

TOASTMASTER®

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DECEMBER 2011

8 THE BENEFITS
OF LINKEDIN

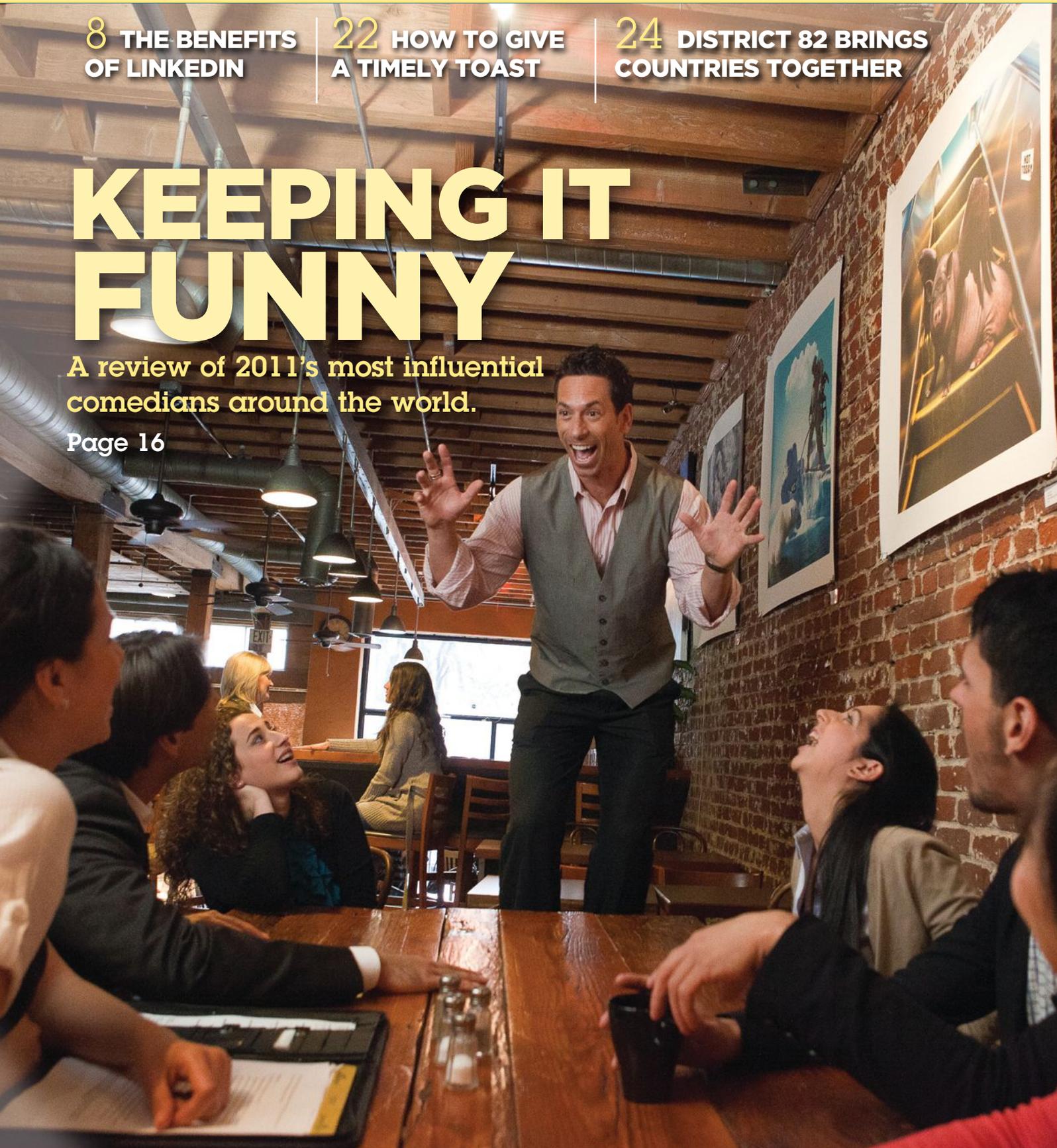
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KEEPING IT FUNNY

A review of 2011's most influential comedians around the world.

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COMMIT TO TURNING FAILURE INTO SUCCESS



It was the biggest speech of my life.

As a top-producing commercial Realtor, I earned an invitation to speak at a lunch meeting for commercial real estate professionals at the elegant Hyatt Regency Hotel in downtown San Francisco. It was my chance to shine as a speaker and leader.

As the lunch plates cleared, I walked to the lectern, adjusted the microphone and looked out at an audience of big eyes and power ties. Suddenly, my heart pounded like a jackhammer. My thoughts raced as if they were competing on the NASCAR circuit. My mouth became a parched desert. My hands turned into icicles. I wanted

to get the speech over with, so I spoke a little faster ... and a little faster ... and a little faster. When I was finally done, I had given a 25-minute speech in 10 minutes. I spoke so quickly my tongue deserved a speeding ticket!

"If you speak for any length of time, you will have at least one negative experience on the platform. We learn more from failure than success."

After the speech, I stood at the door and watched as 250 professionals walked out of the ballroom in silence. Nobody made eye contact with me. Nobody said a word. When I returned to the office, I received the hard news: "You sounded like a fast speaker, not a commanding leader."

That speech was delivered in the early 1990s. It prompted a new chapter in my life. I resolved that it would never, ever happen again. At the time, I was a Toastmaster, but I wasn't taking it seriously. I was an unreliable, inconsistent Toastmaster. I was a *casual* Toastmaster.

I resolved to take Toastmasters seriously and made a commitment to my own success. I resolved to build my leadership skills by volunteering as a club officer. I resolved to build my communication skills by delivering a manual speech every month; I resolved to attend club meetings regularly and do anything needed on short notice; I resolved to earn my DTM and made a personal commitment to seize every Toastmasters communication and leadership opportunity offered to me.

If you speak for any length of time, you will have at least one negative experience on the platform. We learn more from failure than success. Commit to making every personal failure a building block to success. You learn it all at Toastmasters: a place where leaders are made. 

MICHAEL NOTARO, DTM
International President

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WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE
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Since 1924, Toastmasters International has been recognized as the leading organization dedicated to communication and leadership skill development. Through its worldwide network of clubs, each week Toastmasters helps more than a quarter million men and women of every ethnicity, education level and profession build their *competence* in communication so they can gain the *confidence* to lead others.

By regularly giving speeches, gaining feedback, leading teams and guiding others to achieve their goals, leaders emerge. They learn to tell their stories. They listen and answer. They plan and lead. They give feedback — and accept it. They find their path to leadership.

Toastmasters International. Where Leaders Are Made.



"I could not believe my eyes when I saw the article on Sendai in the magazine. Hats off to the people in Japan for their courage and tenacity."
 – Kanwai Sethi, ACB

Digital on Phones

Congratulations on getting the magazine online. As an avid consumer of digital publications, I was happy to see our zine out there. However, as the experienced e-user that I am, I can only say: Back to the drawing board.

Have any of the developers actually, I mean really, looked at the thing on a phone? How many people actually read on a big screen? Why is half the screen filled with covers of previous issues? I'll have another look in a few weeks but I must say, based on first impressions, and writing all this on my phone, I won't be bookmarking the page.

Julian Martelli, CC
 Madrid Toastmasters club
 Madrid, Spain

Editor's Note: *You will find that the magazine archive has been removed from the digital magazine.*

Perfect Page

It came today. I've read it. I like it. Way to go!

Of course, I'm referring to the new look of the *Toastmaster* magazine (September). I enjoyed the variety, from the short bursts of information (perfect for today's busy Toastmasters) to the last page, with the humorous "Funny You Should Say That" discussion of "The Thing." A final page that is humorous is like a fabulous sweet dessert that perfectly rounds off the meal.

Phyllis Inward, ACG
 Glen Abbey Toastmasters
 Oakville, Ontario, Canada

The Reward Isn't the Award

Everything felt right: I exploded onto the stage and gave the speech I came to give [as a finalist in the 2011 World Championship of Public Speaking]. As I sat down in my chair afterward, Captain Bob, my speech coach, put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Magnificent, but you've been disqualified — you were 15 seconds over time."

All that work and yet disqualified because of time! To my surprise, I was not disappointed or depressed — I loved every moment of my stage time. My speech was about not being stamped a failure by something outside your control. In my case I had a speech impediment. After the contest, complete strangers hugged me, cried on my shoulder and thanked me. I was bowled over by people's reactions.

I've experienced firsthand the impact a message can make and realize the reward isn't the award — it's the feedback I've received since the World Championship.

