were maybe the last of a breed. They could stand there and wing it, basically. Kennedy – in the first eight minutes of his [1960] debate with Nixon, won the election. An amazing performance.

Toastmaster: *Would you recommend Toastmasters membership to politicians?*

Matthews: Definitely, They can use it. It's basic training – they don't even have the basics of how to put a speech together: How to write and organize a speech. How to

Chris Matthews' Six-Step Speech System

Excerpted from the chapter titled, "Speak Up!" in his new book, *Life's a Campaign*:



- **The icebreaker:** First, offer a quip about the occasion. This is to relax the crowd and stamp the moment with your voice and personality. It can be hokey – “At least you can’t blame me for this weather” – or it can be an all-occasion greeting: “As King Henry VIII said to each of his seven wives, ‘I won’t keep you long.’” The goal is to simply let the audience know you’re there for *them*.
- **The tease:** Next, give a provocative glimpse of what your speech will be about. This is important... Your goal is to rivet the audience’s attention to what you’re about to pull off. “What I am about to tell you will shock you” isn’t bad.
- **Anecdote time!** Be prepared with a few appealing stories about the specific place, person or occasion that has brought you there. The idea is to further connect with your listeners. Consider this your final warm-up before takeoff. Try to find the anecdotes that will spotlight a few individuals in the crowd sitting in front of you. It instantly converts an audience into a community.
- **Download:** Okay, tell them what you’ve traveled there to say. Just hit it – point by point.
- **Relief!** Time to let them know the heaviest part of the speech is behind them. Just tell some light-hearted story that brings your message home.
- **Send-off:** Go for high octane! You want to leave your audience with a “wow.” Think of the reason you came to speak, then belt it for all to hear. If nothing else, it will alert everyone that you’re done and it’s time to clap.

structure a speech in the car [to an engagement] and make it an interesting talk. They end up winging it, standing up there and just doing it by stream-of-consciousness, which is not worthy of them. I don’t think they really try – it’s just a discipline they have not accepted today. Along will come a great speaker one of these days, like a Reagan, or a Roosevelt, or a Kennedy, and they’ll do very well.

Toastmaster: *Is that a skill they consciously focus on, or does it come naturally to someone like Barack Obama or Rudy Giuliani?*

Matthews: I think they take it seriously. Jesse [Jackson] took it

seriously. There are no great speakers by accident.

Toastmaster: *What’s the most obvious speaking flaw you see in politicians?*

Matthews: Probably delivering an applause line in a way that is grating. When they sort of slow down their delivery to let the applause pick up and then speed up during the applause, I can’t stand that. Hillary does it. It’s the same old thing. They create some sort of riff, they begin to repeat certain phrases, and they do it in a way that’s meant to cheer on the ringers in the audience to applaud and then [during the applause] they push their way through the applause. In other words, they encourage applause

so they can talk through it. It really bugs me. Why are people in the audience just lemmings? I guess that’s what it is – a chant for their supporters.

Toastmaster: *Between Hardball and The Chris Matthews Show, which do you enjoy more?*

Matthews: They are what I do. I can’t say I enjoy one more than another. The Sunday show is more polished – we have a whole day of rehearsal. On a weekday show, you don’t have the time to really organize everything – you are really working on deadline. It’s never going to be quite as calm as doing half hour a week. You have to thrive on deadlines, Monday through Friday

Also, [the shows] are different. During the week I have to challenge people. The Sunday show has a different tone from the weekend show. It has a different audience. It has a different time of the week, a tranquil time. It’s public affairs, news, entertainment – and it’s all connected. You can’t just read out news.

Toastmaster: *You have said Winston Churchill would be your favorite guest on Hardball. Aside from “being the greatest man of the 20th Century,” as you put it, what would make him a good interview? No doubt, he would have several “talking points” you’d have to overcome...*

Matthews: As the greatest man of the 20th Century, he was funny, he was brilliant, he had wonderful things to say and he was spontaneous. He spoke out. He probably would have some witticism ready in his quiver that he would use at the right moment. He didn’t do it spontaneously; he had them ready to serve up.

Toastmaster: *You mention guests should bring “facts, spontaneity, honesty, feistiness and laughter.” Name some recent favorite guests who have brought that.*

Matthews: [Newsweek columnist] Howard Fineman, [NBC correspondent] Norah O'Donnell, and certainly [author and commentator] Andrew Sullivan on the weekend. Dan Rather has been great, Kathy Kay from the BBC, Kathleen Parker – a syndicated columnist. I have these people on a lot, because they are really good. [Debbie Wasserman] Schultz, a congresswoman from Florida, is very good. [Congressman] Barney Frank is always a great guest. He's smart as a whip.

