

TOASTMASTER[®]

MARCH 2006

Turn Team
Conflict
into Team
Harmony

Special Leadership Issue:

**Talk Up Your
Toastmasters
Talents**

**The Wit and
Wisdom of
Leadership**



Are You a Possibility Thinker?

IT'S POSSIBLE! That's what Otis Williams, Toastmasters' 1993 World Champion of Public Speaking, exclaimed in his winning speech. That's what I want every Toastmaster in every club around the globe to embrace for their dreams of personal growth and leadership success. People who achieve greatness embrace this idea: All things are possible! Even in the face of overwhelming odds, they believe that victory can be won, and if not, they will go down giving it their all. These are what I call "Possibility Thinkers." Are you one of them?

My experience has been that some people have thought habits that are "reality limited." Their dreams are limited by the reality they see, hear and feel. Their dreams can never become bigger than their perception of reality. Then there are others whose thought habits are "possibility based." Such people see possibilities that reality-limited thinkers cannot consider. Possibility-based thinkers, while recognizing the past, refuse to be enslaved to it. Instead, they are tugged forward by "what could be." In a piece of coal, they see the diamond; in an untamed wilderness, they see a beautiful estate; in their struggles, they feel latent greatness.

We are within four months of the end of the Toastmasters year. If you feel it's too much of a stretch to reach your Toastmasters goals, I empathize with you. I used to feel stretched when I was trying to finance my college education. While a student at the University of Florida, I spent two summers selling books door-to-door. Among the inspirational lifts the book company gave us were quotations printed in large font size that we mounted in our rooms. A quotation that always fired me up was by Theodore Roosevelt, a great possibility thinker. Whenever I read it, I felt my backbone straighten, my resolve strengthen, and my eyes light up. I hope it does the same for you:

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, and comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who actually strives to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory or defeat."

Former U.S. President Ronald Reagan, another great possibility thinker, used to keep on his desk a paperweight with the words, "It CAN be done." I have a similar paperweight on my desk, to daily remind me that Henry Ford was right when he said, "If you think you can or think you can't, you are right." I know you can. Be a possibility thinker...and make your dreams your reality!

Dilip R. Abayasekara
Dilip Abayasekara, DTM
International President



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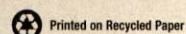
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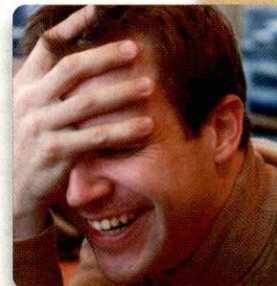


Humor to the Rescue

A witty response is good for business.

By John Kinde, DTM, AS

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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.

Do you have something to say? Write it in 200 words or less, sign it and send it to letters@toastmasters.org.

Visitors Welcome

Recently our club in Lima, Peru, had a visitor from California. We really enjoyed his visit and his participation in our program that night. More than that, he provided us with some fresh ideas that have energized our club ever since. My point in writing this letter is to encourage our fellow Toastmasters to visit clubs when traveling. We all have much to learn from each other!

Please be assured that the welcome mat is out for visitors to Lima!

Larry J. Pitman • International Toastmasters Club 8319 • Lima, Peru

Opportunities in Toastmasters

My adventure has been fun since I joined Toastmasters International. I enjoyed the process of getting a club chartered in an undistricted area like Nigeria! Mine has been a quest of meeting quality people: I've met people from Canada, UK, Germany and USA with a wide range of opportunities and contacts for my business.

My philosophy is, "If you want something in life, go out and fight for it!"

Femi Oye • Ph-City Club 829138 • Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Stuttering No More

I started stuttering when I was 12 years old. I became the laughing stock in and outside school. Buying something in the store was difficult. I always kept quiet and spoke only when asked questions. Presentations at work were harrowing experiences.

In 1988, I decided to do something about it. I was determined to undergo speech therapy in the university. However, I first came across a Toastmasters ad in the local newspaper.

At my first meeting, I found everyone very warm and friendly. During the introductions, I introduced myself. At the end of the meeting, I was asked to give comments. While driving home, I realized that I hadn't stuttered during that meeting. The following week, I went back to the

club and joined it. Since then, I have never stuttered at all. I have been a Toastmaster for 18 years. I am afraid to quit because I might stutter again.

Antonio E. Balce, ATM-G, CL • Y Club 2478 • Edmonton, Canada

My Favorite Magazine

Unfortunately, due to my hectic schedule, I've fallen behind in reading my favorite magazine, *The Toastmaster*, and only recently started to get caught up on my backlog. So I found the timing quite interesting when I opened the December 2003 magazine and found the article "The Q & A: Any Questions?" by Kate Rizer. That very night, I was to give my first Toastmasters speech in many, many years that required a question and answer session. The Q&A session went very well, and for that I give credit to Ms. Rizer's article.

I urge all fellow Toastmasters, if you have old magazines sitting around in a box somewhere, get them out and re-read them! You'll be pleasantly surprised at what you might find!

David Kendall, DTM • Vital Words 2375-64 • Glen Ellyn, Illinois

No Need to Censor Out Religion

In the December 2005 issue, a reader opined that a Toastmasters meeting is no place for any mention of religion. On the contrary, I have found it interesting and informative to hear others talk of their faith in a speech or invocation. This happens fairly often in our club, which is widely diverse religiously and culturally. It helps us get to know each other better. The only time we have had problems was with a member who consistently spoke with contempt and disrespect of those whose beliefs (religious, political or cultural) differed from his.

In other words, there's no need to censor out religion. There's only a need to enshrine it with respect. Since the purpose of Toastmasters is learning to communicate in the real world, that's a useful communication skill to learn!

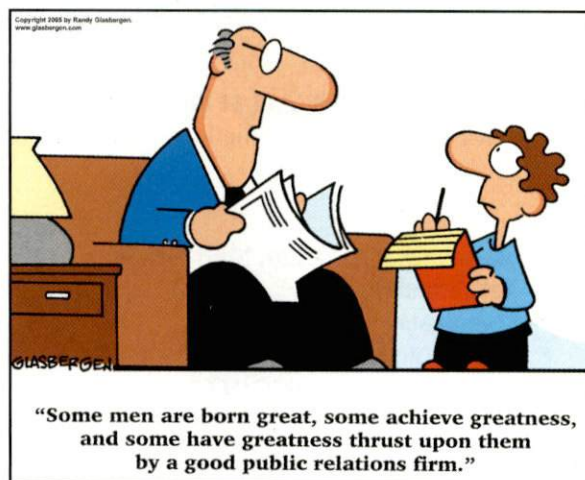
Rosemarie Eskes, DTM • TNT Toastmasters Club 65-1831
Rochester, New York

Talking to International Audiences

Your otherwise praiseworthy article "Talking to International Audiences" was somewhat undermined for me by the fact that the article seemed to be written for the benefit of Americans. Hello! The readership of *The Toastmaster* magazine is an international audience!

From the viewpoint of a substantial number of readers, America is overseas; yet all of the examples in the article were from an American point of view: "Don't mention baseball," "Beware the American tendency to speak too fast," "Crossing your legs may not be normal outside the United States," "This is not Chicago." Even the speaker in the cover photo had an American flag in front of her! The article instead fed the stereotype that Americans are indeed inward-looking, making it hypocritical and somewhat irritating to read.

Michael Walker ATM-B • Botany Bay Club 9710 • Sydney, Australia



The Award and its Meaning

■ The new member exudes anticipation. What are the rituals to be grasped, the required knowledge for successfully and appropriately fitting into the club? How satisfying or daunting will these rituals and tasks be? The awards component of Toastmasters is one familiar detail that infuses new members with everything from a competitive thrill to bored irritation.

I was thinking recently about something Woody Allen said about awards, with reference to the Academy Awards and other like ceremonies. Allen, although often nominated for his work as writer or director, never attends the Academy Awards presentations. He said something along the lines of, "Competing in the arts is absurd."

Personally, I do read about which films and actors win the Academy Awards and, like many people, I am happy about some and can't figure out what the Academy sees in others, disappointed that something "terrible" is being presented as a model of excellence or that something "wonderful" was overlooked. When I took a closer look, I started asking what meaning these awards have – questions many arts lovers have discussed:

- Is one good performance really better than another good performance, or is it just different?
- How are people able to judge beyond what suits their own personalities and passions?
- How much of a role are politics playing in each case?
- Is a consensus proof of poorer quality, since consensus must represent more of an average opinion com-

pared to the rare elevated perception of one or two?

Sports makes for a good comparison. The difference between judging sports and judging art is that the end result in sports – the number of wins and points – is the only thing that counts. If you spin the ball on your feet and bounce it off your head before putting it in the basket, that is art, and it doesn't count. There are only points for putting the ball in the basket. But in art, the most important element of expressing an idea or feeling is something that any art can do, and you don't get more points for expressing more ideas.

What makes one movie or painting different from another is how the idea or feeling is expressed. And because there are a million ways to do this, all of which will be amazing for some people and uninspiring for others, judging art is impossible compared to judging whether or not the ball went through the hoop.

Woody Allen also said that if you believe people when they say you are the best, you must also believe them when they say you are not the best or even among the best. There are always many great works and performers who do not win or are not even nominated, and those artists can indeed reject the opinions by the judges, but only if they don't take their opinions seriously when they are favorable. It is the power of wanting the award that gives the award its power to negate us. And the atmosphere of authority around the Academy Awards, unfortunately, affects the judgment of many people, both inside and outside the movie industry.

Winning the Academy Award is simply an honor. It says you did a



good job and we appreciate the good job you did. And this of course is great. At Toastmasters, it can be viewed as the same kind of thing.

A few weeks ago I was speaking with a Toastmaster about these ideas. I told her I felt strange about accepting a best-speaker award and did not want to compete with anyone except myself. She explained that the awards are to help give inspiration to continually do a better job, so as not to simply go through the motions of completing levels of proficiency, knowing rather that we will be compared and judged every time.

I realized that even if it doesn't matter who wins, it does matter that everyone has a chance to win. A chance to be honored. A chance to be seriously evaluated by your peers. A chance to achieve more recognition next time if you don't win. And a chance to show you won't get lazy if you do. ■

Brad Burgess is an editor at a U.S.-based news agency in Tokyo, Japan, and is a member of the Yamanote Toastmasters club there. Reach him at bradburgess2000@yahoo.com.