Olivia Schofield, CC
 First Berlin Toastmasters
 Berlin, Germany

Editor's Note: *While a time disqualification was announced during the World Championship of Public Speaking, Toastmasters International did not officially name the contestant who was disqualified. This follows the procedure established in the Speech Contest Rulebook (Item 1171).*

Hats Off to Japan

I was thrilled to read the letter from Sendai Toastmasters club in Sendai, Japan (August). A few years ago, I was sailing on a ship as chief engineer and my ship touched Japan's Ishinomaki Port every month. From Ishinomaki I went to Sendai with my Japanese friends. I was devastated when I came to know of the destruction in Sendai caused by the earthquake and tsunami. I wept and later could not believe my eyes when I saw the article on Sendai in the *Toastmaster* magazine. Hats off to the people in Japan for their courage and tenacity. I plan to visit Ishinomaki and Sendai and to meet Toastmasters club members.

Kanwai Sethi, ACB
 Transport Canada Toastmasters
 Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Wrong Bridge

Today I received my September issue of the *Toastmaster*, and I would like to congratulate the editors on the fantastic new magazine. The content and presentation are very refreshing. I particularly liked the "Language Tip" [in the "Around the Globe" section] about the different spellings of "peak".

When I got to the "Traveling (spelled with two "l's" in Australia) *Toastmaster*," I was delighted to see the Sydney Harbour Bridge (which in Australia is colloquially named "the coathanger"), but disappointed to see it labeled as the Sydney Bay Bridge.

Elly Fleming, DTM
 Stage Time! Toastmasters
 Moorebank, New South Wales, Australia

Editor's Note: *Thank you for pointing this out. The digital edition has been revised to reflect the correct name of the Sydney Harbour Bridge.*

FOR THE SAKE OF MY SON

Communicating in a medical crisis.

By Shelley Stevenson, ACS, ALB

In February 2010 my son, Henry, was born with severe hypotonia. Basically, that's a fancy way of saying that his muscles don't work quite the same way as most people's do. In the span of a couple of days, my world spun out of control as doctors tried to determine the cause of his medical condition. When my husband, Shawn, and I were told our baby may not reach his first birthday, we realized we might never have the chance to know this little person we loved so much.

The doctors' attempts to solve his medical mystery, mixed with our fears for our son, left us feeling like we were being flung into space with no safety net. *How could I stop feeling so helpless?*

Eventually, the lessons I learned through our experiences with the medical system, along with the benefits I gained from my Toastmasters training, helped my son as well as my sanity. If you ever find yourself dealing with a medical crisis, here are some helpful tips:

▶ **Research Carefully.** When we learned about Henry's condition, the first thing I did was go online. In the midst of an emotional whirlwind, my Internet search for *hypotonia* only worsened my anxiety. In the span of minutes, I read that if my baby survived, he might never walk, talk or eat. What I *didn't* see in all that online material was this: that it was

just as likely my baby could grow up to be perfectly healthy.

As Toastmasters we learn to research our topics carefully, so we can add reliable facts and anecdotes to our speeches. Use the same practice when researching medical issues. Make sure your sources are reputable and offer well-balanced information.

▶ **Bring Someone for Support.**

When the going gets tough, get help. As Toastmasters, we know that others often see, hear and remember things we don't. That's why evaluations play such an important role in our clubs. Ask someone who is not directly involved to come with you to medical appointments — someone who can remain slightly detached and not get caught up in the emotions of the situation.

In British Columbia, which is where we live, there is an Infant Development Program (IDP) available to families who have young children suffering from developmental delay. We brought our IDP consultant to our medical appointments, and she took notes, asked questions and helped clarify information for us.

▶ **Follow Your Instincts.** If it doesn't feel right, say so! When Henry was born, our doctor was worried because Henry had no desire to eat, so nurses inserted a feeding tube. Then, two days after his birth, Henry started breastfeeding for the



The Stevenson family

first time. I was so happy. But my mood soon changed when a nurse appeared and said, "It's six p.m. — shift change — you have to go."

"What? But my baby is breastfeeding," I replied. She took my baby and escorted Shawn and me from the room. Every fiber of my being screamed that this was wrong; however, I didn't speak up. It was like going blank during a Table Topics response! But I learned to speak up after that.

Nearly two years have passed and we are amazed daily with how well our little "sweet pea" is doing. Henry surpasses all his doctors' expectations. At his first birthday we helped him blow out his first candle. He didn't eat any of the cake, but he sure had a great time — just as every baby does — smashing it into his hair! **T**

Shelley Stevenson, ACS, ALB, is a member of Vancouver Toastmasters club in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, and a stay-at-home mom to Henry, now 21 months old. Read her blog about Henry at henryshomemadeformula.wordpress.com. Reach Shelley at shelley.s@shaw.ca.

AROUND THE GLOBE

INTERNATIONAL INTERPRETATIONS

TOASTS FOR THE TRAVELER



All around the world, new relationships begin with and are strengthened by the clinking of glasses. Here's how some countries say "Cheers!"

France	À votre santé
India	अच्छी सेहत के लिए Acchī sehat ke liye
Spain	Salud
China	干杯 / Gan bei
Sweden	Skål
Japan	乾杯 / Kanpai
Germany	Prost
Philippines	Mabuhay
Ireland	Sláinte
Indonesia	Pro

SNAPSHOT

After receiving seven inches of snow in Taylor, Pennsylvania, Theodore Praschak, ACG, CL, and his nephew, Matthew Farrell, built a "snow speaker" they aptly named Frostmaster in case Frosty the Snowman needed a spokesperson.



WHAT DO YOU SAY WHEN...

YOU ARE GIVING A TOAST AT A FAMILY EVENT?

Toastmasters from the Brussels club in Belgium respond:

"A toast to our family: Dysfunctional, we may be / Wandering minstrels, across land and sea, / Scattered around the world, / Our hearts, they beat as one, / As we love each other, today, and anon. / To us all! / Let's raise a glass, for all to hear, / On this special day, / A loud cheer!" — SANDRA LIZIOLI, ACB, CL

"Think of those in the front lines who are not as fortunate to be sharing a meal with their loved ones. Do not wait to be thankful for all the beautiful things you have in your life." — JESSICA MARIE DEJESUS

"Everyone always says that you cannot choose your family. But I would choose each one of you without a second thought because I know you all love me unconditionally and you are always there for me when I need you. You complete me." — KIRSTEN UJVARI, CC, CL

Congratulations to the Brussels Toastmasters club on its 40-year anniversary!

BOTTOM LINE

Speech Contest Resources

The 2012 Speech Contest Rulebook and contest materials are available for free download from the Toastmasters online store. Go to www.toastmasters.org/DigitalContent to see what is available.

Holiday Gift Ideas

Show your appreciation to fellow members and leaders with apparel and gifts from the Toastmasters online store. Visit www.toastmasters.org/ApparelGifts to see what is available.

New Brand Resources

Check out the expanded Virtual Brand Portal at www.toastmasters.org/vbp for newsletter templates, A4-size documents, advertising art and more.

▶ VOCAL VARIETY TIP

DON'T PUT YOUR VOICE ON AUTOPILOT

If you deliver an entire speech in the same tone of voice, the audience's attention will wander and wane. Vary your vocal patterns to engage your listeners and keep them tuned in to your message. Here are three areas to focus on:

- **VOLUME:** Change the volume of your voice when emphasizing different emotions. For example, speak louder to show anger or fear — and softer if you're conveying a sense of secrecy or quiet drama.
- **PITCH:** Adapt your vocal pitch to your speech material. Make your voice higher to show excitement, lower to reflect a more somber or sorrowful mood.
- **PACE:** Mix up your speaking rate. Speak faster when covering more basic material, but slow down when focusing on more essential or complicated points.

MEMBER MOMENT

WITH RUTH GREENAWAY

Ruth Greenaway embraces life by doing what she loves every day. She has two “fabulous” daughters and lives on the Sunshine Coast of Queensland, Australia, where she enjoys warm beach weather 10 months of the year. A member of the Maroochydore Toastmasters club in Maroochydore, Queensland, Greenaway studied sports science and education at university, then became a physical education (P.E.) teacher for students with disabilities.



Ruth Greenaway

As a Ph.D. candidate, what are your career goals?

When I left school, I aspired to be a police officer; however, I was advised by my father that “going to university might be a good idea,” a comment that has now provided many hours of amusement to my family because, in effect, I have never quite finished my studies. ... I began teaching physical education classes for students with disabilities, bringing great joy to the students as they could feel their bodies moving in new ways — and a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment for myself.

My teaching philosophy is to involve as many people as possible in a student's education, including community members.

Why did you join Toastmasters?