Toastmaster: *What do you consider your greatest strength as a speaker and communicator?*

Matthews: Enthusiasm. I'm more enthusiastic than just about anybody. Also, my knowledge of the field of politics.

Toastmaster: *If you could improve one aspect of your speaking style, what would that be?*

Matthews: Great question. Organization – I think it would be helpful. I keep working on that.... But if I were any more organized, I'd be

less spontaneous, so I think I'll work on the combination of organization and spontaneity.

Toastmaster: *What do you consider the single most important element of a successful speech?*

Matthews: Absolute enthusiasm. Enjoying being there. The enjoyment of the moment. Also, humor. You can give the best speech in the world, but if it wasn't funny, no one will remember it.

Toastmaster: *Name some candidates who could use some more humor.*

Matthews: Oh God. All of them!

Toastmaster: *Is there any contemporary person you admire as a speaker? Why?*


Matthews: I guess I've always admired [Tony] Blair – even though I disagreed with him, I liked him. I liked how he'd come to American press conferences at the White House and explain, sort of interpret Bush for us. It's almost as if he were saying, "Here's the English version." He'd speak, and then

Bush'd speak, and you'd wonder, are these guys speaking the same language? He's so articulate and charming. And funny! It makes you feel good when you listen to Tony Blair. Archbishop Tutu, of South Africa, is also great – very eloquent and funny.

Toastmaster: *Tell us about your new book, Life is a Campaign.*

Matthews: It's my best book yet. I spent years writing it. The subtitle is "What Politics Has Taught Me About Friendship, Rivalry, Reputation and Success."

Toastmaster: *Thank you for taking the time to talk to us.*

Matthews: Thank you. Toastmasters changed my life. They really did. Put me on the stage. I don't know what I would have done without that positive boost. And I really appreciate the call, to make me think about this again." 

Suzanne Frey is the editor of the *Toastmaster* magazine.

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How to “get coverage” and run a Toastmasters club in sparsely populated areas.

Toastmasters in Rural Areas

A popular series of commercials showed a man testing his cell phone in places where you wouldn't normally get cell phone coverage, such as mountaintops and fields. These commercials helped coin the phrase “Can you hear me now?” The message in these commercials was that this cell phone carrier could provide coverage virtually anywhere, especially where

other companies did not offer service. This example of cell phone coverage parallels the way Toastmasters clubs are more concentrated in cities and large communities than in rural areas – but we do have coverage everywhere!

Does the low population of a rural area make it almost impossible to “get coverage” or run a Toastmasters club? Some people might say yes, others might say no. For example, it would seem to be harder to build and maintain a Toastmasters club in rural areas than in the big cities like New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Houston, Toronto or Vancouver which have populations in the millions. In your more pessimistic moments, you might be tempted to think of that old saying, “If a tree falls in a forest, will anybody hear it?”

Consider a few facts:

- Almost any community will have at least one group or service organization.
- Virtually any community will have one or more employers of some size (say 50 employees or more) or an alliance of small businesses or entrepreneurs.

- People who live in the country realize that part of the trade-off for a rural “quality of life” is the number of hours spent in a car, bus or train.
- The desires for improved communication and self-expression are universal.

Toastmasters *can* be successful in rural areas! As an example, District 45 is largely rural, sparsely populated and stretches over sections of both Canada and the U.S. The largest city in District 45 has less than 300,000 inhabitants, while most municipalities are much smaller. However, this district routinely has excellent results in the Distinguished District, Area and Club Programs. Despite the relatively low population, District 45 clubs are successful by many measurements. Other districts with highly rural populations are also successful.

So what are the steps to success in rural areas?

1 Build a successful club with strong leadership. Every club needs to have the basics in place. Your club officers need to know

what their jobs are and they need to do those jobs. You need to have all the necessary programs in place for education, membership, public relations and mentoring.

Keep your club as informal, interesting and fun as possible. Make your club a place where passions can be expressed, skills can shine and friendships can be formed. Make the Toastmasters meeting one of the highlights of a member's week!

Cultivate strong, enthusiastic club leaders, because they are the public face of your club. They contribute to the maintenance and growth of the club. Start with officer training at the district and make sure they know how to access TI's member Web site for information and tips for success.

Take care of your members. Find out what they want or need and help them achieve it. Monitor attendance and be sure to contact any members who start to miss meetings. If their attendance reflects dissatisfaction with the club, find out what you can do to resolve any issues. Every member is like a precious gem. You want to keep him or her happy!