From Toastmasters club to comedy troupe:

The Puzzled Players

By Julie Bawden Davis

At this slap-happy club, humor is the first and last thing on the agenda.

Ever seen Groucho Marx and Tweety bird meet on the Golden Gate Bridge? If you're a Morning Knights Toastmaster, you have. At this slap-happy club in Binghamton, New York, humor is the first and last thing on the agenda.

"No other organization I've been involved with has taken humor as seriously as this club," says founding member Kenneth Hull, DTM, who has been with the club since its inception in 1973. "We find humor in everything we do."

Not surprisingly, this lighthearted club, which features a court jester telling jokes at the beginning of every meeting, has spawned a comedy troupe. Known as the Puzzled Players Comedy Improv Theater, the group originally performed in January 2003 for the club's 30th anniversary. Things went so well that the troupe now appears on a regular basis throughout New York state and has even started two other comedy groups.

"Our first show was a success, and we had so much fun doing it that we decided to continue meeting and performing," says Russell Swanger, CTM, a member of Morning Knights and leader of the Puzzled Players. The comedy group does improv, which involves live and unscripted acts created by the actors themselves in an impromptu manner.

The troupe originally had 10 members, all of them from the Morning Knights Toastmasters club, except for its teacher and mentor, actor Bill Whiting.

"After the anniversary show, Bill brought us our first paying job for a local company's dinner dance," says Swanger, who also does commercials and voice-overs and hosts live events. "That second show went great and we decided to continue." Since then the group has performed for a wide variety of audiences and Swanger has created an offshoot called the Improv Dads, which provides educational entertainment to school-age audiences.

"We're also auditioning for a second improv group and we created a sketch comedy crew. Everyday we're being booked into bigger and bigger venues," says Swanger, who notes that Puzzled Players members are a little surprised at how well they've been received.

"It's thrilling to know that audiences enjoy what we do, but we're also baffled that they're so captivated by it and will pay money to see it," he says. "Many people will tell us they find it incredible that we can go on stage with absolutely no script and create something live right in front of them. To many of us it's second nature; we're wired that way, and we feel right at home."

The way Hull sees it, Puzzled Players is a logical extension of the Morning Knights and makes members stronger. "Toastmasters is all





◀ The Puzzled Players cast:

Front Row: Sara Blake, Joe Falank,
John Carey
Center: Russell Swanger
Back Row: Bill Whiting, Colin
McNalley, Robin Allen

**“Everyday we’re being booked
into bigger and bigger venues.”**

- Russell Swanger

about learning in a fun atmosphere, and the Puzzled Players gives us a laboratory to practice skill building,” says Hull, who was a member of the comedy troupe until just recently when he had to quit because of conflicting responsibilities.

Hull and Swanger both credit Toastmasters for making the Puzzled Players successful in the first place.

“Not only has Toastmasters given us the courage and confidence to relax and try improv, we use many of the organization’s principles in the improv meetings,” says Swanger. “Like Toastmasters, Puzzled Players is run in a democratic manner. We have a director, an agenda, rotate responsibilities and use a timer to keep track of each meeting segment. We practice and continue to learn about the art of improv. There is also an evaluation period.”

Toastmasters has provided the improv group with a talented group of members. “The Puzzled Players got started by drawing upon members who were interested taking public speaking and performing to the next level,” says Swanger. “Even though they didn’t have a background in theater, they were willing to learn and give it a try.”

In many ways improv is a lot like Table Topics, says Rosemary Markoff, ATM-B, who is also a member of the Morning Knights. She performed with the Puzzled Players in the anniversary show and hired them to entertain at her company’s Christmas party.


“Like Table Topics, with improv you get a general theme and scenario and run with it,” says Markoff. “People are surprised when they find out that you have to practice for improv because it’s impromptu. Even though

you don’t know specifically what you’ll be talking about in the actual scene, you still have to practice for things to flow smoothly. Thinking fast on your feet is the key to being a good performer. I think that’s where Toastmasters helps the most with this particular art form.”

What people like about improv in general is its unpredictable nature, says Hull. “Much like an extemporaneous speech, nothing is the same twice with improv. You respond to the moment, and the only thing you can plan for is the situation. The audience provides the location and subject of the skit and you go with the flow, which is something Toastmasters does a superb job of teaching.”

Toastmasters has also given Puzzled Player members the courage to try. “Even though they may be initially uncomfortable, people have jumped into the group and attempted improv anyway,” says Hull. “The results have been a lot of zany minds coming up with some really creative acts.”

The coming months look busy for the Puzzled Players. The troupe was recently invited to participate in a project that involves traveling to El Salvador as “arts ambassadors” to provide instructions on improvisation.

“I’m in awe of how far they’ve gone in just three short years,” says Markoff. “There was quite a crowd when I went to see them recently. I had expected to see a couple dozen [people] in the audience, but there were a couple hundred. They’re really getting a following.” 

Editor’s Note: For more information, visit www.thepuzzledplayers.com and www.improvdads.com

Julie Bawden Davis is a freelance writer based in Orange, California. Reach her at Julie@juliebawdendavis.com.

How to get people with diverse backgrounds to rally together for a common cause.

Turn Team Conflict into Team Harmony

By Dave Zielinski

Ask anyone who's ever been part of a work team to recount the experience and you're likely to hear a jumble of adjectives, such as *rewarding*, *exasperating*, *fulfilling* and *challenging*. Despite the long experience most of us have in serving on project or permanent

teams – be it in school, on the playing fields or in the office – “team member” is a role that continues to test us like no other. Consider the challenge: Teams require people with often wildly-diverse backgrounds, work styles and belief systems to set aside differences and suddenly start “rowing together as one.” And in many cases they're asked to do so under the guidance of team leaders with considerable technical or subject matter expertise, but little aptitude, expertise or formal training in how to manage and motivate psychologically complex human beings.

Good teamwork, it seems, remains as elusive as ever. The good news is that there's plenty organizations can do to ensure their work teams join the ranks of the high-performing and well-adjusted and avoid the fate of the chronically underachieving and dysfunctional.

The Effective Team Leader

Much of the extensive literature written about effective teamwork focuses on the team leader as the arbiter of team success or failure. Subject matter expertise has long

been acknowledged as a prerequisite for leading well, but today there's growing recognition of the importance of “soft” interpersonal skills in building high-performing work teams. To truly succeed, teambuilding experts say, leaders must be adept not only at establishing strategy and clear performance objectives, but at integrating difficult personalities within the team framework and embracing rather than shunning the conflict that inevitably arises in group settings.

Much of what makes team leaders successful isn't rocket science but rather common sense applied with diligence and persistence. Some of the best ways for team leaders to motivate employees, boost performance and engender commitment, for example, are both simple and daunting. They start with becoming more empathetic listeners, taking an interest in fellow human beings and yet still insisting on full accountability for performance. Teambuilding consultants say one of the hardest things for team leaders is to simply sit down and talk with their people – many would prefer to do anything else but. Yet the payoffs of such small actions can be powerful and far-reaching.





A team's chances of sustained success grows immeasurably when:

- Leaders combine those people skills with the ability to set precise and measurable team objectives.
- Provide regular (and actionable) performance feedback.
- Promote peer pressure as the ultimate accountability mechanism.
- Reward team members for good performance in ways that are meaningful to them, not just to the organization.

Effective team leaders also understand the different skills and actions required of them during the four stages of team development – the phases of forming, storming, norming and performing first identified by Dr. Bruce Tuckman in 1965:

- The *forming* stage requires extra direction and guidance from leaders while team members feel out their new roles and responsibilities.
- *Storming* demands that leaders be resolute and goal-focused as team members jockey for position, form cliques and challenge the leader.
- *Norming*, where roles and processes grow clearer and begin to normalize, requires deft facilitation skills and more shared leadership approaches.
- *Performing* requires even greater delegation as a maturing team grows more autonomous, strategically aware and capable of functioning on its own.

Clarity, Trust and Accountability

One of the biggest reasons that teams of any stripe struggle is a lack of clarity around group and individual goals and roles. Without a clear idea of what's expected of them, what their specific role is on a team and what, for example,

Leading Volunteer-Based Teams

Managing teams that consist largely of volunteers, as is the case with many Toastmaster clubs, often presents a different set of challenges to team leaders than leading paid staff. Volunteers in general tend to be a passionate and self-directed bunch, and because of their non-paid status a "command and control" management style often is anathema to motivating and managing them effectively. Leadership experts say a more participatory or inclusive leadership style, but one that still holds people accountable for results, is usually a better fit for volunteer-based teams.

"Volunteers' passion and willfulness can be a formidable combination when a manager comes along," says Loretta Donovan, president of Worksmarts, a learning solutions strategy company in New York City that has worked extensively in volunteer-based organizations.

While much of the advice for managing paid staff applies to volunteers – establish clear objectives and set precise expectations, communicate frequently about progress toward goals, hold people accountable for results – it often needs to be refined or emphasized with volunteer-based teams, Donovan says. For example, team leaders may want to put extra effort into recognizing volunteers' efforts in meaningful ways and seek more input from them on key decisions. The latter represents the difference between "enlisting" and "commanding," she says.

Dave Zielinski is a freelance writer who divides his time between Wisconsin and South Carolina. Contact him at zskidoo@aol.com.

Is Your Team Crashing and Burning?