After I gave a bad presentation, I avoided public speaking in front of my peers. But starting a Ph.D. program meant I had to present my research in front of academics from around the world. At my first few Toastmasters meetings, I was welcomed by a great group of people with similar goals for improvement.

Do you speak any other languages?

I only speak English, but when I presented a speech at Beijing Normal University I memorized the introduction to it in Mandarin Chinese.

Learn more about Ruth Greenaway's Ph.D. research at urbaninformatics.net/projects/ruth.

Magazine Language Translations

The digital edition of this magazine can be viewed in different languages. Go to www.toastmasters.org/magazine and click on the title of the article you wish to translate.

Meet the Board

Ever wonder who serves on the TI Board of Directors? Learn more about them here: www.toastmasters.org/MeetTheBoard.



Seeking Speakers

Toastmasters International needs top-notch speakers for the 2012 Convention in Orlando, Florida. If you possess professional-level speaking skills, apply at www.toastmasters.org/CallforPresenters.



THE BENEFITS OF LINKEDIN GROUPS

Use this social media site wisely and you'll gain practical tips and potential contacts.

By Lin Gensing-Pophal

Toastmasters are finding much to like about LinkedIn. Arguably the most professionally oriented of the social media tools, **LinkedIn.com** enables Toastmasters to interact with people interested in business and professional issues — particularly issues centered on communication and leadership.

The Official Toastmasters International Members Group has more than 19,000 members from around the world. The Official Toastmasters International Group, for Toastmasters and non-Toastmasters alike, has at least 4,000 members. And 5,000

tremendous potential for networking. That is also the downside. With so many groups, it can be challenging to find the ones that represent the greatest opportunity.

First Steps

Daniel Surman is an area governor and president of the Red Bank Toastmasters club in Red Bank, New Jersey. In addition to the Toastmasters groups on LinkedIn, he enjoys groups such as The Exceptional Speakers & Communicators Group.

“I actually use the groups I belong to as sounding boards for advice and

manager with Emdeon, a medical data services provider headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee.

But before diving into the groups, you need to know a few things about LinkedIn. **Profiles** are the starting point for connecting with others on LinkedIn, says Krista Canfield, senior manager for corporate communications at LinkedIn. Create your profile strategically so it reflects your background and interests; in addition, use keywords to draw attention from relevant audiences. Think about the words people might use when they search for someone with your background and expertise — then make sure those words are included in your profile. Be sure to include a current photo.

In terms of connections on LinkedIn, Canfield says 50 is the magic number. “That’s when you start seeing first, second and third-degree contacts,” she says. But, she stresses, users should be cautious about building their list and should only connect with those they know and trust: “You would never give your Rolodex to someone on the street — you shouldn’t do that online.”

Groups can be a good starting point to find connections with shared interests that can provide mutual benefit.

The Benefit of LinkedIn Groups

Groups on LinkedIn are either open (meaning anyone can immediately participate) or closed (meaning a group moderator will determine whether or not you may participate. The latter

“You would never give your Rolodex to someone on the street—you shouldn’t be doing that online.”

— Krista Canfield

people, including some Toastmasters, belong to the Public Speaking Network, a non-Toastmasters group.

A variety of other groups may also hold value for Toastmasters — LinkedIn offers literally thousands of groups covering virtually every area of interest imaginable. Simply search under “Groups” (using the drop-down box at the top of the LinkedIn home page) for whatever you are interested in, and you will get a list of relevant groups ranked in order of most members to the fewest.

LinkedIn groups can represent a huge volume of information and

direction on business problems as well as professional development,” he says.

“When I encounter a situation or problem at a [club] meeting,” he adds, “I turn to the LinkedIn Toastmasters group and, within minutes, I receive a barrage of answers and explanations to my questions.”

Ana Ortega, a member of Top of Texas Toastmasters in Fort Worth, Texas, says LinkedIn groups are a great way to network, share ideas and learn new things. “You may see an idea or a thought that could be the topic of your next Toastmasters speech,” says Ortega, an account

TI'S OFFICIAL LINKEDIN GROUPS

Use the Official Toastmasters International Members Group and the Official Toastmasters International Group to network, ask questions, get answers and share stories. Participation in both groups has gone up significantly since December 2010: Membership in the members-only group increased by approximately 30 percent, and the open group (for Toastmasters and non-member friends) grew by more than 50 percent. You can engage in virtual discussions on topics such as this one posted by Jacqueline Austin:

What are some of the BEST Table Topics ideas you have ever had? The responses (such as those below) offer an opportunity to trade ideas that will energize your club.

Bob Jensen, ACG, ALB: *One night our Table Topic was "Oh no! Blue lights are flashing in your rear-view mirror! What have you done this time?"*

Ivy Davis: *Recently, we just stated a quote and asked the speaker to discuss the quote. I found this inspiring and fun!*

Celly Feraren Adamo, DTM: *Once in a while I bring with me several unfamiliar objects (some are parts of a larger item) and put them in a basket. I ask a member to pick an unseen item and talk about its purpose and why it is important for everybody to get one.*

Log in to **LinkedIn.com** to join. Select "Groups" from the drop-down menu next to the search box in the upper-right corner, and type "Toastmasters." Join the first two groups listed. Return by clicking "Groups" from the top navigation menu and selecting your group.

groups tend to be the most useful. In addition, extremely large groups can be less valuable because many of the postings are promotional or irrelevant.

Wayne Breitbarth, author of *The Power Formula for LinkedIn Success*, was once a skeptic but is now an outspoken advocate for the use of LinkedIn for business professionals. Breitbarth conducts a survey twice a year asking users what they like most about LinkedIn's features. January 2011, he says, was the first time that groups emerged as the number one feature; prior to that, they were typically in the second or third spot.

What makes LinkedIn groups so powerful, says Breitbarth, is that they speak to a specific audience. He recommends joining these groups to start:

▶ The largest group in your geographic location. In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for instance, that would be Link Up Milwaukee, with more than 11,000 members.

▶ A few of the largest groups on LinkedIn; these would include Job Openings, Job Leads and Job Connections! with more than 530,000 members, and Linked: HR with nearly 500,000 members.

Joining these groups will help you expand your potential network. Most people do not realize that the results attained from the Advanced People Search come from the user's own circle of contacts at a first, second or third degree of connection, says Breitbarth. "The quickest way to get names into your network is to join big groups."

Best Practices for Participation

Finding the Right Groups

Jan Vermeiren, author of *How to REALLY Use LinkedIn* and the founder of Networking Coach, says that LinkedIn groups "are the spot on LinkedIn to build your Know, Like and Trust factor." He attributes this concept to networking and referral expert Bob Burg, who said: "All things being equal, people do business with, and refer business to, people they know, like and trust."

The groups that hold the most value will, of course, vary based upon individual user needs. Cindy Cannon, of Growth Management Group in Suwanee, Georgia, belongs to nearly 20 LinkedIn groups, most of which she uses in her role as a recruiter. She has also found groups to be useful in her role with Toastmasters, particularly on a local basis. "For District 14 we're able to give our information and talk about the fun things that are going on," says Cannon, DTM, a member of PB&J Toastmasters and Speakers Roundtable Advanced Toastmasters clubs in the greater Atlanta, Georgia, area.

She notes that the ability to connect with people around the world is a great benefit. George Marshall, DTM, a member of Speakers Forum Toastmasters and Star Search Toastmasters clubs near San Francisco, California, echoes that idea. "The Official Toastmasters group is incredibly valuable, especially for leaders at the club and district level, because of the opportunity to exchange experiences with other leaders around the world, pick up ideas and get insights on the challenges they face."

Monique Ramsey, a social media expert and principal of Cosmetic Social Media in La Jolla, California, points out that LinkedIn users shouldn't limit themselves to professional or business-related groups. Former classmates can prove to be valuable connections, and alumni groups can be great ways to reconnect. "You never know — don't dismiss those kinds of connections," she says.

Another popular option, she notes, is to use groups as a pre- or post-communication channel tied to seminars, workshops, contests and conferences. It's easy — and free — to set up a LinkedIn group, so the conference organizer could do that to allow participants to discuss issues prior to and after the event, says Ramsey.

Once you've joined a few groups, it's a good idea to monitor conversations for a while, Ramsey advises. "That way, you can get a sense of what the key conversations are and then choose to add to the conversation, clarify a situation and position yourself as an expert."

Seek First to Understand

Initially, you should simply observe the discussions and learn from them. Do group members acknowledge the contributions of others? Is much of the conversation centered on self-promotion and marketing efforts? What are the topics being discussed and what might you be able to add to the conversation?