2 Word-of-mouth and other promotion. Word-of-mouth promotion is critical to the success of a rural club. Yarmouth Toastmasters in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, relies heavily on hand-

picking new members within their town of 7,500 residents and in surrounding areas. Club president David Mooney says, "Four of our active members are always speaking about Toastmasters and showing others about the great learning in both communication and leadership." Armstrong Toastmasters, based in a community of 2,500 in British Columbia, finds success when members recruit their friends to join.

It's also very important to promote your club within the local community. Armstrong club president Anna Houston shares several successful techniques: "Our VP Public Relations puts out small but eye-catching posters all around town. We also have a standing reminder in the local weekly newspaper's community calendar, reminding and inviting 'one and all' to our meetings on Tuesday evenings at the Chamber of Commerce office."

Special events, such as open house meetings, can be very useful. "We hold an evening networking event each year during Small Business Week," says David Mooney. "During this event we always sign up two to three new members from local businesses."

3 Consider daytime meetings. If your club is struggling with getting members to evening meetings, try daytime meetings. Yarmouth Toastmasters meets two or three Thursdays each month from 12:15 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. Daytime Toastmasters meetings are commonly held in the New Brunswick communities of Fredericton, Saint John and Moncton. Daytime meetings are often used by corporate or closed clubs with great success. Members from Harbourside Toastmasters of Saint John find noon-hour meetings more convenient for busy people whose evening agendas are full of family or community activities.




4 Open your mind to "closed" clubs. On one hand, it might not make sense to have a closed club in an area with low population. After all, you don't want to limit your potential membership. However, closed clubs that focus on specific organizations can help provide the necessary continuity and focus to help make a club successful.

Gary Belding, former Area 19 Governor for District 45, says the New Brunswick provincial government started its own Toastmasters club, "since employees offer a lot of presentations and Toastmasters would be part of a great professional development plan." Local Toastmasters sold the idea to two government departments by sitting down with the deputy ministers (Business New Brunswick and the Dept of Tourism and Parks). In January 2003, Civil Speakers Toastmasters Club in Fredericton was born and is still going very strong.

5 Partnership with other groups. Find other organizations that complement Toastmasters. One example is 4H, a youth organization that focuses on developing the minds, bodies, health and character

of young people. Did you know that public speaking is a key part of the 4H program? Many clubs need judges for their public speaking competitions – Valley Toastmasters in Woodstock, New Brunswick, has provided judges to these competitions to help the 4H program while helping to spread awareness of Toastmasters. The 4H program provides a way to introduce Toastmasters to children and teenagers. You can plant the seed for future Toastmasters members through a youth organization. Toastmasters can provide similar help to school debating and oratorical clubs.

There's no doubt that rural communities have their own unique challenges for maintaining Toastmasters clubs. However, with some hard work, careful marketing and creative partnerships, Toastmasters can thrive virtually anywhere.

Perhaps some day, in your small community, someone will ask the question, "Can you hear me now?" The answer will be "Yes, over here at Toastmasters!" 

Mark Dykeman, ACB, is a member of Valley Toastmasters club in Woodstock, New Brunswick, Canada.

I *Imagine Adolf Hitler with his hands cuffed behind his back. Now imagine him, thus cuffed, attempting to address an immense audience at a party rally at Nuremberg.*

As satisfying as the first image might be, the second one is even better, especially when considered from a speaker's point of view. Take away the dictator's ability to punctuate his speech with his hands and arms and you're left with a frothing, sputtering caricature flopping around behind the lectern like a beached shark – not exactly the object of blind, hypnotized devotion.

The sort of wild gesticulating that marked the fascist leaders of more than a half century ago has largely disappeared. Intelligent modern speakers know that all that windmilling and shadow boxing makes audiences squirm at best and scares them at worst. Today, it's seen as bad, inauthentic method acting rather than effective communication.

Once, however, exaggerated gesturing was not just fashionable but necessary. In fact, it was the gold standard for a school of speakers in the Victorian era known as the elocutionists.

“The elocutionists were a group of people in the late 1800s who felt if you did certain things, the audience would always react the same,”

said Richard Doetkott, a veteran professor of communications studies at Chapman University in Orange, California. “This meant using certain gestures and certain inflections and postures. They used to have a book of gestures that they could study. It was more effective with the audience of the time but it's important to understand that they had no sound reinforcement, so in order to enhance the fact that you were portraying something dramatic, such as anger, you would raise your fist. And even though the people may not have been able to understand the words that you were using, they understood that you were angry. The elocutionists had a complete repertoire of all kinds of gestures that they could use. And really, this is all about stagecraft, theatricality, acting. In those days, public speaking was an extension of the stage.”