Look to these five common causes:

In his bestselling book *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable*, management consultant Patrick Lencioni identifies five problems that commonly undermine teams. These are issues, excerpted here, that both team leaders and team members must work together to address:

- 1 Absence of trust.** Team members who are not genuinely open with one another about their mistakes and weaknesses make it impossible to build a foundation of trust. "It is only when team members are truly comfortable being exposed to one another that they begin to act without concern for protecting themselves," Lencioni says. "As a result, they can focus their energy completely on the job at hand rather than on being strategically disingenuous or political with one another."
- 2 Fear of conflict.** Too often teams sweep conflict under the rug for fear of face-to-face confrontation or upsetting others, dooming themselves to dealing with the same problems over and over. A better approach is unbridled but respectful debate that brings issues affecting performance or productivity into the light of day. "Teams that engage in productive conflict know the only purpose is to produce the best possible solution in the shortest period of time," says Lencioni. "They discuss and resolve issues more quickly and completely than others, and emerge with no residual feelings of collateral damage, but with an eagerness and readiness to take on the next important issue."
- 3 Lack of commitment.** This happens when all team members fail to buy in or commit to decisions made by the group, bad mouthing or undermining decisions even after they've signed off on them. "Great teams find ways to achieve buy-in even when complete agreement is impossible," says Lencioni. "They understand that reasonable human beings do not always need to get their way in order to support a decision, but only need to know their opinions have been heard and considered."
- 4 Avoidance of accountability.** This occurs when team leaders or team members fail to call others on actions and behaviors that undermine the team. "Team members who are particularly close to one another sometimes hesitate to hold one another accountable precisely because they fear jeopardizing a valuable personal relationship," says Lencioni. "Ironically, this only causes the relationship to deteriorate, as team members begin to resent one another for not living up to expectations and for allowing standards to erode." Members of great teams, he says, ignore these natural tendencies and choose instead to "enter the danger" with each other.
- 5 Inattention to results.** This happens when team members put their individual needs above the collective goals of the team. Some may focus on enhancing their own positions or career prospects at the expense of the team. In other cases, Lencioni says, some teams simply aren't results-focused in any sense. "They do not live and breathe in order to achieve meaningful objectives, but rather to merely exist or survive. Unfortunately for these groups no amount of trust, conflict, commitment or accountability can compensate for a lack of desire to win."

Excerpted with permission from *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, (Jossey-Bass 2002)

separates mediocre from excellent performance, team members rarely perform up to their potential.

"Team members might know what the organization's purpose is, but they often are less certain about their own role or purpose and why what they do is important to someone else on their team," says Gary Lear, president of Resource Development Systems, a performance improvement consulting firm in Lake City, Florida.

Indeed, vague performance objectives have undermined far more work teams than factors like too much individualism or poor communication, experts say. Teams with specific goals, like "resolving customer problems in one contact 90 percent of the time" or "shipping 95 percent of orders within 24 hours," rather than "improving customer satisfaction," often will perform better – especially if

progress toward those goals is diligently measured and communicated.

"If there is one thing that everyone is clear about, it's that successful, high-performing teams have clear performance objectives and unsuccessful teams do not," says Glenn Parker, a team building consultant based in Skillman, New Jersey, and author of the best-selling book *Cross-Functional Teams*.

It's also clear that teams won't go far without trust and accountability – two shopworn terms that nonetheless remain the lifeblood of team success. Lear encourages organizations to think about trust as more than just "reliability," but rather creating environments where team members feel comfortable opening up and showing some vulnerability without fear of retribution. "There are things

that increase *trustworthiness* – people arriving to work on time or playing by rules, for example – that don't necessarily build a deeper level of trust" on a team, he says. Lear uses the acronym *SOAR* to capture all the elements needed to build real trust: straightforwardness, openness, acceptance (of others' differences) and reliability.

In his book *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, author Patrick Lencioni says teams with an absence of trust conceal their weaknesses and mistakes from one another, hesitate to ask for help or provide constructive feedback, rarely offer help outside their areas of responsibility and jump to conclusions about the intentions and aptitudes of team mates. Establishing this kind of trust doesn't happen easily, Lencioni writes, and requires "a leader who shows some of his or her own genuine (not staged) vulnerability, shared experiences over time, multiple instances of follow-through and demonstrated credibility and an in-depth understanding of the unique attributes of team members." (For more advice from the book, see the article, *Is Your Team Crashing and Burning?* on page 12).

The Power of Conflict

We tend to view teams that are chummy and exhibit few outward signs of conflict or discord as role models of sorts. But appearances can be deceiving. If such teams avoid tackling tough issues and engaging in passionate debate due to a fear of conflict – if the desire to avoid personal confrontation trumps all – they risk sweeping under the rug problems that can return to bite them time and again. Experts say many high-performing teams learn to embrace *productive* conflict – the kind centered on strategic or tactical concepts or ideas, not personality or political matters – as a way of resolving difficult issues faster and finding more creative, well-rounded solutions.

"Telling people they need to just 'rise above and live with' an existing conflict in most cases is a cop out," says Barb North, a conflict resolution expert with Win-Win Training in Woodland Hills, California. The trick, North says, is to ensure work teams have the right tools and training to engage in productive rather than toxic debate. That starts with creating a formal conflict resolution plan, then allowing team members to role-play common conflict scenarios in low-pressure training situations before dealing with the real thing in the workplace.

When teams get bogged down in conflict, it's usually not out of malice but because they lack the proper mindset and a structured, systematic process for addressing contentious issues, North says. For example, many workplace conflicts are escalated needlessly because people are drawn into them who shouldn't be involved. Consider the team leader who starts to hear rumblings about one team member who isn't pulling his weight.

The leader's first instinct might be to gather more information by talking to all members of the team about the situation. But North says that often just fans the flames – it's far better to address the "accused" directly before consulting

the team. "You want to ask if there's anything going on with this person that you're not seeing," North says. "It could be they have an ailing parent at home, have experienced a recent death in the family or have financial or health issues themselves. It also could be that they're simply not suited for a particular job, and that their talents might blossom in another role. The approach some managers take of, 'first I am going to investigate you, then later I'll sit down and talk to you about the problem' is getting it backwards."

People often keep conflict alive and festering rather than working quickly through it because they're not fully aware of its costs, North says. "There can be financial costs to conflict, but just as often there are emotional costs, health costs and costs to family and friends who have to deal with the fallout of conflict you're engaged in at work," she says. "Too often people simply stay in a state of conflict rather than take the time to really analyze it and ask themselves, 'Is it really worth paying the price I'm paying for this stalemate?'"

She also says there's a common misconception that the only way to resolve conflicts is through a "50-50" compromise, which more often than not leaves both parties unsatisfied. A more thorough investigation of needs on both sides can lead to more "win-win" solutions. Case in point is an anecdote from the negotiation skills book *Getting to Yes* by Roger Fisher and William Ury. A mother walks into a kitchen to find her two sons arguing over possession of an orange and cuts it in half to end the argument. But neither child is satisfied. It turns out one son simply wanted the orange for its rind to make cookies and the other wanted it for the juice to

"Experts say many high-performing teams learn to embrace productive conflict."

drink. "What Mom forgot to do was ask the question: 'Why do you want the orange?'" North says. "We are so conditioned to think either I get what I want, or you get what you want, or we have to compromise and we only get part of what we want. But a deeper exploration of issues and options on both sides can create more win-win solutions."

Leading Virtual Teams

More of today's managers also find themselves leading teams with whom they have little or no physical contact. These "virtual" teams feature employees working together from geographically-dispersed locations on a project or permanent basis, conducting most of their business via the phone, e-mail, webconferencing and videoconferencing.

Leading virtual teams requires significant adjustments from managers accustomed to employees working underfoot, a challenge that can be magnified if the team is

(continued on page 19)

Teaming With Success

By Craig Harrison, DTM

In successful Toastmasters teams, cooperation trumps competition.

Team-up with the new *Competent Leader* manual

It's time to apply your burgeoning teambuilding skills. When you complete assignment #10 from your *Competent Leadership* manual, you'll use your team skills to lead within Toastmasters. Opportunities abound within and beyond your club: as a Toastmaster or general evaluator; as chairperson of a contest, membership or PR campaign or special event, and in other capacities. Indeed the world awaits your team-building skills as a leader. Lead on!

In our clubs, districts and world at large, we are surrounded by examples of great (and not-so-great) teamwork. Recently I flew to Los Angeles, visited relatives, took in a parade with floats, bands and street performers, saw a football game and attended an opera. Countless teams made it all possible, whether on stage or backstage, seen or unseen. As a Toastmaster, you too are a part of a variety of teams. How well you work together tells me how successful you are. Are you teaming with success?

True teamwork takes time and a willingness to contribute to the greater good of the team, as opposed to only looking out for number one. It begins with a desire to work on behalf of the group. Examine your motives. In successful teams, when the team wins all teammates reap the rewards. Ineffective teams are often betrayed by selfish team members whose individual goals supersede their team's goals.

Hallmarks of effective teams:

- A shared vision of the mission of the team and its goals.
- Willingness to meld one's individual talents for the betterment of the team.
- Clear communication in both directions between team leader and team members, and among members themselves.
- Ample appreciation of individual differences within one's team.
- Recognition and reward of team members for their efforts.

I have chaired boards of directors, coached basketball teams domestically and internationally, and managed talented – and not so talented – groups within and beyond the high-tech sector. I know from experience that lines of authority alone do not guarantee dedication, loyalty and a shared sense of team play. Similarly, I have been a member of functional and dysfunctional teams and have seen firsthand that talent alone doesn't guarantee success. Successful teams are about a coming together of talent, a melding of minds and mindsets, and an ability to focus on the big picture.

Team members seek the following:

- To be heard.
- To feel important.
- To be valued, appreciated and recognized.
- An opportunity to express individuality.
- The excitement and pride of group accomplishments.

These can all occur on well-led teams without sacrificing the team spirit. It's a mistake to believe that the best team leaders treat everyone the same way. Realistically, not everyone wants nor needs to be treated the same way. Some team members are self-motivated. They are self-starters who want the keys to the car and then ask that you step away from the curb. Other team members want and need reassurance, support



▲ District 59 Toastmasters celebrate great teamwork at last year's Convention.

and a little hand-holding. Neither is right or wrong. But each personality excels when treated the way he or she most want to be treated.

Team leaders should strive to achieve the following:

- A clear vision of the team's goals and objectives that they consistently articulate.
- Appreciation of who each team member is and how to relate to them: personality, temperament, strengths and weaknesses, and style.
- Cohesion through regular communication.
- Support for each team member.

- Recognition for members' accomplishments and group milestones.

As an only child who once thought the sun revolved around the son, I benefited greatly from team activities. I played rhythm guitar in a band while in high school (think "second fiddle"). I was back-up point guard (otherwise known as the last player off the bench) on my UC Santa Cruz basketball team. And I served as co-teaching assistant in an undergraduate class at UCLA (think compromise.)

Yet it was as a servant leader in Toastmasters that I learned my great-

est lessons as a club, area, division and district leader. I learned how to:

- Admit mistakes.
- Cover for others' errors.
- Give and receive constructive criticism to protect the team and its members.
- Let go of having to always be right.
- Think first of the team, then of myself.