While open exchange is good, LinkedIn groups are not the place to vent frustrations, cautions Marshall. "It actually reflects badly on *you*, not the people you are attacking," he says. "While members will probably overlook the occasional passionate response, if you have a pattern of posting complaining messages, you will soon be ignored by most members of the forum."

Monitoring the Mass of Information

Because so much information is shared through LinkedIn groups, it is important to have a strategy for filtering, advises Ana Ortega, the Toastmaster from Texas. "Use the group settings to tailor how often you want to receive email updates from the group."

"No matter what group you belong to, you have to decide why you joined and how you want to use it," says Ortega. "If you participate in a group, but get no feedback, why stay in the group? Periodically evaluate the groups you belong to and determine if they are fitting your needs. Leave the groups that don't."

ADDITIONAL GROUPS TO CONSIDER

Are you not sure which groups to join? The list below will help you get started or discover new groups to expand your network.

Consultants Network

- ▶ 195,000 members and 19 subgroups

A global group that unites all strategy, management, marketing, finance, business, IT consultants and freelancers. It is the largest consultancy community on LinkedIn.

Linked Strategies

- ▶ 31,000 members

This group focuses on creating professional success on LinkedIn.

Need a Speaker/Be a Speaker

- ▶ 5,000 members

Search the replies in the "Speakers List" discussion and contact those you would like to consider, or post what you are looking for in the "Call for Speakers" discussion. Post your keynotes and relevant information in the "Speakers List" discussion post.

Professional Speakers and Seminar Leaders

- ▶ 7,800 members

A group for speakers — from those who make presentations as part of their job to full-time professionals who make their living from speaking.

Public Speaking Network

- ▶ 5,000 members

This is a group for people who want to be dynamic public speakers, are looking for opportunities to speak to groups and want to learn tips to improve their skills.

Additional Tips

Surman, the New Jersey Toastmaster, offers additional suggestions:

- ▶ Add Toastmasters to your LinkedIn profile under "volunteer experience," whether in a member or officer position.
- ▶ Ask questions regarding obstacles you may have encountered when trying to write a speech, seeking ideas for a speech or running a club contest.
- ▶ Assist others with questions or issues.
- ▶ Exchange ideas or tools with other members and their groups.

Most important of all, Surman recommends taking advantage of this popular tool to expand your global reach. "This is similar to when the telephone was first invented — at first people didn't take to it," he says, "but if you look around today the phone is indispensable." 

Editor's Note: Toastmasters International administers the Toastmasters LinkedIn Members Page, but does not participate in discussions or act as a moderator. Using LinkedIn is not the avenue to directly pass on your comments or questions to World Headquarters staff; instead please visit www.toastmasters.org/ContactWHQ.

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for more on LinkedIn, see page 20

Vincent Kituku: **OVERCOMING LIFE'S BUFFALOES**

Native Kenyan shares stories about hope and determination.

By Julie Bawden-Davis

Born in a mud and grass hut in Kenya during the late 1950s, Vincent Kituku chooses not to dwell on the resources he and his family lacked during this youth. For Kituku, the absence of material possessions served as a motivator. In that first home, while he and his family contended daily with rats, snakes, ticks and cockroaches. He learned valuable lessons that he now shares as a professional communicator.

used in ecologically sound ways and that livestock can graze on such lands.

After school he became an ecologist in Idaho, working on various land, water and animal issues. At one time, he researched the impact of water-flow fluctuation on vegetation along dams. Eventually, however, he found his true calling as a motivational speaker and author, thanks to Toastmasters.

“Even though I was grateful for my job in the science field, I knew

The following week, Kituku decided to join the corporate club. As he worked to earn his CTM and shared stories about his childhood, he was surprised to find that audiences listened. Just a few months after becoming a member, he started to receive invitations to speak at various functions.

When Kituku attended his first Toastmasters International Convention in 1995, he heard a presentation by keynote speaker Jim Cathcart that changed the course of his career. “He said that to succeed in life, you should use what comes naturally to you,” recalls Kituku. “In science I had to work hard, but telling stories came easily to me. Throughout my childhood, my mother taught me life lessons with parables.”

Ruth Romero is a member of the Capitol Club in Boise and credits Kituku for inspiring her to join Toastmasters. She compares him to a “wise sage.”

In 1997, Kituku left the corporate world to become a full-time motivational speaker. Today he addresses a variety of audiences, presenting his program, “Overcoming Buffaloes at Work & In Life.” The program is full of powerful analogies, such as Kituku comparing the unpredictable nature of life to the buffalo invasions of his childhood.

“Poverty has nothing to do with material possessions — it has to do with a lack of hopes and dreams.”

“You can live with less if you have something to live for,” says Kituku, who moved to the United States in 1986 and is now a member of the Boise Bible College Toastmasters in Boise, Idaho. “Poverty has nothing to do with material possessions — it has to do with a lack of hopes and dreams.”

Despite schooling and health obstacles in his youth (he struggled with severe stomach pain and malaria symptoms), Kituku persevered and eventually earned his Ph.D. from the University of Wyoming. His area of study was range management, which includes ensuring that rangelands are

that I didn’t want to spend the rest of my life collecting data and sitting in a laboratory. Fortunately, I found Toastmasters, which catapulted my professional and personal life beyond my wildest dreams,” says Kituku.

A New Discovery

He stumbled upon his first Toastmasters meeting in 1992, while working as a training specialist at Idaho Power Company. “A sign on a door said that a Toastmasters meeting was in session, so I walked in,” he recalls. “I was amazed to hear a member give a moving speech about his relationship with his son.”



Vincent Kituku

“The first time I heard a woman screaming, there was a buffalo in our village,” he says of his childhood in Kenya. “African buffaloes were so destructive that life changed in an instant when they stampeded.

“During chaotic times, people fear real and perceived challenges. I provide listeners with the tools to overcome life’s buffaloes and to thrive by setting themselves apart at life and work, rediscovering their talents and resources, and becoming a part of something bigger than themselves, such as Toastmasters.”

A Harrowing Childhood

Married with four children today, Kituku experienced many of his own buffaloes during his younger years. In addition to growing up in poverty, he saw five of his younger siblings die, and from a very young age, until he was hospitalized for a time at age 17, he struggled with debilitating stomach pain. Malaria symptoms also plagued Kituku until he came to the U.S. to attend college. (His wife and then-2½-year-old daughter followed him shortly thereafter.)

In part because of illness, Kituku found elementary school difficult and had to repeat three grades twice. Yet he persevered, earning the required grades to make it into a government-

supported high school and eventually receiving his bachelor’s of science degree from the University of Nairobi.

Helping Others With His Story

For those who take a high school education for granted, Kituku’s life lessons and how he’s used them to succeed make for a powerful presentation.

Judy Reynolds is the executive director of the Washington state chapter of Future Business Leaders of America, an organization of students preparing for business or business-related careers. She describes the reaction Kituku received when he was a keynote speaker for the group this year and in 2007:

“Two thousand teenagers and teachers can be thwarting and critical, but Vincent captures his audience. Both years, you could hear a pin drop as every young and seasoned ear held onto each word he spoke.”

Kituku, who earned the Certified Speaking Professional (CSP) recognition from the National Speakers Association, has delivered motivational speeches to the football team at Boise State University since 1998. “Vincent’s story is unique, which is refreshing and gets the attention of the players,” says Chris Petersen, Boise State’s highly successful head football coach.

Always cognizant of his roots and how difficult it can be to succeed when

poverty blocks the way, Kituku uses the skills he gained through Toastmasters to give back to the community. He is chairman of the Boise Rescue Mission homeless shelter and founded Caring Hearts and Hands of Hope Inc. (caringheartsandhandsofhope.org), a nonprofit organization in Kenya that provides high school tuition and fees for orphans and children from poverty-stricken families. The organization currently supports 113 at-risk students — and Kituku often hears from grateful young people whose lives he helped improve.

Kituku also recognizes the value of fostering communication and leadership skills in the next generation. “Something had been missing in my life until I joined Toastmasters,” he notes. As a result, he regularly sponsors individuals in Kenya who wish to join Toastmasters. With every word these new members speak, Kituku’s story comes full circle. **T**

Learn more about Vincent Kituku at kituku.com.

Julie Bawden-Davis is a freelance writer based in Southern California and a longtime contributor to the *Toastmaster*. You can reach her at Julie@JulieBawdenDavis.com.



Michael Connell

BE FUNNY WITHOUT BEING RAUNCHY

Comedians reap the rewards of clean comedy.

By Uma Thakar, ACB, CL

My first gig as a stand-up comedian was at a comedy club in Melbourne, Australia — my hometown. I was different in every way from all the other performers. I was female, I was brown-skinned (I'm originally from India), I had a foreign accent and, to *top it all*, my humor was clean.