With the advent of sound amplification in the early 20th century, the need for such dramatic physicality diminished, said Doetkott, and speakers began to adopt a more personal and natural style of relating to their audiences. For example, Franklin Roosevelt's celebrated “fireside chats,” carried via radio, “were not necessarily conversational, but were less florid and theatrical than

The Splendid Gesture

By Patrick Mott

**Gesturing then and now:
Pomposity of the past
gives way to authenticity
of the present.**



the public had been used to,” said Doetkott. “We now know, in modern times, that the more authentic you are as you speak, the more effective you are.”

Doetkott teaches just that in his speech classes, which he has been conducting for 42 years at Chapman. His students are not taught about gesturing, eye contact or other overt physical aspects of public speaking. They do not work from notes. They speak to an audience of fellow students who may number from 50 to 150, and the goal is a smooth, unforced conversational style in which any gestures are entirely their own. Doetkott calls this approach “oralistic.”

“Gestures are not effective because of what they are, they’re effective because they have truth behind them and that they belong to the person who’s speaking,” he says. “Public speaking at its most effective is really an extension of conversation, if you have a conversation with the audience.”

This evolution in both approach and technique can be traced by observing some of the more memorable speakers of the modern age:

- **Theodore Roosevelt** – The former leader of the Rough Riders was a profoundly physical man who relished what

he called “the strenuous life,” and this often found reflection in his speaking gestures. He often favored a forward chopping motion, as if he were wielding a hatchet above his head. During this, his hand would either be clenched in a fist or his index finger would be pointing aggressively. Lest this posture look too belligerent, Roosevelt was always ready to save it with his trademark toothy grin.

- **Winston Churchill** – Already a renowned and expert speaker by the time he became prime minister, Churchill in the House of Commons was known for his physical stance when he came to a section of a speech he wanted to strongly emphasize. Taking a wide stance with his feet, he would place his hands on his hips, thumbs forward, and lean forward conspicuously from the waist. This posture, combined with a jutting jaw, was the very picture of aggressive confidence. During the war years, he punctuated his speeches with the two-fingers-up “V for victory” sign, a gesture that became a symbol of hope throughout the world.

Such a posture, for Churchill, was effective and natural because it “came out of his pugnacious nature,” said

Doetskott. “Gestures are only effective if they’re true gestures, gestures that the person would adopt normally.”

■ **John F. Kennedy** – Neither a natural politician nor a born speaker, Kennedy grew into both roles. During his time as president he had the great advantage of having Theodore Sorensen as his speechwriter. It was Sorensen who said later that Kennedy relished the occasional classical – almost Biblical – flourish in his speeches that Sorensen ably provided. Perhaps the most famous of these, “Ask not what your country can do for you...” at Kennedy’s inauguration was punctuated strongly with a finger-stabbing gesture at the word “not.” He used that gesture whenever he wanted to call attention to the most important lines in a speech. Most of the time, however, Kennedy’s speaking gestures were subtle. For emphasis, he would drum his right hand – but usually only his right – up and down in a gentle hammering motion just above the sloping surface of the lectern, mostly with his index finger either pointed or crooked (President Bill Clinton, who idolized Kennedy, would later adopt this gesture but would make sure it was more visible to his audiences). He was always careful not to actually strike the lectern, which would create a thump that would be amplified by microphones.

■ **Nikita Khrushchev** – A coal miner’s son who was as brash and rough as Kennedy was polished, the Soviet premier earned infamy in the speaker’s pantheon when, while speaking to the United Nations General Assembly in September 1960, he removed one of his shoes and began banging it on the lectern in front of him. The gesture earned him the nickname “Hurricane Nikita.” Khrushchev’s speaking style was often crude and bombastic, and the expansive gestures he used reflected this. Photographers were fond of capturing him in a characteristic pose: leaning forward belligerently, mouth agape in fiery exhortation, his right arm raised in the air, his fist clenched.

Even so, the shoe incident and the general bombast were effective to a degree because “that was very much him,” said Doetskott. “I don’t think he said, ‘Today I’m going to do this.’ He was pretty rough trade, and that likely came out of emotion rather than artifice.”

■ **Adolph Hitler** – Even Hitler’s gestures, after he had gained power and become chancellor of Germany, grew out of the emotion of the moment and from true inner feelings rather than from a textbook performance, said Doetskott.

“Hitler learned by speaking in bars and beer gardens,” he said. “When people are drinking and you’re in there trying to get their attention, you’re going to adopt certain techniques that are going to be effective or else you’re useless. He actually had a photographer photograph him in various poses in order to study them.”