Having had the pleasure of serving on guidance committees for several High Performance Leadership projects of others, I've learned about acceptance and humility, open-mindedness and how cooperation trumps competition among team members.

Teamwork, in any group, is developed over time. Day by day your club or district team can strengthen itself through experience and the natural relationships that occur over time. With time and attention to these tips, soon your group will be teaming with success! ■

Past District Governor Craig Harrison, DTM is a professional speaker, corporate trainer and communication consultant who founded Expressions of Excellence™ to help professionals express their sales and service leadership. Visit his Web site at www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com for resources and solutions.

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The Wit and Wisdom of Leadership

By Gene Perret

A good leader senses the humor in a situation and recognizes the logic of it.

What does wit have to do with wisdom? What does a sense of humor have to do with leadership? Let me tell of a personal experience that might explain it.

At the company where I used to work, our team had developed a computer program for engineering information. Our group leader chose me to present the new proposal to upper management and to the engineering work force, to both explain the system and recommend it for company funding and implementation.

This was a major company presentation and I was flattered and honored to be selected to be the lecturer. I bombed. The engineers weren't happy with having their learning commandeered and compressed into computer logic. They ambushed me with complicated questions. All of my answers began with "Er...ah..." and ended with confusion on my part and smug snickering on their part. After the meeting, the company's top executive chided me for not being well enough prepared.

My boss and I had lunch afterwards and even he ridiculed my performance. He laughed at me. I was offended and hurt by his reaction. "I thought you had confidence in me and I expected you to support me," I said.

He said, "I do have confidence in you and I do support you, but you were hilarious up there. You were lost from the first question on."

I said, "Is that any reason for you to laugh at me?"

He said, "I'm laughing at you because it was funny, but also because you're taking this whole thing too seriously."

I said, "It was serious. The big boss was there."

He said, "This was only one talk."

I said, "One terrible talk – one career-ending talk."

He said, "Let me ask you something. Do you believe this system we developed is a beneficial one for the company?"

I said, "You know I do."

He said, "Then just continue saying that."

I said, "I tried to say that today but no one would listen."

He said, "Just keep saying it and keep on believing it. Eventually, someone will listen. One day, they'll all see that it is the best system and when they do, they'll realize that you were telling them that all along. In the long run it'll be a feather in your cap."

This was magnificent leadership. With his sense of humor, my boss stayed focused, while I wanted to project disastrous, unfounded results.

At this same company, our supervisor had to give an ominous speech to his charges. He told us we had to pick up production or face serious consequences. Of course, we felt this was a veiled company threat – shape up or ship out.

The supervisor recognized our concerns and said, "I'm not telling



you this because your jobs are in danger." Of course, we all reacted with a skeptical groan.

He continued, "No, I'm telling you this because my job is in danger."

He conveyed, with a sense of humor, that we were all in the same predicament. He wasn't an adversary, or a tyrant. He was one of us. Through his humor, he made us realize the honesty of the situation so that we could deal with it more realistically. This, too, was superb leadership.

I've dealt with comedy and comedy creators for most of my income-earning life. I've also worked for some very impressive executives. To me, humor and leadership are two sides of the same coin.

Comedy writers investigate, research and analyze a topic to get to the facts and to the essence of a topic. Once they uncover the logic of a given situation, they can generate the humor in it.

A worthwhile leader senses the humor in a given situation and from that vantage point can recognize the logic of it. That logic is what enables a good executive to make well-informed, wise decisions.

Bob Hope was a legendary humorist, but also an executive. He headed a production company that employed hundreds of salaried employees. He had to produce a product almost daily – his show or his stage presentations. Hope also managed the quality control of his corporation. He demanded of all of us on his team that the product be excellent.

One time, after we had finished the last televised show of the season, Bob Hope was going to do several college concerts and asked us writers to come up with some new football jokes.

One writer objected. "We've been writing football jokes all season. You haven't used all of them. Why do you need new jokes?"

It was a tense moment in the dressing room. As CEO of his production company, should Hope defend his request? Should he

explain why new jokes were required? Should he argue with the recalcitrant writer or should he surrender and agree to use the jokes left over from the television season?

Bob Hope simply approached the employee who questioned why he wanted new material and said, "I pay you with new money, don't I?"

End of discussion. The new material was delivered the following morning. That's the wit and wisdom of solid leadership.

A sense of humor can lead to wise leadership in the world of sports too. Knute Rockne, arguably the most dynamic football coach in college history, was famous for inspiring his teams to win. During one game, the Notre Dame lads were being terribly outplayed. At half time, the players sat and waited. They were certain they were going to get a devastating tongue lashing from their fiery coach berating them for their poor performance.

They waited...and waited...and waited.

Finally, just about three minutes before they had to charge back onto the field, Rockne barged into the dressing room and said, "Oh, excuse me. I was looking for the Notre Dame football team."

Another fine example of the wit and wisdom of leadership.

Humor is sensed by seeing reality. There are three steps to ensure that:

1. **See the facts as they are.** It's not wise to view opinions, projections or fantasies. A wise leader sees just the facts. In my inept talk to the engineers, I saw all sorts of terrible results; my boss saw one bad talk. He knew that it wasn't the catastrophe that my self-pity was turning it into.
2. **Recognize what's behind the facts.** I saw only my ineffectual presentation. I blamed only myself. My boss knew that the engineers were resentful and would try to sabotage our program. He taught me that knowing that, I could prepare in future talks for their ambush – and have appropriate responses.

3. **Accept the facts.** After my talk, I wanted to crawl into a hole. I wanted to give up on the project that I believed in. I wanted to quit the company. His sense of humor and leadership convinced me that this was one talk. It was a bad one, indeed. However, it was over. I had mishandled the assignment. Now I should concentrate on preparing properly for the next presentation.

A sense of humor – a sense of reality – is a skill that can generate leadership that will not only benefit you, but also all those who work for and with you. **T**

Gene Perret, of Westlake Village, California, was Bob Hope's head writer and is a three-time Emmy Award winner. He teaches an e-mail course on using humor in speaking and has written many books on the subject. Contact him at Gper276@sbcglobal.net.

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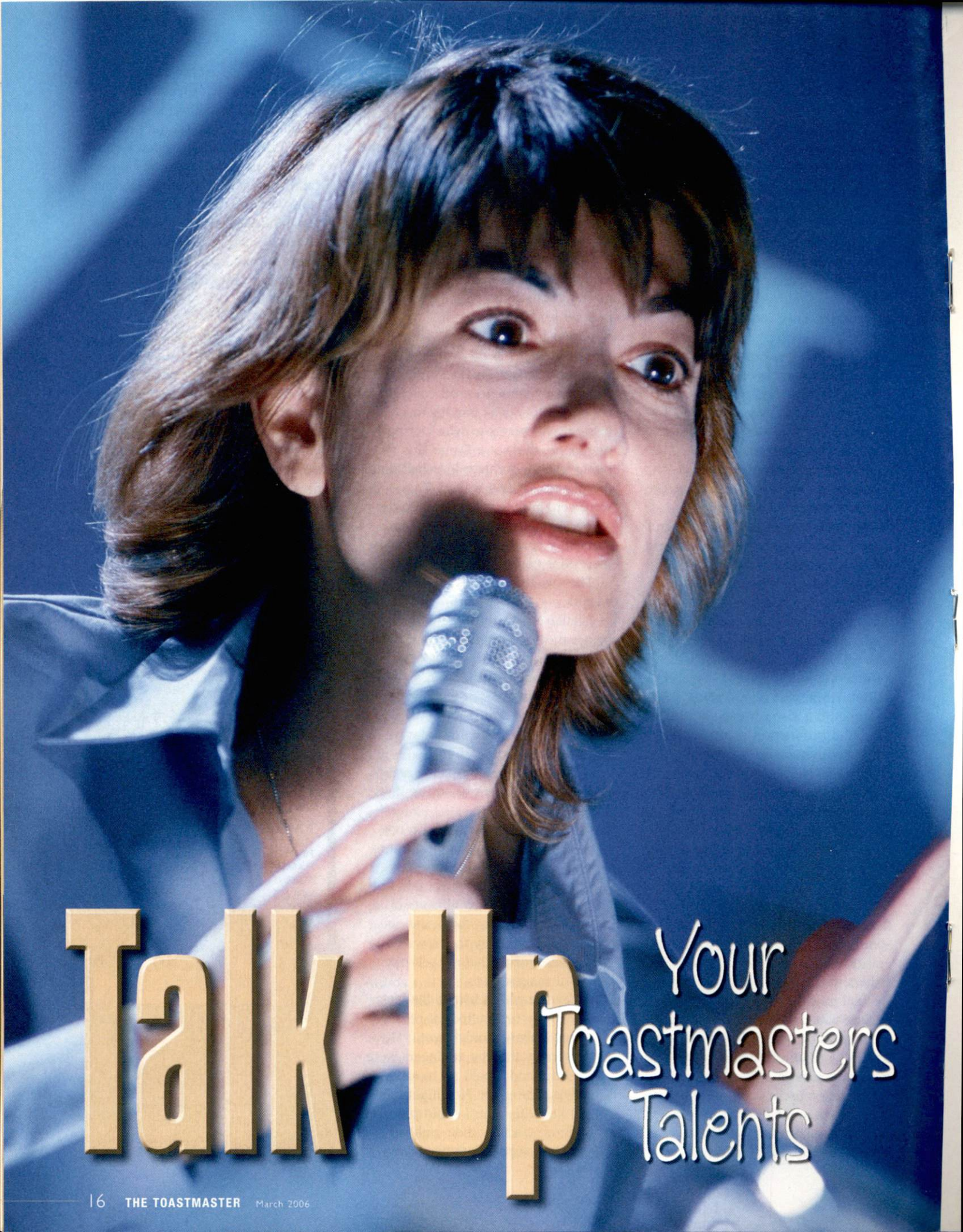
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Talk Up

Your
Toastmasters
Talents

9 ways to promote yourself as a public speaker.

By Dena Harris, CTM

From the time Sindy Martin, DTM, joined Toastmasters in 1997 through 2004, her career took major leaps forward. "I was promoted four times," says Martin. "And there is no question it was because of my speaking abilities."