In other words, I didn't use any profanity or sexual material to spice up my act. I relied on physical comedy, cultural riffs and creating characters onstage.

After a few more stand-up shows where my family-friendly humor was again the exception rather than the norm, I began to wonder if I was the only comedian to eschew off-color material. But then, performing this year at the 2011 Melbourne International Comedy Festival, I discovered a troupe of successful comedians in a production called *Squeaky Clean Comedy*.

"Most clean comedy is aimed at kids, but we specifically wanted to produce a show with sophisticated humor that would appeal to adults, without relying on cheap shock tactics or crudity to do it," said Eugene Wong, executive director of Candlelight Productions, which presented the show.

In the production I attended, emcee and comedian Michael Connell (pictured, left) was the highlight of the evening. Connell has regular gigs at comedy clubs across Australia and has also performed in the United Kingdom, Ireland and New Zealand. He says he found that "working blue" (using liberal doses of profanity and sexual references in his act) restricted his audiences to pubs and clubs.

That point was made clear by the broad range of the audience members at this show. The ages spanned from a 9-year-old girl to a man in his 80s. In between were teenagers and families — and the laughs were plentiful among all age groups.

“By going clean, I opened up a whole world of gig opportunities,” says Connell. “I performed at everything from the kindergarten picnic to the Rotary club dinner.”

When he started performing his new style of humor, Connell says he wasn’t getting many laughs, but because his humor was clean, people

membership, the organization recommends that members be sensitive to religious and cultural diversity in their group when making choices regarding topics, the nature of speech material and the language they use.

In addition, individual clubs do have the right to limit speech subjects, content and/or language with the consensus of its members. Club leaders should guide members on how to observe good taste and sensitivity in the context of their club.

Steve Jans, a member of the Westend club in Billings, Montana, is a comedy buff. He says Toastmasters

Funny Days Down Under

Like Michael Connell, others in the *Squeaky Clean* group are veteran comedians. All except one are Australian. Typically, they employ observational humor about day-to-day occurrences that we can all relate to. In the show I saw, Beau Stegmann brought the house down with a routine that described his love of reading junk mail. Mike Klimczak entertained the audience with his rapid-fire delivery and used audience participation to great effect. Klimczak describes his comedy as “wicked, not rude.” Dave Wiggins, a New Zealander who is originally

“By going clean, I opened up a whole world of gig opportunities. I performed at everything from the kindergarten picnic to the Rotary club dinner.” – Comedian Michael Connell



from the United States, performs at fundraisers, international festivals and corporate events.

As a comedian myself, I was interested in how other stand-up performers survive the pressure to work blue. According to Wong, “There are always people who are convinced that clean comedy can’t be funny, but most of our [troupe’s] comedians don’t make a big deal out of being clean. They just are. Audiences see their shows and then walk out commenting how funny the show was and only later realize that it was clean.”

didn’t mind giving him a go. “Once I was good enough,” says the comedian, “I just kept working clean so I could get corporate gigs, TV and radio spots, and work in other areas where only clean comedy will do.”

Toastmasters and Humor

For Toastmasters who want to excel in speech competitions, the examples of Connell and his *Squeaky Clean* colleagues are heartening. The Toastmasters *Speech Contest Rulebook* states that speakers in all Humorous Speech Contests shall “avoid potentially objectionable language, anecdotes and material.”

As far as speeches given in club meetings, Toastmasters International does not place restrictions on topics, content or language. But because clubs typically reflect a diverse

gave him the confidence to do stand-up. “Just the thought of getting up and speaking in front of people terrified me before I joined Toastmasters,” says Jans, who recently performed at a local event called Relay for Life, which raises funds for cancer research.

When he performs, he doesn’t use profanity or raunchy material. “As a Christian, I don’t believe in talking like that,” says Jans. “I’m keeping it clean, and I’ve been pretty successful that way.”

At the urging of his late friend and mentor Josie Skibstad, DTM, he started an advanced Toastmasters club in Billings last year specializing in humor. In the Jolly Jesters Humor club, members focus on humorous speeches; they practice stand-up comedy and improvisational humor in the Table Topics portion of the club meetings.

Uma Thakar, ACB, CL, is a member of Tuesday Chatters club in Rosanna, Victoria, Australia. She performs a solo comedy show, *The Uma Huma*, and can be reached at themahuma.com.



Ali Al Sayed

KEEPING IT FUNNY

A review of 2011's most influential comedians around the world.

By Malcolm Kushner

In a world plagued by war, drought, disease and recession, it's not surprising that some stand-up comedians are considered national treasures. They can make a country laugh at its troubles, its neighbors and itself. That kind of influence is rare. And it's invaluable when you need a good laugh at the end of a bad day ... or a bad year.

Fortunately, with the rise of video-sharing websites such as YouTube,

My parents tried [an arranged marriage] on me last year. My mom says, "You're getting older now. And you're not married. What if I bring some nice girls home for you?" Are you out of your mind, man? My mom wanted to pick my wife! I wouldn't let my mom pick my clothes.

India

With the second largest population in the world, it's not surprising that

Pakistan

In Pakistan, it's easy to identify the most influential stand-up comedian performing in English. He is Saad Haroon. And he is a man of many firsts. He was the first Pakistani comedian to perform stand-up in English in Pakistan. He created and hosted the first English-language television comedy show in Pakistan. He also created BlackFish — the first improvisational comedy group in Pakistan. Today, in addition to performing, Haroon helps develop the comedy scene in his country by organizing open-mic nights.

On water pollution:

I went to Seaview the other day. There's no view. There's hardly any sea left. I went into the water. There were only two things alive in the water — my left foot and my right foot. And my left foot died.

Singapore and Malaysia

Singapore and Malaysia also have active comedy scenes. In Singapore, the reigning stand-up comic is Kumar — a female impersonator who is often called a national treasure. In addition to jokes about sex, this comedian comments on subjects that one would assume to be taboo in the conservative country. These include Singapore's various ethnic minorities and government policies. In Malaysia, Harith Iskander is one of the most popular stand-ups. And his influence extends beyond his own land. Both

"There were only two things alive in the water — my left foot and my right foot."

— Pakistani Saad Haroon

their influence can now be felt by a global audience. Here's a quick guide to some of the most influential stand-ups plying their trade in English-language performances around the world. It's based on the reputation, accomplishments and popularity of each selected comedian. Each section includes a sample of the comic's material.

Canada

Few would dispute that Russell Peters is one of the most influential Canadian comedians working today. In addition to ranking number nine on the Forbes magazine list of top-earning comedians, he has broken sales records for comedy performances in Britain and Australia. Much of his humor is derived from his Anglo-Indian background:

India has a lot of stand-up comedians. A country with over a billion people has more of everything. But Papa CJ has emerged as a uniquely influential comedian. After earning an MBA degree, he abandoned a corporate career to pursue his love of comedy, and gained international fame in 2008 after beating thousands of comedians to become one of 10 finalists on the American television show *Last Comic Standing*. Today he performs around the world, sells out tours in India and helps develop young Indian comedians.

The truth is [England and India] are not so different. You [in England] waste far too much time talking to somebody who you think is an idiot at the other end of a call center telephone call. So do we.

MASTERING THE LAUGH AND LEADING THE PACK

Famous American humorist Will Rogers said, "There's no trick to being a humorist when you have the whole government working for you." Think of the last successful political speech you heard. Did it include a joke or two? The ability to make constituents laugh often helps leaders sway opinions and even rule nations. Now, that's influence! So how can you build your sphere of influence with humor? Maybe you won't change the politics in your country (or the world for that matter), but you can influence your local community of family and friends — in many ways — with a well-aimed joke. There's only one catch: Humor is hard! Try these tips to encourage your audience to laugh *with* you, not *at* you!

- ▶ **Be yourself.** Think about what types of humor you appreciate, then create a library of such items. Don't like jokes? Try a humorous anecdote or a witty observation from your own life.
- ▶ **Be mildly amusing,** rather than eye-dabblingly funny.
- ▶ **Use humor sparingly.** Try using a humorous introduction, a quote or an offhand observation to start.
- ▶ **Keep it relevant** to your speech topic.
- ▶ **Avoid retelling jokes** found on the Internet. Others have probably already heard or seen them.
- ▶ **Keep it clean.** Humor is supposed to make people feel good, not embarrassed, insulted or offended.
- ▶ **Keep it appropriate to the audience and the situation.**
- ▶ **Self-effacing humor is safe,** but a little of it goes a long way.
- ▶ **Work on your delivery.** Incorporate vocal variety and gestures into your humor.
- ▶ **Timing is everything!** Pause before the punch line.