Once Hitler had risen to power and already had an audience’s attention, “it was real emotion that drove the gestures rather than the gestures driving the emotion,” says Doetskott. “The gestures may have been theatrical-looking but there was real emotion driving them.”

■ **Benito Mussolini** – The Italian dictator aped many of Hitler’s speaking gestures, taking some of them to even wilder lengths. He would occasionally, as if frenzied, fling his arms every which way, almost as if he were semaphoring his speech. Perhaps his most characteristic pose would come at the climax of a phrase or section of

“When gestures are used as punctuation rather than theater, when they come from within rather than without, they carry a subtle power.”

a speech, when he would cross his arms pugnaciously across his barrel chest, jut out his jaw and survey the crowd, nodding his head – as if to say, “Take that!”

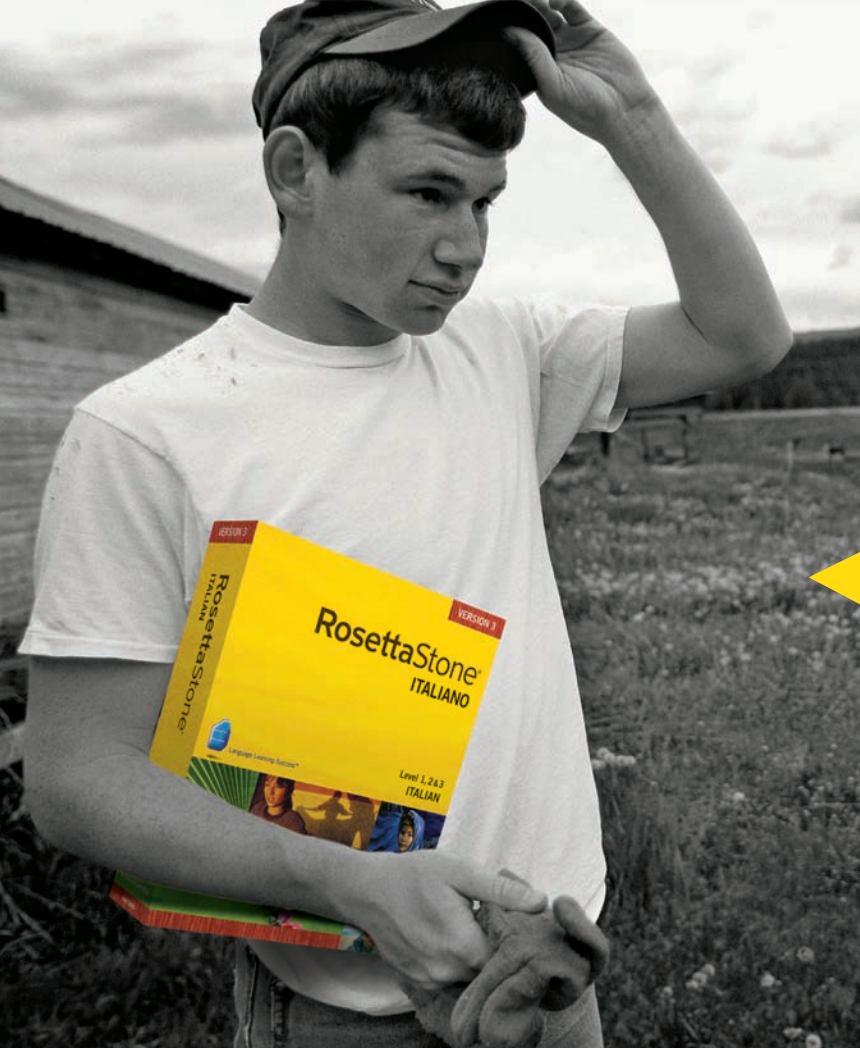
■ **Martin Luther King, Jr.** – The great American civil rights leader was a Southern clergyman and favored the dramatic cadences, the round pronunciation and the exaggerated highs and lows that are often particular to the Southern clergy. However, in his most famous speeches he was judicious and even economical with his gestures. During his landmark “I Have a Dream” speech to marchers gathered on the Mall in Washington, D.C. in August 1963, he put his words center stage throughout most of the address, keeping his arms at his side and letting the drama of his delivery carry the presentation. It wasn’t until the final ringing words – “Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!” – that he thrust both arms upward and clenched both fists.

The reason? According to Doetskott, King’s speech was scripted “until that last part. When he got into ‘I have a dream,’ he was off script at that point and that’s where the gestures started, because that was who he was. That was his background, where he came from.”

The best modern speakers have drawn lessons from watching people such as these. They have come to realize that the grand gestures of the era of Henry Clay and Benjamin Disraeli seem antique and almost clownish today. They also realize that aggressive gestures – the closed fist, the pointed finger – have the power to either galvanize or frighten. The images of animated tyrants still haunt our memories.