Martin went from providing technical support to sales staff over the phone to presenting to 400 people every two years at a national sales conference. "I kept my VP up-to-date on my speaking achievements," explains Martin, "so when the need for a speaker came up, it was always, 'Send Sindy.'"

Martin is not alone in her success. Individuals willing to speak on behalf of their companies typically earn 5-25% more than their colleagues and enjoy enhanced opportunities for travel, visibility and advancement.

Are you putting yourself out there as a speaker to enjoy these perks? Remember, you possess a talent few do – the willingness to speak in public. Make this talent work for you outside your Toastmasters meetings!

Consider for a moment how you would like to use your skills. Do you dream of being a motivational speaker? Of speaking out to improve your community and the lives of others? Or maybe you simply want to further yourself in business. Any of these options are within your grasp if you'll promote yourself as a speaker. How much promotion you do depends on how far you wish to go. Follow the tips below to get started.

1 Speak Every Chance You Get. No assignment is too small. Garner assignments by suggesting topics on which to speak. "I understand this program is causing confusion. Would you like me to do a 10-minute overview for your staff on how it works?" is a great way to approach a manager. You're making their life easier and highlighting your skills – a win-win.

2 Create a Web site. If seeking to promote yourself as a speaker outside your immediate company, it's essential to have a Web site. Here are some suggestions for what to include:

- **About You.** Talk up Toastmasters and any public speaking experience to date.
- **Appearances.** List them all, including upcoming events. If you spoke at your son's Boy Scout meeting, include it. You're looking to show a range of speaking expertise.
- **References/blurbs.** These can come from colleagues, friends, or people in your Toastmasters group. "Sheila brings excitement and enthusiasm to all her presenta-

tions." Be sure to list the names and company affiliation of anyone who supplies a blurb. This list especially builds credibility with outside groups who are considering asking you in as a speaker.

- **Tips for public speaking.** Including a "top 10 list" conveys fun and confidence.
- **Pictures of you speaking.**
- **Blog.** A blog (Web log) is an online journal centering around a specific theme or topic. Your topic will be your public speaking. Use your blog to write about current projects and appearances, and anything else you want to share (Speech go awry? Share it in a funny story. People love to see the "behind the scenes" side of speaking). Keep your blog active, giving people a reason to return to your site. People can ask questions and post comments, making your site truly interactive. In addition, using keywords to title your entries encourages traffic to your site.
- **Contact Me.** List an e-mail where you may be reached.

3 Use E-Mail Signatures. E-mails reach a multitude of people. If you've achieved your CTM or CL status, include them in your e-mail signature after your name and use them as a conversation starter.

If you haven't achieved a Toastmasters designation, simply note you're a public or motivational speaker. You may not be able to include this information on a corporate e-mail, but you can add it to your personal e-mail. You'll also, through your personal e-mail, want to supply a link to your Web site.

4 Network. Just as 70 percent of today's jobs are found through networking, so are the majority of speech assignments. You can get the ball rolling by joining organizations/associations and becoming active in them.

Don't be shy about networking and accepting small, non-paying speeches. You may think, "Eh, this is a speech to the five members of our local Kiwanis club," but you don't know who might be listening who can recommend you to the next big client.

5 Teach Classes. Teaching classes in any topic will quickly establish you as an expert speaker in the eyes of others. Approach colleges offering continuing or adult education

Opportunities For Speakers Abound. Consider speaking at...

- **Toastmasters Events.** Volunteer to be a presenter at a district conference. Enter an evaluation contest. Volunteer to be a judge. (As a judge you don't even present, but people assume you have solid speaking skills yourself.)
- **Church/Religious groups.** Lead study groups, read at the pulpit, teach children's classes.
- **Job Search/Networking** groups are always looking for new speakers.
- **Girl Scout/Boy Scout-type clubs.** Are you an engineer? How about a hands-on presentation about how electricity works? A stay-at-home mom? How about a talk on budgeting?
- **Book discussions.** Lead one in your neighborhood or at work.
- **The Office.** Position yourself as the "go to" person for presentations. Don't wait for people to come to you. Come up with specific ideas for talks and put yourself out there.
- **Speaker's Bureaus.** Volunteer organizations offer wonderful opportunities to establish your public speaking skills. Ideally, you're volunteering with an organization you have a passion for, which makes it easier to speak about its mission. There are any number of volunteer organizations that need community speakers – people willing to lead tours, conduct fundraising, give interviews to the press or provide educational talks.

programs about teaching a class in pottery or basic accounting principles or whatever holds your interest. Recreation centers, senior centers and schools are other venues to consider. Don't worry about money – what matters is you're setting a precedent that you know how to organize material and lead a workshop. If you're nervous, buddy up with a friend or fellow Toastmaster. For that matter, get your Toastmasters group involved in presenting public workshops. If tight on time, offer to teach a lunchtime class at work.

6 Write Articles. Write an article for your company Web site or newsletter. It can be an article on public speaking, but also write about subjects in your chosen field. How does this help your speaking career? People respect the written word. The more you write, the sooner you'll be asked to speak on what you've written about.

Article writing also allows you to conduct your research ahead of time and become comfortable with your subject. By the time you're asked to speak, you're knowledgeable on your topic and feel comfortable speaking about it.

Submit articles to:

- Company Web sites/newsletters
- Local newspapers
- Any newsletters, bulletins or Web sites for groups you belong to
- Online discussion groups
- Your Web site

7 Get Your Name Out. Send a press release to your local paper every time you teach a class or speak in public. (Hint: Advertise the event over the fact that you're the one speaking). Promote yourself in company newsletters. Some companies have a bio page for their employees. Yours should state that you belong to Toastmasters, your designations and experience, and that you're available to give presentations, facilitate meetings and lead group discussions. Think about your bio as an introduction someone might read before you give a speech: "Jack Smith has been speaking for over 5 years and has given presentations on marketing strategies, financial analysis and better customer service tips."

8 Maintain a List of Appearances. Keep a list of everywhere you speak – staff meetings, Toastmasters meetings and volunteer activities. The list will become invaluable when you apply for a new job or are negotiating a raise. Not many people can whip out a list of public speaking engagements and topics. But two years from now, you won't remember all the 20-minute office presentations you made, so record them now.

9 Think of Yourself as a Professional Speaker. You must believe in your speaking abilities before you'll convince others to see you as a speaker. Start small. As you give speeches to different groups on different topics, your confidence will increase alongside your reputation and exposure.

Conclusion

Establishing yourself as a public speaker requires time, preparation and dedication. Start now by thinking of yourself as a speaker. Seek out speaking engagements. Talk yourself up. Teach classes. Write articles. Soon people will be seeking you out. From there, it's up to you how far you wish to carry your speaking career. But whether you aim big or stay small, actively promoting your speaking abilities will pay off in new friends, added income, increased confidence, and a wide range of previously unexplored opportunities.

As for Martin, she has since left her position and is seeking new ventures. Her speaking skills continue to set her apart from the crowd. "In my last interview I was asked how often I do public speaking, and I could say I've done 10 presentations in the past month," says Martin.

"They were impressed." ■

Dena Harris, CTM, teaches writing, networking and public speaking. Visit her at www.denaharris.com.

Turn Team Conflict into Team Harmony

(continued from page 11)

scattered over multiple time zones, is culturally diverse or team members speak English as a second language.

For example, it can be easy for virtual team members to feel isolated and lose their sense of direction when they're distanced from others, so checking in frequently by phone or e-mail becomes more important for managers, as does providing regular performance feedback. To address this, many virtual team leaders hold mandatory weekly conference calls to create group cohesiveness and keep everyone on the same wavelength. Teambuilding consultant Glenn Parker encourages virtual teams to hold face-to-face kickoff meetings when they form and then meet at least once a year in person if possible. Starting a dialogue, putting faces to names and getting to know teammates helps later if problems arise, Parker says.

Effective virtual teams also create ground rules around use of technology, their communications lifeline. Some team leaders require that all e-mails be answered within 24 hours, for example, and many establish protocol on what kinds of e-mail can be sent to whom, so people don't get flooded with unnecessary messages.

Others set a goal of posting a meeting agenda 48 hours before an online meeting or phone conference so everyone has time to contribute to the agenda and prepare for the meeting. "It's critical to establish norms for communicating and making decisions in a virtual world that are based on the team members' unique situations, backgrounds, experience and work assignments," says Parker.

Recipe for Team Success

Teamwork will always be a fabric of organizational life. As long as people with different backgrounds and belief systems come together under the banner of "team," there will be disagreement and conflict. But the sooner that organizations embrace the value of productive, face-to-face confrontation as a means of finding the best solutions in the smallest amount of time, and recognize the simple power of leaders taking a personal interest in their team members, setting precise performance objectives and holding people accountable for results, the more effective they'll see their work teams become. **T**

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From CTM to CC - The new name is Competent Communicator

TI's educational awards to be renamed in July.

As announced in the November 2005 magazine, Toastmasters International is making some exciting changes in the educational system and award designations. To strengthen the leadership training and to make all educational designations in the communication and leadership tracks clearer and more meaningful, TI is adding leadership award programs and renaming educational awards to distinguish between speech programs and leadership programs.

Beginning July 1, 2006, members will see the following improvements in the educational program:

- **A new leadership award.** Members completing the new *Competent Leadership* manual, which debuted in January, will receive the new *Competent Leader* award.

- **New titles for existing leadership awards.** The current *Competent Leader* award will become the *Advanced Leader Bronze* award. The current *Advanced Leader* award will become the *Advanced Leader Silver* award. The requirements for the *Advanced Leader Bronze* award include completion of the *Competent Leadership* manual. (See the sidebar for award requirements.) Because requirements for the award

are changing, there will be a two-year "grace period" for those working toward the current *Competent Leader* award.

This means World Headquarters will continue to issue *Competent Leader* awards under the current requirements through June 30, 2008. Beginning July 1, 2008, all members will have to meet the new requirements. Those who have already earned the *Competent Leader* award under the current requirements and who apply for the *Advanced Leader* award after June 30, 2006, will receive the new *Advanced Leader Silver* certificate.

- **New titles for the Communication and Leadership Program and Advanced Communication and Leadership Program manuals.** At their next reprinting, the *Communication and Leadership Program* manual will be titled the *Competent Communication* manual and the *Advanced Communication and Leadership Program* manuals will become the *Advanced Communication* manuals.