Iskander and Kumar are part of the "Kings and Queen of Comedy Asia," a show with five top comedians that tours internationally.

A sample of Iskander's humor:
I love to go to the Malaysian cinema and watch movies They have subtitles in three languages — blocking half the screen! Malaysians don't even watch the movie. We just read the subtitles.

Australia

While Australia's international reputation for comedy was once limited

to Paul Hogan of *Crocodile Dundee* fame, the continent now boasts many big-name stand-ups who perform around the world. One of the most famous is Adam Hills. Best known as the host of a popular Australian music trivia show, he has also won much acclaim for his performances at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland.

A couple of samples of his humor:
I'd like to start on a vaguely controversial note. Deaf people, I've learned, are really racist. That's right. I'm not afraid to say it out loud.

I reckon Americans are the most optimistic people on the planet. Only Americans would name their children after personality traits they hope they're going to grow up with. You see Americans on the street with their kids, going, "Oh, Faith, have you seen Hope?" "Yeah, she's over there with Charity. They're waiting for Honor."

Dubai

Ali Al Sayed has an indisputable claim to being influential in the Dubai comedy scene. He's considered the first professional comedian in Dubai. Perhaps equally important, Al Sayed co-founded Dubomed Arts in Dubai — a pioneering comedy and urban arts school in the region. Part of its mission is "to create a solid local comedy community."

I am sick and tired of people asking me where I'm from. Because they always come up with something ridiculous anyway. One girl said to me once, "Oh God, you have, like, Chinese eyes. Are you from China?" What? There are no brown people in China.

England

As the original home of the English language, England has produced many well-known comedians. One of the newer ones is Sarah Millican. Since winning the Best Newcomer Award at the 2007 Edinburgh Fringe Festival and placing second for the main award in 2010, she has become a fixture on British radio and television. She also performs to packed audiences at comedy clubs and festivals.

A sample of Millican's humor:
[Interacting with audience.] "Are you married? How long you been married? Three and a half years? Oh, you're nearly done."

And another sample:
My diet's not the best. I was in a restaurant the other day with my

friend and I said, "Oh, I like it in here, 'cause they've got multi-colored food." And she went, "Do you mean vegetables?"

South Africa

Known as "The Cousin," Barry Hilton has been a household name in South African comedy for a long time. He has starred in his own South African TV series and recently made his big-screen debut. Hilton is also a member of Bafunny Bafunny, a team of eight prominent South African stand-ups.

The kids in South Africa are the sharpest children in the world. If you ask any child anywhere in South Africa, if you stop them and say, "Listen, tell me where is the capital of Zimbabwe." Just like that they go, "In a Swiss bank account."

The United States

What about the United States? There is a wide range of influential comedians — among them Jeff Foxworthy, who riffs on the American South. His "You might be a redneck if ..." line has become iconic ("You might be a redneck if there are more dishes in your sink than your cabinet."). Foxworthy, whose comedy albums have received two Grammy Award nominations, was also the force behind the "Blue Collar Comedy Tour," a group of comedians that popularized a neglected segment of American comedy. Foxworthy was number eight on last year's Forbes magazine list of top-earning comedians, and he has propelled the careers of "Blue Collar" colleagues Larry the Cable

Guy (number six on that same list) and Bill Engvall (number 10). When one comedian can get three names on the list of top-earning comedians, that's influence. And that's no joke.

In fact, all of these comedians are great influencers because they speak the universal language of humor. As the best in their profession, they reach hearts around the globe with the healing tonic of comedy in challenging times. Most importantly, they help us to see how we are all alike — especially in our ability to laugh. **T**

Malcolm Kushner is the author of *The Little Book of Humorous Quotes* and curator of the Museum of Humor. Visit his websites at kushnergroup.com and museumofhumor.com.

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ENHANCE YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE

By Michelle Tyler

LinkedIn is where you can connect online with business associates and mentors, and network with other professionals. In addition to joining groups and having discussions, be sure to complete your profile. This lets people know who you are and why you belong in the conversation. Follow these simple steps:

▶ **Secure a URL.** Change your *Public Profile* URL from a random assortment of numbers to your name or something that signifies your brand. Many people forget this simple step, but it will make your profile more personal and set you apart from the crowd.

▶ **Add a picture.** Use a current, professional-quality headshot. Not only will your image add to your online brand identity, it will allow people to recognize you easier. Those who view your profile may not remember your name, but they will probably recall your face.

▶ **Fill in every section.** Write a *Summary* of your work experience, including what you can offer your future colleagues. When listing your *Experience*, include job titles, a summary of each company, the dates you worked there and your job description. Under *Additional Information*, *Groups and Associations*, list supplementary

activities such as volunteer work, community service and organizations you belong to. Write as though you are verbally describing yourself — with excitement and personality.

▶ **Don't be shy.** Tell the world everything you have accomplished in your professional life. If you graduated *Magna Cum Laude*, share it. If you have received numerous certifications, tell everyone. If you were awarded *Employee of the Month*, include that too!

▶ **Get recommendations.** Recommendations allow people to professionally endorse your work, and they make your profile more credible. Get at least one recommendation for each job you have listed and follow up if you haven't heard back on your recommendation requests.

▶ **Keep it current.** Just like with your resume or in a conversation at a networking event, make sure to present the most current information to your audience. If you change companies or job titles within your company, update your current position on your LinkedIn profile. If you move, change your LinkedIn location. If you change industries, make sure you note that change online, too.

It's networking time!

Michelle Tyler is the editorial assistant for the *Toastmaster* magazine. Reach her at mt Tyler@toastmasters.org.

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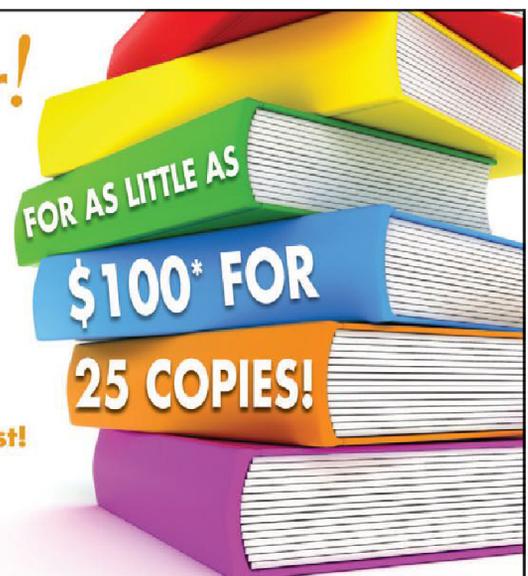
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2011 WARDROBE MALFUNCTIONS

Fashion industry sends the wrong message.



By Jenny Baranick

Earlier this year, JCPenney, a United States department store, discontinued its back-to-school T-shirt targeted to girls ages 7 to 16 in response to outraged consumers. The shirt read, “I’m too pretty to do homework so my brother has to do it for me.” I can see why people were upset; the shirt’s message obviously alienates pretty girls who don’t have brothers. However, that’s not the reason most people objected to the shirt’s message. Most of the dissenters disapproved of the shirt’s sexist implications. I actually have a different bone to pick with the message. As a teacher, the last thing I need is a T-shirt downplaying the importance of homework. In fact, it’s ironic that an article of clothing is undervaluing homework when this year the fashion industry made several embarrassing errors that likely could have been avoided if people in that very industry would have taken their school homework more seriously.

Employees at Wet Seal, a young-women’s clothing retailer based in the U.S., should have paid more attention to their English homework. In January of this year, Wet Seal released a shirt that read, “If Your Single, So Am I.” Unlike the JCPenney shirt, it wasn’t the shirt’s message that caused the controversy (although, keep any floozy wearing that shirt away from my husband); it was the grammatical error. Someone at Wet Seal failed to notice that the shirt’s text contained an error: It read *your* when it should have read *you’re*. This is a very

common mistake, so it’s important to know when to use *your* and when to use *you’re*. *Your* indicates possession:

If *your* shirt is grammatically correct, I’m single.

You’re is short for *you are*:

If *you’re* not into grammatical correctness, I’m married.

Old Navy, another American clothing brand, should consider attending a grammar study group with Wet Seal. A few months after Wet Seal’s grammar faux pas, Old Navy made one of its own: Old Navy’s August 2011 “Superfan” line included a series of T-shirts for various sports teams that said *Lets Go!!* The problem is that the shirts should have said *Let’s Go!!* — with an apostrophe. *Let’s* is short for *let us*, and when we’re rooting for a team, that’s the form we want to use: *Let us* go for the goal. *Let us* go to the finish line. *Let us* go get a beer during halftime. *Lets go* — without the apostrophe — means to release something: The receiver *lets go* of the football. The runner *lets go* of the baton. The figure skater *lets go* of his partner whom he has lifted above his head. We certainly don’t want to be rooting for our favorite teams to do that!