Conversely, today’s great speakers likely have found that when gestures are used as punctuation rather than theater, when they come from within rather than without, they carry a subtle power that can engage an audience and more accurately – and truthfully – make their point. **T**

Patrick Mott is a freelance writer from Fullerton, California.



He was a
hardworking farm boy.

She was an
Italian supermodel.

He knew he would
have just one chance
to impress her.

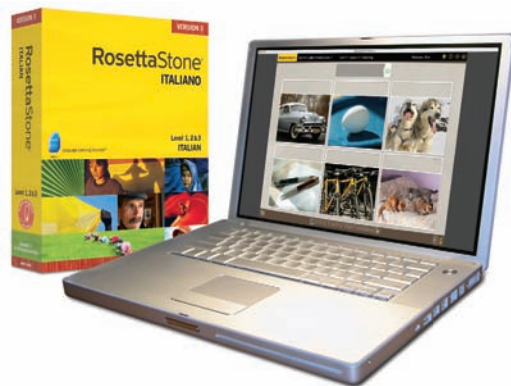
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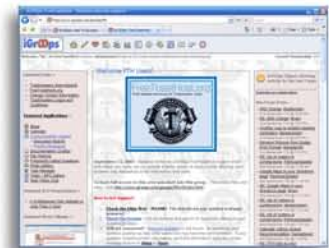
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If you don't like your voice, here's the reason.

Sounding Off

† Some years ago, I called a colleague for a quick chat. In the middle of my second sentence, I realized I hadn't identified myself, so I told him who was speaking. He replied that he had known who I was as soon as I said hello, because I have a very distinctive voice.

I was intrigued. "Oh, really?" I said. "How would you characterize it?" His immediate reply: "You sound just like the little sister on *The Simpsons!*"

Now that may sound cute to some, but I was a newspaper editor in my thirties at the time. And I was still reeling from having been told several years earlier that I sounded just like the actress Mary Steenburgen, who has, in my opinion, the voice of a cartoon character.

Most of us have no idea how we sound to others, and when we find out, we are often discouraged. That's because our voices tend to sound higher-pitched and reedier, or thinner, to other people than they do to us. And for good reason. When we hear ourselves talk, the sound has traveled not only through the air, but also through our bones into the inner ear, which gives it a deeper pitch. But since the sound doesn't reverberate through the bones of our listeners, our voice sounds lighter to everyone else.

This phenomenon becomes even more disconcerting when listening to a recording of our voices. Unless the equipment is of extremely high quality, we're not only missing the impact of the bones on our voices, we're also hearing the tinniness caused by a poor microphone and/or speakers.

Why should we care how we sound? Despite our highly visual

culture, we tend to judge people to some extent by their voices. (In non-visually oriented cultures, people are judged far more by how they sound or smell than by how they look.) Did you ever notice that dogs tend to respond better to men than to women? Like dogs, people associate lower, stronger voices with authority. We tend to sit up and take notice, to take the speaker more seriously. Higher-pitched voices, on the other hand, are typically associated with children and with non-professional, non-assertive women. That doesn't mean they're bad. It just means we should be aware of the impression we're making.

Just how important is the tone of our voice when we're speaking? According to some estimates, 55 percent of what audiences recall from a speech is the visual portion, seven percent is the content of the speech, and 38 percent is the quality of the voice. So if our words are stirring and our images are strong, but we deliver our talk in a less-than-pleasant voice, we may not be communicating as well as we'd like. And in a recording where there are no visuals, tone takes center stage.

Does this mean that we all need to take voice lessons? Well, that isn't a bad idea for anyone, but it's usually not crucial. Instead, liking your voice may simply be a question of adjusting your attitude. Think of it this way. If your voice sounds thinner and higher to others than it does to you, remember: Everyone else is in the same boat. So in comparison, you sound perfectly normal!

You might consider asking others for their opinions about your voice. Do they think it sounds pleasing? Is

it nasal or hoarse? What is the overall impression your voice creates? In general, when we support our voices with deep, diaphragmatic breathing they sound fuller. This is also known as abdominal or belly breathing, because when done correctly, the belly expands on the inhale.

In addition, get used to your voice by listening to it often. You may hear your spouse or co-workers so often that you take their voices for granted. But yours will always sound strange to you until you hear it on a regular basis. One easy way to do this: Record an extra long message on your answering machine and play it back frequently. Experiment by re-recording with a different pitch. (To help out callers, make your primary message shorter and more to the point!) Or, if you can use high-end recording equipment, so much the better. In fact, it's not a bad idea to ask a fellow club member to tape your speeches now and then. Not only will you grow accustomed to how you sound, but you'll also improve your speaking ability. And in time, you'll become accustomed to your voice so you can judge it more accurately.