- **New titles for the communication track awards.** The *Competent Toastmaster (CTM)* award, given to those completing the *Communication and Leadership Program* manual, becomes the *Competent Communicator (CC)* award. The *Advanced Toastmaster Bronze*, *Advanced*



Toastmasters Recognition



Beginning July 1, 2006, members can earn the following communication and leadership awards:

Communication Track

COMPETENT COMMUNICATOR (CC)

Requirements:

- Completed the *Competent Communication* manual

ADVANCED COMMUNICATOR BRONZE (ACB)

Requirements:

- Achieved Competent Communicator award (or achieved Competent Toastmaster award)
- Completed two Advanced Communication manuals

ADVANCED COMMUNICATOR SILVER (ACS)

Requirements:

- Achieved Advanced Communicator Bronze award (or achieved Able Toastmaster award or Advanced Toastmaster Bronze award)
- Completed two additional advanced communication manuals (may not be those completed for any previous award)
- Conducted any two programs from The Better Speaker Series and/or The Successful Club Series

ADVANCED COMMUNICATOR GOLD (ACG)

Requirements:

- Achieved Advanced Communicator Silver award (or achieved Able Toastmaster Bronze award or Advanced Toastmaster Silver award)
- Completed two additional advanced communication manuals (may not be those completed for any previous award)
- Conducted a Success/Leadership Program, Success/Communication Program or a Youth Leadership Program
- Coached a new member with the first three speech projects

Toastmaster Silver and Advanced Toastmaster Gold awards become the *Advanced Communicator Bronze*, *Advanced Communicator Silver* and *Advanced Communicator Gold* awards respectively, with no changes to award requirements. (See article on this page for requirements for these awards.) Members applying

for any of the current awards will receive certificates reflecting the new award names.

■ A change in the Distinguished Toastmaster award requirements.

To be eligible for the DTM award, a member must have received the Advanced Communicator Gold (or

Leadership Track

COMPETENT LEADER (CL)

Requirements:

- Completed the *Competent Leadership* manual

ADVANCED LEADER BRONZE (ALB)

Requirements:

- Achieved Competent Leader award
- Achieved Competent Communicator award (or achieved Competent Toastmaster award)
- Served at least six months as a club officer (president, vice president education, vice president membership, vice president public relations, secretary, treasurer or sergeant at arms) and participated in the preparation of a Club Success Plan while serving in this office
- While serving in the above office, participated in a district-sponsored club-officer training program
- Conducted any two programs from *The Successful Club Series* and/or *The Leadership Excellence Series*

ADVANCED LEADER SILVER (ALS)

Requirements:

- Achieved Advanced Leader Bronze award (or "old" Competent Leader award)
- Served a complete term as a district officer (district governor, lieutenant governor, public relations officer, secretary, treasurer, division governor or area governor)
- Completed the High Performance Leadership program
- Served successfully as a club sponsor, mentor or coach

DISTINGUISHED TOASTMASTER (DTM)

Requirements:

- Achieved Advanced Communicator Gold award (or achieved Advanced Toastmaster Gold award)
- Achieved Advanced Leader Silver award (or achieved Advanced Leader award)

current Advanced Toastmaster Gold) and the Advanced Leader Silver (or current Advanced Leader) awards.

For more information about the changes, visit the Toastmasters International Web site, www.toastmasters.org.

Getting a 'Seat at the Table'

By Lin Gensing-Pophal

What it takes to be "in the loop" at the office.

You've been with your organization for 10 years and have made several significant contributions. You feel "stuck," though, in the department you started in and have become frustrated as you've watched relatively inexperienced employees join the organization and quickly catapult beyond you. You have a lot to contribute and many good ideas you think could really make a difference. What's going on? Why doesn't anyone ever ask for your opinions and perspectives? Why aren't you included in decisions that impact your areas of responsibility? Why don't you have a "seat at the table"?

First, you're not alone. A lot of business professionals feel frustrated

that they're not more involved in the strategic planning issues that affect their organizations. It certainly *is* a frustrating spot to be in. Not having a seat at the table means that you're "out of the loop" – that your ideas frequently fall upon deaf ears and that when it comes time for a promotion or special project, you're likely to be overlooked.

Fortunately, there are some relatively simple things you can do to get yourself "unstuck." Here's what it takes:

Realistic Expectations

Your colleagues who are "part of the inner circle" know that they had to *earn* their way to this position – it's not a position that is simply conferred because of position or title. Think of the executives in your organization. Some of them are more involved in decisions – are more "players" than others. It has nothing to do with their titles. It has to do with other traits and qualities (to be discussed later).

Complaining or becoming petulant about not being involved in decisions where you feel you could offer input will get you nowhere. Demonstrating, through your actions and accomplishments, ways in which you could provide important insights will.

In short: you do not *deserve* a seat at the table. You have to earn it.

A "Win-Win" Attitude

Leaders are often competitive, but *successful* leaders know that collaboration, not competition, is the best way to move ahead. Competing



head-on with colleagues may get you what you're looking for in the short term, but in the long run working with others to achieve results will have a greater positive impact on your career. Your goal should never be to "get my way." Your goal should be to "do the right thing."

An Organizational – Not Personal – Focus

As Stephen Covey says, "start with the end in mind." Focus on organizational and departmental goals and make decisions based on meeting those goals – not necessarily your individual or personal goals. Having this focus will help you navigate tough situations where there may be conflict between you and your peers, or between your department and another department. What is the goal of the organization? What is the best decision based on that goal?

An Inclusive Attitude

Every relationship in your organization is important. Don't focus your efforts on nurturing relationships only with those who you view to be in "important" positions. There is much to gain – professionally and personally – by forming relationships with a broad variety of individuals, from front-line staff to part-timers to managers and CEOs. Each relationship provides you with a new perspective and a greater understanding of the issues affecting your organization. That understanding can help you make better recommendations and will build your reputation as someone who has a broad, strategic perspective.

A "Generalist" Mentality

If you've been in accounting your entire career, you probably have a solid understanding of accounting and may even be very well respected in that position, but you won't be called upon to participate in higher level decisions without a broader perspective. How do you develop a broad business focus? By learning about your organization and your industry. If your

expertise is limited only to your specialty area, how can you expect that you will be treated seriously when it comes to making decisions that affect the entire organization?

The most successful executives are those who have spent time in a variety of positions – finance, marketing, operations, etc. What can you do to demonstrate your interest in the *entire* organization? Start by networking with co-workers in other departments and becoming involved in task forces or committees outside the scope of your job. Read trade journals about your industry. Learn everything you can about the organization and the issues it faces.

A Forward-Looking Attitude

As a new employee, you impressed the organization with your great ideas and fresh perspectives and can point to some bottom line impacts of your efforts. But that was five years ago. Now you're frustrated because your colleagues and superiors seem to have forgotten about the contributions you made. You're frustrated and insulted. You shouldn't be.

You need to *continually* contribute to your organization. Institutional memories are short (the phrase "what have you done for us lately?" applies). While your past contributions represent good building blocks for your continued development, you should be constantly looking for new ways that you can contribute and not expecting to be recognized and rewarded for past achievements.

A "Share the Wealth" Philosophy

You just led a team in the development of a marketing campaign that was a huge success. You're glowing and eager for the recognition that is bound to follow. But don't be too eager to bask in the limelight. There are very few accomplishments that you can really achieve on your own. Working with and through others will get you further – faster. Just make sure that you're acknowledging the

contributions of others, not just privately, but publicly.

A Focus on Facts, Not Feelings

If you want to become the type of employee who is called upon for advice and insights, you need to make sure that your recommendations are based on fact, not feelings. Your opinions are valid only to the extent that they're based on practical experience or hard data.

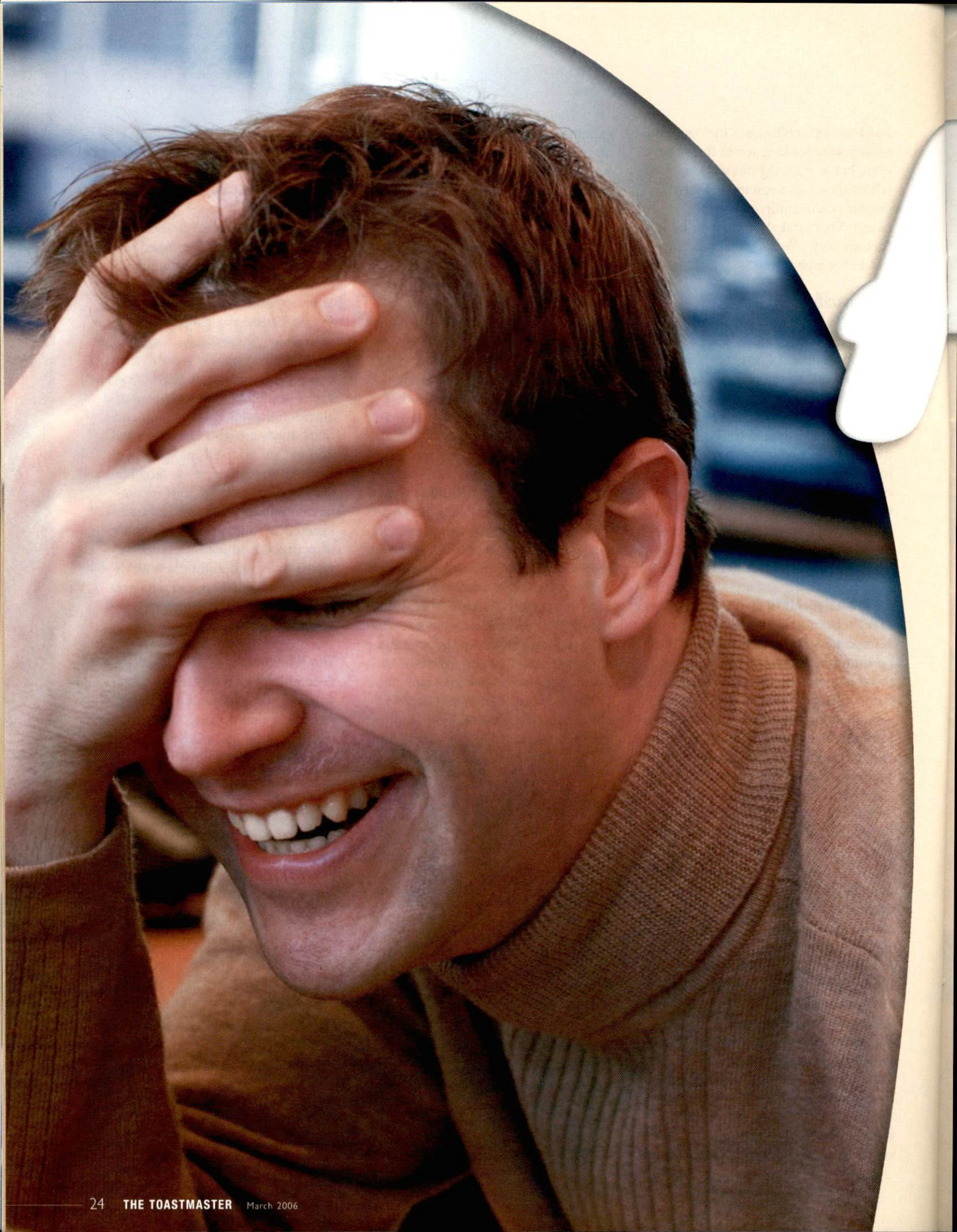
While it would be great if your opinion was so valued that no one ever questioned your judgment and always followed your recommendations, that's a highly unlikely situation to find yourself in. More likely, you will need to provide tangible evidence to back up your recommendations. You should not feel insulted by this – recognize it as part of your job and learn to leverage your power and authority with the value of information and data you can provide from both internal and external sources.