As an English instructor, I enjoy nothing more than alliteration, but the following is a cautionary tale about how doing one’s history homework might have prevented an awkward alliterative accident. The Kardashian sisters Kim, Khloe and Kourtney — American socialites who star in the

reality TV show *Keeping up with the Kardashians* — often change the first letter of words that start with a “c” to a “k” to match their names. For example, their fashion line is called the Kardashian Kollection, and the MasterCard that boasts their image is called the Kardashian Kard. Accordingly, when the sisters sent out invitations to a party celebrating their new clothing line, they wrote: “Join the stylish Kardashian Klan.” If the Kardashians would have paid more attention to their history homework, they probably would have realized that changing the “c” in the word *clan* to a “k” would be highly offensive to many people because it’s reminiscent of the Ku Klux Klan, a white supremacist terrorist group that originated in the American South in the 1860s. Next time, they should use *Kardashian Krew* — it’s a lot less kontroversial.

The fashion industry should take measures to prevent making the same embarrassing mistakes it made this year. Starting in 2012, fashion companies might want to think about offering general education refresher courses. Perhaps a designer could create a stylish shirt that reads, “I’m too smart to wear T-shirts that downplay the importance of education.” Maybe the Kardashians could even start their own kollege. **T**

Jenny Baranick is an English professor based in Southern California. Reach her at jennybaranick@gmail.com.



CELEBRATION SEASON

How to prepare a timely toast.

By Christine Clapp, DTM

I've always been more intimidated by delivering toasts than by giving Toastmasters speeches or presentations at work. Perhaps you have been, too.

It's no wonder that we struggle with them. Toasts are given on special occasions to honor people we care about; we have something important to say and only a few minutes to say it. In many ways, the stakes are higher.

This season, whether you're celebrating a religious holiday, wedding, anniversary or other event, I hope you will embrace the challenge and experience the joy of giving a toast. You not only will honor the special people in your life, you'll also become a better public speaker.

Here are guidelines for crafting and delivering a memorable toast:

Plan ahead. Don't wing it. The best time to come up with your toast is not on the spot when there is a microphone in your hand. Prepare an outline and rehearse it six times — or until you can deliver it comfortably without notes. You don't have to convey your thoughts word for word — just memorize the main ideas and rehearse them until your delivery is fluid. A conversational delivery (even with a few hiccups) will be a better fit for a party than the reading of a script.

Be concise. Think Hemingway, not Faulkner. Toasts should be short: One to two minutes is appropriate. If you are a special guest, such as the host, best man or matron of honor at a wedding, you can stretch it to three or four minutes.

Explain your connection. If people in attendance don't know who you are, give them a little context. It doesn't have to be your opening line, but at an early point in your toast, briefly describe your relationship to the guest(s) of honor.

Open with a theme. Every great speech has a hook; toasts are no exception. You might simply have a theme that is supported by a story or a few short anecdotes about the person or occasion you are celebrating. Also consider starting with an inspirational quotation or passage and relating it to the guest(s) of honor or subject of your speech. If you are comfortable using humor, start with a tasteful and topical joke, and then provide a moral or advice that relates to the guest(s) of honor.

One of my favorite opening lines for a toast came in the 2001 movie *My First Mister*: "I'd like to propose a toast to all the special 'f' words — to friends, family, fate, forgiveness and forever." It's funny, sincere, memorable, and masterfully sets up the rest of the toast.

Focus on the guest of honor. It sounds obvious, but some speakers miss this subtlety. Your toast should focus on how great the person is, and not what that great person means to you or how he or she makes you feel. The former makes the toast about *them*; the latter makes it about *you*.

It is fine to tell personal stories involving yourself and the person you are toasting. But be sure those stories serve to highlight what is special about that person, and not shift focus on to you.

Avoid insider information. When in doubt, leave it out. If it isn't possible or appropriate to explain a story or joke so that every guest can understand, it has no place in a toast. Leave that for a personal conversation or correspondence.

Remember your thank-yous. When giving a toast at a special event, think ahead to identify all the people you should thank or otherwise recognize. It could be the host(s), attendees, guest(s) of honor or others who made the event possible. Don't miss out on an opportunity to show your gratitude publicly.

Say "Cheers!" A toast is just a speech if there's no drink at the end. Don't forget to invite other guests to join you in toasting the guest(s) of honor. You can say, "Please join me in raising a glass to ..." Or it can be as simple as, "Cheers!"

Test your toast. It is always a good idea to run your toast by someone

you trust. He or she can tell you if the humor is appropriate and the stories flow logically, or if you forgot to thank someone important! The candid feedback will give you confidence when it comes time to give your toast.

When it comes to delivery, you can ensure that your toast goes smoothly if you follow these simple tips:

1. Let the host go first. Etiquette requires that the host gives the first toast. You might be eager to deliver your toast so you can get on with celebrating, but wait for the host to kick things off.

2. Speak before your second drink. On the subject of getting to celebrate, make sure you give your toast before you start your second drink. It might seem like a good idea to have a few drinks to calm your nerves, but it's not. Alcohol and public speaking don't mix well. Save yourself, the host and guest(s) of honor potential embarrassment by sticking to water or speaking before you move on to your second adult drink.

3. Hold the microphone properly. Watch for the placement of the microphone when you give your toast. If you hold it right up to your lips, you'll

get a muffled or garbled sound, rather than a clear, amplified voice. If you hold it too low or too far in front of you, it won't pick up your voice.

Keep your chin up, speak with a strong voice and hold the microphone at a 45-degree angle about four inches from your mouth. Avoid moving your hand on the microphone, as it can cause a distracting sound or even turn the microphone switch off. If you can, arrive at the celebration early and ask the event organizer for a moment to test the microphone. You might also discuss details of when toasts will be given and where speakers should stand to avoid unpleasant feedback.

There will be plenty of opportunities to say a few words at special events during the holiday season. Seize the chance to give your friends and family the gift of your words. **T**

Christine Clapp, DTM, is a member of the U.S. Senate Toastmasters club in Washington, D.C. As president of *Spoken with Authority*, she develops the voice of experts who want to broaden their impact. Her new iTunes app is called *Master Public Speaking for All Occasions*. Contact her at christine@spokenwithauthority.com.

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Distinguished: Members from District 82 are recognized at the 2011 International Convention for being Toastmasters' number one district in the world — for the fourth consecutive year.



International Director and Past District 82 Governor Balraj Arunasalam, DTM, and his wife, Saru, at the 2011 Convention President's Dinner Dance.



District 82 Governor Zameen M. Saleem, DTM



District 41 Governor
Punita G. Singh, DTM

Photos by Jowdy Studios

BECOMING NO.1

District 82's explosive growth is fueled by commitment and the power of community.

By Dilip R. Abayasekara, DTM, AS, PIP

What a dazzling moment! Members of District 82 — from India and Sri Lanka — paraded onto center stage during the 2011 Toastmasters International Convention to be recognized as a President's Distinguished District (PDD). But more than that, they were

clubs did not belong to a district. None of the officers in the clubs had been trained and few had read their club officer manuals. These clubs had no sense of community. Then a suggestion of international unity gathered momentum until members of these clubs formed a community that would bridge

“Members experienced the thrill of speech contests, new opportunities for leadership and the realization that their clubs were not lone entities but part of a larger family — a worldwide organization.”

about to be recognized as the number one district in the world — for the *fourth* year in a row.

The beaming face of Immediate Past District Governor Nagaraja Rao said it all: This district has come far in the mere *five* years since provisional District 82 was formed. When these ecstatic Toastmasters took the stage that day, one question filled the hall: What did the Toastmasters in India and Sri Lanka do to make their new district so successful?

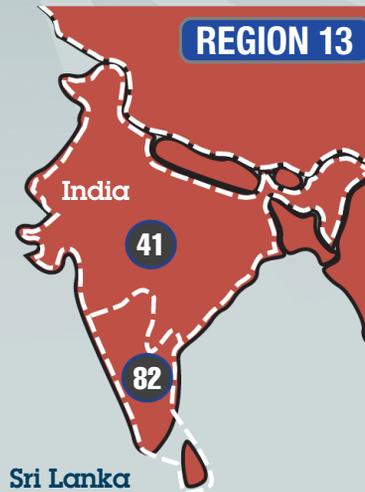
Eight years ago, the little island of Sri Lanka had three clubs and its neighboring giant, India, had seven. These 10

two countries and cross ethnic, cultural, religious and language barriers.