As for me, I use a deeper voice when I speak to groups and lighten up when talking one-on-one. Believe it or not, I've actually come to appreciate my "distinctive" voice.

Just don't ask me how I look on camera! 📷

Caren S. Neile, Ph.D., ATM-S/CL, directs the South Florida Storytelling Project at Florida Atlantic University and is a member of the Boca Raton Toastmasters club.

HALL OF FAME

The following listings are arranged in numerical order by district and club number.

DTM

🎉 Congratulations to these Toastmasters who have received the Distinguished Toastmaster award, Toastmasters International's highest recognition.

Louis H. Altman 3645-1, Torrance, California
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Gregg A. Cummings 7771-4, San Francisco, California
Linda Wolf 913434-5, San Diego, California
Kenton J. De Motte 701931-8, Saint Louis, Missouri
Susan E. Nelson 105-12, Redlands, California
Darcy M. McNaboe 290-12, Grand Terrace, California
James Jackson 3723-15, Salt Lake City, Utah
Nita K. Patel 1615-16, Norman, Oklahoma
Linda Ann Israel 3031-16, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Linda Schaab 4869-21, Vernon, BC, Canada
Shirley Berry 9460-21, Surrey, BC, Canada
Scott Mochinski 7880-30, Chicago, Illinois
Mike W. Halawa 916266-30, Oak Brook, Illinois
Claude J. Schilling 8852-35, Menomonie, Wisconsin
Joan Hepscher 6522-46, Freehold, New Jersey
Jennifer L. Hoch 2604-50, Dallas, Texas
Ai-King Ngui 6622-51, Kuching, SAR, Malaysia
John D. Nilson 5522-52, Sherman Oaks, California
John T. Willison 3481-54, Freeport, Illinois
Ronald Mueller 6140-56, Houston, Texas
Gloria T. Hume 4027-57, Walnut Creek, California
Christine Levesque 5651-61, Québec, QC, Canada
Reid B. Weidman 1136-65, Rochester, New York
Lois S. Cheney 7290-65, Towanda, Pennsylvania
Dick Fu 2422-67, Kaohsiung, Taiwan, Taiwan
Webster Kiang 844289-67, Taipei, Taiwan
Lewis Christopher Troman 2456-70, Wollongong, NSW, Australia
Marjorie Hines 3186-70, Gosford City, NSW, Australia
J. Cameron 7574-71, Glasgow, SCO, United Kingdom
Leonor L. Tebelin 7271-75, Cebu City, Cebu, Philippines

Gene Ann Hildreth 1334-77, Montgomery, Alabama
Rebecca Lee Yueh Hoon 5090-80, Singapore, Singapore
Fernando Young 691812-80, Singapore, Singapore

Anniversaries

February 2008

70 YEAR

Century 100-F, Westminster, California
Modoc 98-07, Klamath Falls, Oregon
Pioneer 97-26, Casper, Wyoming

65 YEAR

Miles City 239-78, Miles City, Montana

60 YEAR

Magic City 572-77, Birmingham, Alabama

55 YEAR

Mainliners 1213-04, San Francisco, California
Blue Ox 1235-07, Portland, Oregon
Nora 1183-11, Indianapolis, Indiana
Shelton 1236-32, Shelton, Washington
West Hills 1249-40, Cincinnati, Ohio
Freeport-Hempstead 1105-46, Freeport, New York

50 YEAR

Papago 2694-03, Tempe, Arizona
Gainesville 2520-14, Gainesville, Georgia
Plant Industry Station 2627-36, Beltsville, Maryland

45 YEAR

Miracle Babies 2230-F, Irvine, California
Saratoga 3572-04, Saratoga, California
Suitland Federal 3349-27, Suitland, Maryland
Arsenal 2264-38, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Guymon 1680-44, Guymon, Oklahoma
Breakfast Club 3581-62, Muskegon, Michigan

40 YEAR

Pajaro Valley 2373-04, Watsonville, California
Capital Nevada 1813-39, Carson City, Nevada
Skyline 3258-78, Rapid City, South Dakota

35 YEAR

Bootstrappers 2397-07, Salem, Oregon
Abilene 1071-44, Abilene, Texas
Mohawk 3597-60, Toronto, ON, Canada
Taumarunui 2053-72, Taumarunui, New Zealand
Makati 1697-75, Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila, Philippines