The Willingness to Ask for Inclusion

Feeling left out of decisions that you feel you could contribute to? Frustrated that nobody ever asks you for your opinions? Miffed because you weren't asked to participate in a certain task force? There's a simple solution: ask to be included.

Too many business people assume that their superiors know that they'd like to be included, or know that they have knowledge and information that could be helpful to the organization. They give their superiors too much credit. Chances are they *don't* know. You need to tell them. Chances are that a lot of people in your organization who are involved and whose opinions are valued didn't sit back and wait for someone to invite them to participate. They asked for the opportunity. You should too. **T**

Lin Gensing-Pophal is a freelance writer living in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin.



HUMOR to the Rescue

A witty response is good for business.

By John Kinde, DTM, AS

For a leader who's building social and business relationships, humor is a wonderful tool. People want to associate with leaders who have a positive personality and a sense of humor. When you are skilled at using humor, it increases trust and likeability. It builds, and sometimes even rescues, relationships. It clearly strengthens your leadership skills. As a significant fringe benefit, a sense of humor gives you a better-tuned humor radar.

Here's an example of when I used the humorous touch in sending a letter to a fellow professional speaker. It illustrates keeping your humor radar tuned for fun opportunities. I enjoyed hearing Mary-Ellen Drummond, a terrific speaker and Toastmaster, give a presentation in Los Angeles. In her talk she mentioned that when she receives a great testimonial letter, she laminates it. When I returned home I wrote a nice letter and mailed it to her. When she received the envelope and opened it, she discovered that my letter was already laminated!

Years later, I discovered that she was sharing my pre-laminated letter with an audience. When you create humor and share it, you never know how many people it will touch and to what extent it will build a relationship.

Humor is also a terrific way to recover from a mistake. Less effective ways of dealing with a mistake includes ignoring or explaining it, or becoming defensive. Often, those choices can be awkward. Many times, when recognizing a mistake, laughter is clearly the best choice. Let me give you some examples.

I received an e-mail inquiry for a speaking engagement on the East coast. At the end of my response to the request for information, I added: "I look forward to adding a special touch to your meeting in Delaware!"

The meeting planner replied to my e-mail with two simple words: "It's DelAware." I had misspelled the name of her

state! I had replaced an A with an E.

My note back to her: "Thens. Lern something every dey."

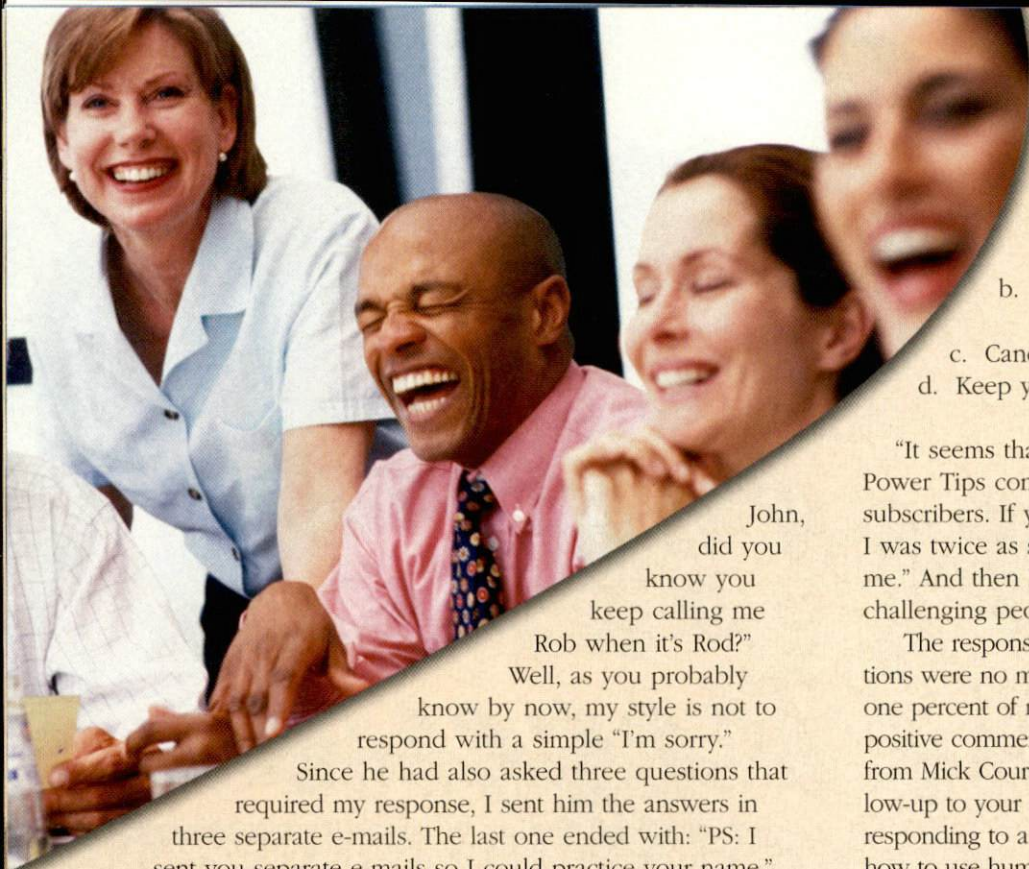
Her response (the capital letters are hers): "YOU PASS THE TEST! We needed someone with a TRUE sense of humor. Now I'm really excited. I'll be in touch!"

Another example, again in communicating with a potential client, I misspelled the potential client's first name. Instead of *Cecelia* I had written to her as *Cecilia*. Knowing that misspelling someone's name is a tacky mistake, I quickly acknowledged the error before she had a chance to reply. I immediately sent her a second e-mail:

"Oops, misspelled your name Cecilia. Sorry about that. Jhon."

My way of acknowledging that I had unintentionally misspelled her name was to intentionally misspell mine. Her response was positive: "Funny - you are going to be great for us!"

And here's another embarrassing mistake and a humor recovery. As a newly elected board member of an association, I received an e-mail from its president. "By the way



- “What do you do when you receive a blank e-zine?”
- Be happy because you can read it quickly.
 - Believe it is a do-it-yourself e-zine... and write your own.
 - Cancel your subscription.
 - Keep your sense of humor.

“It seems that a random blank issue from the Humor Power Tips computer-in-the-sky was sent to many of our subscribers. If you were half as surprised as I was... then I was twice as surprised as you. Thanks for smiling with me.” And then I introduced a Blank Book Title Contest challenging people to write titles to imaginary blank books.

The response was very positive. The subscription cancellations were no more than they usually were, much less than one percent of my subscription base. Among the several positive comments about how I handled the mistake was one from Mick Court in Melbourne, Australia: “What a great follow-up to your blank e-zine. I found your lived example of responding to a technical mistake a really powerful lesson – how to use humor to recover ground after a technical mistake!”

As a bonus, I received more than 350 submissions for the Blank Book Title Contest. Here are ten of my favorites:

- The Greatest Story Never Told
- It's Easy to Love Your Enemies – By George Bush and Michael Moore
- What I Learned in My Lifetime All By Myself
- How Logic Applies To the Understanding of Human Behavior
- Much Ado About Nothing
- The Sequel to The Last Word
- Gifts Greater Than Life
- 2021 Social Security Benefits
- Tricks to Teach Your Cat
- Best Short Stories Written in Invisible Ink

It's important to note that none of the fun and creativity of this group writing exercise would have happened without my choice of fixing a mistake with humor.

Be alert for opportunities to use humor when dealing with mistakes or simply to put a memorable touch in your

“Many times, when recognizing a mistake, laughter is clearly the best choice.”

communications with others. You'll make a lasting impression as someone who can see the lighter side of life. It will make you a stronger leader, a better speaker and it's good for business!

John Kinde, DTM, Accredited Speaker, is a humor specialist and keynote speaker in Las Vegas. For more information, visit www.HumorPower.com.

John, did you know you keep calling me Rob when it's Rod?”

Well, as you probably know by now, my style is not to respond with a simple “I'm sorry.”

Since he had also asked three questions that required my response, I sent him the answers in three separate e-mails. The last one ended with: “PS: I sent you separate e-mails so I could practice your name.”

His response: “Thank you Jon, for practicing my name.” He intentionally misspelled my name! I assumed he did it intentionally because I know he has a fun sense of humor. One humorous reply deserves another. A few minutes later I sent him a limerick:

*There once was a man named Rod.
For President he got the nod.
He did a great job,
but some called him Rob.
Which struck him as kinda odd.*

Rod's response: “Ho ho ho. Very clever. Funny too.” That entire humor exchange helped program Rod's name into my brain. And since that time, I've used his name correctly.

And then there was the time I accidentally broadcast an e-mail to people in 60 countries. I was helping a friend publish her first e-zine (electronic newsletter) issue. It appeared that it would be best to do the coaching over the phone. We were both signed onto the Internet, and I walked her through the steps on my e-zine server's control panel while she took parallel steps on her control panel.