30 YEAR

Wordmasters 165-F, Seal Beach, California
Sensational Salesmen 417-F, Santa Ana (Tustin), California
Talk of the Town 2917-10, Brookpark, Ohio
OKC PROS 3220-16, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Club Dynamique De Laval 3604-61, Laval, QC, Canada
Portage 3064-64, Portage La Prairie, MB, Canada
Peninsula 1444-69, Redcliffe, QLD, Australia
Randwick 3812-70, Sydney, NSW, Australia

25 YEAR

Second Stage 3742-F, Irvine, California
Roller Toasters 4216-06, Minneapolis, Minnesota
Technical Talkers 1691-16, Bartlesville, Oklahoma
Revelstoke 4050-21, Revelstoke, BC, Canada
Riggs 3612-36, Washington, District of Columbia
Treasure Chest 1245-42, Yorkton, SK, Canada
Speaker's Corner 4310-42, Regina, SK, Canada
Bradenton 2449-47, Bradenton, Florida
Dramatically Speaking 1580-57, Oakland, California
20/20 1385-64, Brandon, MB, Canada
CI Club 4228-64, Winnipeg, MB, Canada

20 YEAR

Inland Valley Earlybirds 6836-12, Upland, California
Tanglewood 6850-25, Fort Worth, Texas
Arvada Speak-Easy 6835-26, Arvada, Colorado
Star Performers 6839-26, Colorado Springs, Colorado
Unity IV 6838-28, Warren, Michigan
Hi-Rise 6819-37, Raleigh, North Carolina
Folsom Intellectuals 6833-39, Folsom, California
Medical Center Speakers 6837-47, Miami, Florida
Kuching 2936-51, Kuching, SAR, Malaysia
Miri 6832-51, Miri, SAR, Malaysia
North Star 6826-65, Syracuse, New York
City of Norfolk 6822-66, Norfolk, Virginia
Articulate Speakers 6844-71, Dereham, Norfolk, United Kingdom

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Are You Competing in the Contest? Do You Want a Competitive Edge? Do You Want to **WOW** the Audience?

From the desk of World Champion, Darren LaCroix

Dear Fellow Toastmaster:

"How do I write a world-class speech?" Toastmasters from around the world ask me this question all the time because of my accomplishment. I wish there were a "secret pill" that, when swallowed, would instantly allow us to "own the stage." Ironically, that's *exactly* what I wished for when I was competing in the contests. With no luck finding such a pill, I re-committed myself to becoming a dedicated "student of public speaking."

I wish I could spend a day with you! I'd love to sit down and show you exactly what my two speaker coaches taught me. But, I can't.

If you're anything like me... I wanted to know, "How do world-class speakers approach a presentation? How do they make it look so easy? What do they do? What don't they do?" What I realized is that I needed to learn a World Champion's "perspective."

If you were sitting across from me, the first thing I'd say is "you're looking at it wrong." You're spending way too much time trying to write that "magic" speech that's a surefire winner. A "great" speech is one that's synergistic with the presenter. That the message *is* the presenter: they are **one in the same**.

The second thing I would tell you is that you're trying to persuade *before* you connect. A winning speech is one that emotionally connects with the audience. You must connect **before** you can persuade. If you want to connect, you must speak from your own experiences rather than about some "hot topic."

A comment I hear over and over again from people is, "I've got a good speech... I just need to add some humor." As fellow World Champion, Craig Valentine, would say, "You don't add humor, you uncover it!" Humor isn't something to be "added." Telling a joke unrelated to the main point doesn't make somebody a world-class speaker. The problem is not usually "lack of humor." It often lies within the *structure* and *focus* of the speech. I personally had many problems while creating my championship speech. My coach was quickly able to point them out. It was easy for him to see my problems. Why? His *perspective*. Mark Brown had *been there before* and had won the World Championship.

I was an experienced speaker, so I thought I knew "enough." I was comfortable, I could hold the audience's attention, and I could even make them laugh. I just needed that *secret speaker pill*.

Well, I have finally discovered the secret! The secret is *perspective*. If you want to be a world-class speaker, you need a world-class *perspective*.

I really wish I could spend a day with you. Instead, why not *two* days? Why *just me*? Why not get the perspectives of *seven* World Champions (including Mark Brown, my coach) and the eight comedians who taught me to be funny?

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~ Michael Erwine, Eaton Rapids, MI

"I was able to take a good Area Contest winning speech, and turn it into a great Division Contest winning speech."

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"After the contest, one of the audience came to me and said, 'I saw your improvement, and you are totally different!'"

~ Hubert, Taiwan

Stage time, Stage time, Stage time,



Darren LaCroix
2001 World Champion of Public Speaking

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