Somehow I made the mistake of loading a blank e-zine into my server and sent it to 1000 of my subscribers. Oh no! I knew of someone who sent out an e-zine with a glaring error and received more than 200 subscription cancellations. I wanted to respond before my subscribers reacted. Humor to the rescue!

In less than an hour after I discovered the mistake, I sent out a special newsletter issue that read:

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Start a New Toastmasters Club

Do you know of an organization or community that could benefit from improved communication and leadership skills? (Who doesn't?) If you'd like a fulfilling challenge, why not consider being the spark plug for bringing a new Toastmasters club to life, from idea to reality? It's not complicated, but it does require focus and commitment. Here are a few suggestions on how to start a club:

- **Identify your target audience:** Are you planning for a community, corporate, advanced or other club? A rule of thumb for determining if a community is large enough to support a club is, "If it can support a McDonald's, it can support a Toastmasters club." Planning for corporate and advanced clubs is a bit different, since both have a specific, measurable target audience. There is no minimum target audience size – all you need is enough commitment to get at least 20 members. Many small corporations have formed very successful clubs.
- **Order a New Club Kit:** E-mail your request to newclubs@toastmasters.org. The kit explains everything you need to know about the chartering process and includes guides, brochures and tips for planning and implementing your new-club strategy.
- **Build a team:** New clubs can be built by individuals, but it's best to have a team of motivated members who can bring support and perspective to the effort. Identify key people willing to serve as sponsors and mentors, as both of these roles are *critical* to a new club's eventual success.
- **Plan your Demonstration Meeting:** Most new Toastmasters clubs are the result of successful demonstration

meetings, or "demos." Demos are presented before a group of prospective members by one or more experienced Toastmasters. They usually include an overview of the organization, the benefits of membership, and how to start and operate a club (including information about fees). Examples of a manual speech, an evaluation and Table Topics are usually given to show how a typical meeting works. Allow plenty of time for questions and answers.

- **Develop and implement a promotion strategy:** Even the best demo won't result in a new club if no one is there to hear the message, so it's *critical* to plan a promotional campaign that will bring people out. Use fliers, newspaper ads and phone calls, and brainstorm with your team for more innovative ideas.

So... it's the day of the demo meeting, and the room is crowded with excited people. Here are a few ideas for turning that enthusiastic group into a successful new club:

- **Focus on what's in it for them:** Rather than emphasize the technical aspects of starting a club, highlight what Toastmasters can do for its members and why it's worthwhile for them to join. Involve your team members, and get their testimonials about what Toastmasters has done for them. Keep it upbeat, positive, interactive and not too technical.
- **Take a break:** Allow some time for snacking, socializing and networking.
- **Plan next steps:** It's a good idea to develop options for next steps in advance of the demo meeting. Make provisions for the full range of possible outcomes (I.e. from slight interest

to enthusiastic, "when-can-we-start" commitment). Once commitment is confirmed by the attendees, be ready to suggest a suitable course of action – *but be sure to let the group decide its own preferences!*

- **Identify the future leaders:** Gauge which attendees come across as likely leaders of the future club and enlist their involvement as soon as possible. If the group is willing, an interim president, secretary and sergeant-at-arms can be elected.
- **Get a financial commitment as soon as possible:** Solidify the commitment of prospective members by having a "starting point" budget and collecting some level of dues at the first meeting. As a benchmark, US\$53 or CDN\$62 per member will cover the costs of chartering, new-member kits and initial dues; meeting room and other club costs must also be factored in.
- **Respect their time:** Stay within the prescribed time limits of the meeting.
- **Follow up:** Keep your newfound goodwill with the group intact by honoring your commitments and promises meticulously. Remember, within their circle, *you're* the expert.

The potential for new clubs is all around us, in communities, corporations, governments and other organizations. Toastmasters is such a time-proven formula for communication and leadership development that it just about sells itself. All we have to do is present the message as best we can! **T**

Carl Duivenvoorden, DTM, is a member of three clubs in New Brunswick, Canada, and served as District 45's Governor in 2004-2005.

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Written By

BO BENNETT

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About Bo Bennett, DTM

Bo Bennett is a distinguished Toastmaster, business man, author, programmer, philanthropist, martial artist, motivational speaker, amateur comedian, and most of all a husband and a father devoted to improving the lives of others. Since age 10, Bo has started several companies and sold them anywhere from \$1 to \$20,000,000.00. Today, Bo remains active President of Archieboy Holdings, LLC. and CEO of Boston Datacenters, Inc. Bo is also the creator of FreeToastHost.org, the Toastmasters service that currently provides free websites for more than 2000 Toastmasters clubs around the world.



When it comes to success, there are no shortcuts.

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.

Herbert M. Modelevsky 2444-F, San Clemente, California
 Norma D. Rochester 6013-U, Kingston 5, Jamaica
 Paul Anthony Sharp 7289-U, Kingston, Jamaica
 Maria A. Ruiz 693601-1, Manhattan Beach, California
 Lisa E. Platt 4346-3, Scottsdale, Arizona
 Neel P. Valame 2544-4, Redwood Shores, California
 James D. Reese 4860-4, San Jose, California
 Richard A. Moser 9521-7, Portland, Oregon
 Tammy Fadler 9903-8, Arnold, Missouri
 William L. Kennedy 5074-15, Boise, Idaho
 Gail C. Payne 4281-16, Broken Arrow, Oklahoma
 Saleema R. Muhammad 4884-16, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
 Andrew J. Yarne 1564-19, Cedar Rapids, Iowa
 Paul Young 908-21, Richmond, Canada
 Randall Edge 9073-21, Kamloops, Canada
 Catherine Thomas 7812-22, Kansas City, Missouri
 Cindy Ho 864-42, Edmonton, Canada
 Randall Edge 6131-42, Regina, Canada
 Jan D'Orsay 896-44, Lubbock, Texas
 Robert Dashman 1516-55, Round Rock, Texas
 Shoshanna B. Szuch 792982-58, Charleston, South Carolina
 Jack Lyons 3427-60, Peterborough, Canada
 Dave Picard 180-61, Ottawa, Canada
 Gina Y. Cook 2285-61, Ottawa, Canada
 Alfred W. Kerperin 7194-64, Winnipeg, Canada

Shirley H. F. Stuart 7709-69, Maleny, Australia
 Steve Wiczorek 6748-70, Parramatta, Australia
 Brian Gowans 2249-74, Cape Town, South Africa
 Heriberta N. Bulac 808468-75, Davao City, Philippines
 Masahiko Inatsugi 7816-76, Kyoto, Japan
 Evadne N. Bell-Johnson 3874-77, Birmingham, Alabama
 Chee Liang Law 5110-80, Singapore, Singapore
 Albert Hock Seng Lim 8046-80, Singapore, Singapore

TM of Westfield 3187-46, Westfield, New Jersey
 Oxford Speakers 3297-71, Oxford, England

Anniversaries

70 YEAR

McBrian Lincoln-Douglas 51-8, Springfield, Illinois

65 YEAR

Bartlesville 186-16, Bartlesville, Oklahoma

60 YEAR

Communicators 356-52, Pasadena, California
 Lincoln 370-78, Fargo, North Dakota

55 YEAR

West Suburban 930-30, LaGrange Park, Illinois

50 YEAR

Sales and Marketing Executives 2019-6, Minneapolis, Minnesota
 Marion 2020-10, Marion, Ohio
 Noblesville 1251-11, Noblesville, Indiana
 Janesville 1983-35, Janesville, Wisconsin
 Napa 2024-57, Napa, California

45 YEAR

Collins Avionics 3250-19, Cedar Rapids, Iowa
 Cowichan 950-21, Duncan, Canada

40 YEAR

Moline 2790-19, Moline, Illinois
 Northshore 3908-31, Peabody, Massachusetts
 Milwaukee Public Works 1003-35, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
 Louis Riel 3207-64, Winnipeg, Canada
 Karingal 1665-70, Sydney, Australia

35 YEAR

Chilliwack 3486-21, Chilliwack, Canada
 Leesburg Speakeasies 1889-27, Leesburg, Virginia
 Boston 1074-31, Boston, Massachusetts
 High Desert 3647-33, Palmdale, California
 Norbeck 367-36, Rockville, Maryland
 H E Dobson 2005-40, South Charleston, West Virginia
 Foresters 2511-42, Edmonton, Canada
 Logistics Center 2050-62, Battle Creek, Michigan
 Thompson 2411-64, Thompson, Canada

30 YEAR

Speak 4 Yourself 318-4, San Carlos, California
 Livewires 3534-7, Portland, Oregon
 Talk of the Town 2430-8, Salem, Illinois
 Lower Valley 76-9, Sunnyside, Washington
 Toast of the Southwest 2047-25, DeSoto, Texas
 Minutemen 2288-31, Waltham, Massachusetts
 Evergreen 2897-42, Hinton, Canada
 Richmond County 3817-46, Staten Island, New York
 Donelson Early Birds 1298-63, Nashville, Tennessee
 Ennis 3360-71, Ennis, Ireland

Editor's Note: 25-year and 20-year club anniversaries will be included in the April 2006 issue.

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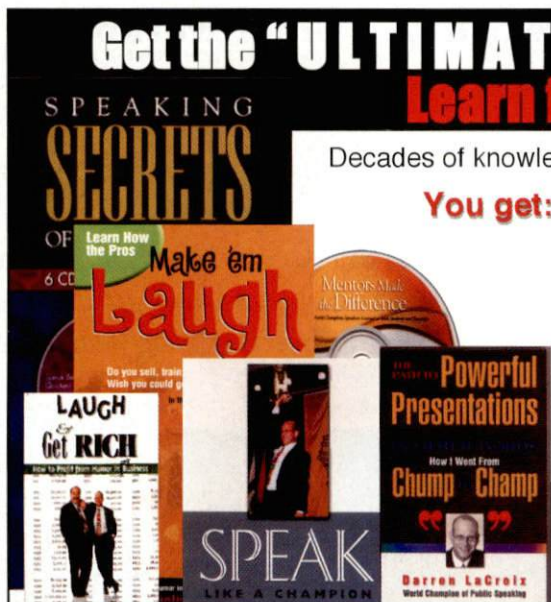
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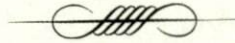
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