As more and more clubs were chartered during the terms of Past District Governors Bosco Abraham and M. Venkat, the positive impact of areas and divisions could be seen. Members experienced the thrill of speech contests, new opportunities for leadership and the realization that their clubs were not lone entities but part of a larger family — a worldwide organization. They began to discover the power of community to strengthen and enhance the Toastmasters experience.

EXPLAINING TOASTMASTERS' GROWTH IN INDIA

By Punita G. Singh, DTM, Ph.D.



We live in an increasingly interconnected world that requires communication across nations and cultures. The aspiration to be a part of the global workplace and engage confidently with colleagues across the world brings many people to Toastmasters.

India, with its billion-plus people, most of them between the ages of 20 and 30, offers a fertile envi-

ronment for an institution such as Toastmasters to take root. Youngsters today want to feel like global citizens. Being a part of Toastmasters connects people across the world and grooms them to be able to hold their own as a part of an international community.

India has the second-largest number of English-speaking people in the world. For many, English is a second or third language and though they are able to use it functionally, they wish to acquire more fluency and polish. Toastmasters is seen as a forum that can help achieve that, via regular practice opportunities and feedback for improvement.

Most of the clubs we have in India currently are corporate clubs. Many companies have realized that setting up a Toastmasters club for their employees is the most cost-effective and practical way to get them to become more competent and confident communicators. It also offers a more sociable and fun alternative to standard training workshops. It is a win-win solution in the corporate world.

We have witnessed the phenomenal growth of Toastmasters clubs in our erstwhile District 82 and expect our young new District 41 to flourish as well, as more and more Indians get to know about Toastmasters and how it can help them become the great communicators and leaders they aspire to be.

Punita G. Singh, DTM, Ph.D., is the 2011-2012 Governor of the newly formed District 41. Reach her at punitaontoast@gmail.com.

When Change is Daunting, Leaders Make the Difference

The brief history of District 82 shows that even when most members are uncertain about reinventing their loose collection of clubs, courageous and visionary leaders can make the difference. Such leaders grasp the larger vision, respectfully work with diverse people, confront their fears of facing the unknown and inspire members toward a better future for all. It wasn't an easy task, but fortunately India and Sri Lanka had several magnificent leaders.

When asked what accounted most for District 82's success, Hussain Moosajee, president of the Colombo Toastmasters club in Colombo, Sri Lanka, gave credit to those who made the extra effort. "Success in any organization depends on its leadership," he says. "The leadership provided [in District 82] was exceptional — it was committed to a predetermined result with a clear vision and focus on the way forward."

"The key was the dedication of some senior Toastmasters to grow the clubs," adds fellow Colombo club member Niranjana De Silva, an early supporter of district formation. "Some Toastmasters traveled more than 200 kilometers [nearly 125 miles] every weekend for this purpose."

These leaders traveled vast distances, built a cohesive leadership team, communicated with clubs that were spread as far as 3,200 kilometers [almost 2,000 miles] apart, and spent their own money because no funds were available for travel, training, meals or lodging — all to create a district structure encompassing two countries and multiple cultures.

By 2004 the two countries had a total of 20 clubs and were recognized as the Territorial Council of South Asia (TCSA). In October 2004, TCSA

leaders met at a conference in Bangalore, India, and made club building a strategic priority. Then in May 2006, when I was Toastmasters International President, I traveled to Colombo, Sri Lanka, on a Presidential visit. In light of this official Toastmasters event, the TCSA organized an important district conference — one that would herald a new era for our organization and the region. The opening ceremony attracted more than a thousand attendees and garnered tremendous publicity for Toastmasters.

Other Keys to Success

District 82 leaders also put the following strategies into action:

Living the Toastmasters mission

It is no secret in District 82 that the reason people join Toastmasters is because they love their club experience. Reshu Tomar of the Toastmasters Club of New Delhi, India, was drawn by the welcoming members. “The sheer aura of the meeting was the first thing that drew me toward the club,” she says. “The friendly nature of the members immediately made me comfortable, and I felt that I was part of the club already. As the meeting progressed, I knew I was at the right place as I witnessed a very enthusiastic and inspiring audience that was constantly encouraging the speaker at the podium.”

Kathiravan “Kadri” Pethi, of the Sunshine Toastmasters club in Bangalore, India, felt support for self-improvement. “I was empowered by the approach of sincere appreciation and feedback,” he says. “I looked around and realized that this was the magic Toastmasters created for anyone wanting to speak and discover their true self.”

Shreya Thariyani of the South Delhi Toastmasters club in India heard the call to leadership. “To me, the club was a platform to hone not just communication skills, but

also evaluation and leadership skills — aspects that are vital at every point in life.”

Building unity by showing support and creating friendships

In November 2008, the day before the semiannual district conference in Chennai, India, the city of Mumbai was rocked by horrific terrorist attacks. The reverberations of the resulting uncertainty and tension were palpable across the Indian subcontinent. Despite security concerns, Toastmasters from Mumbai and other parts of India and Sri Lanka attended, making the conference a success.

Maheshi Premasinghe, a member of the Colombo Toastmasters club, recalled the 2004 TCSA conference in Bangalore. She was one of three Sri Lankans competing in the semifinals of a speech contest at the conference. She describes how TCSA Chairman Ian Faria personally arrived to pick up the three Sri Lankans in the pouring rain, just after they arrived at their hotel from the airport.

“The standing ovation the three of us got from the Indian delegation as we walked into the school hall where the semis were held — now that’s the Toastmasters culture!” says Premasinghe. “This first conference cemented the bridges of friendship.”

Tapping into people’s desire to communicate in English

India has an English-educated, middle-class population of more than 300 million, but that does not mean they are all fluent in English. Mysore Narasimhaswamy Vishwanath, a member of the Mecon Communication club in Bangalore, says, “I was a good speaker in my native language, but after joining Toastmasters, I am now able to give speeches in English.”

District 82 Governor Zameen Saleem says most Sri Lankans don’t speak English as their first language. Yet they need to communicate in

English when they start professional careers, he notes, and they find it a challenge to communicate effectively. “People are intimidated when someone else is more eloquent,” Saleem says. “At least I was such a person if the conversation was in English.”

Yusuf Jeevunjee, of the Colombo Toastmasters, says, “I think the greatest strength of Toastmasters in this district was the urgent need to fill a vacuum in Sri Lanka and India, both in terms of the use of English and in terms of [helping people in] delivering their thoughts coherently.”

Connecting with corporations to develop employees

Past District 82 Governor and Region 13 Advisor Deepak Menon points to the opportunities for professional development that are created. “Another propeller for our growth has been the huge support of the corporate world that recognizes the benefits of Toastmasters,” he says. “Nearly 70 percent of our district’s clubs today are corporate clubs.” In Menon’s year as district governor (2009–2010), District 82 formed 75 new clubs — a world record.

Zehra Shaikh of the HTS – Public Speaking & Leadership club in Mumbai found Toastmasters at her place of employment. “I remember when my manager was pushing me to attend,” she says. “The confidence I gained meeting after meeting was amazing, and the benefits I get in my personal and professional life are countless.”

Use Speechcraft as an introduction to corporations

Speechcraft offers a portable club-experience program with a definite start and end date — and no requirement to join Toastmasters. This has worked well with local companies. Toastmasters International Director and Past District 82 Governor Balraj Arunasalam established the systematic use

of Speechcraft in Sri Lanka. “At any given time from Monday to Thursday, five Speechcraft programs are running in Colombo,” he notes. “Speechcraft programs lead to the formation of new clubs in the host companies, attract new members to our community clubs and also benefit the host clubs.”

Be committed to club officer training

The passion with which District 82 approaches club officer training reached epic proportions in Sri Lanka. While civil war raged in 2008, Jaffna, a northern city located in the war zone, chartered its first Toastmasters club. District leaders braved the war to travel there in person and deliver the training that has helped that club succeed to this day.

By 2011, District 82 had grown to more than 250 clubs, prompting it to split into two districts: 41 and 82. The Toastmasters in these districts are enjoying a rich experience because they are connected to a community of clubs and to the larger family of Toastmasters around the globe. American author and management consultant Margaret J. Wheatley says, “There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.” This is the power of community that members and clubs now share in India and Sri Lanka. 

Dilip Abayasekara, DTM, Accredited Speaker, served as Toastmasters International President in 2005–2006. A member of several Toastmasters clubs in Districts 18, 38, 82 and 83, he is an author, trainer and speech coach. During a visit to his native country, Sri Lanka, as Toastmasters Third Vice President in 2003, he planted the idea that clubs in Sri Lanka and India could combine to form a district of their own. Reach him at www.drdilip.com.

THE CHALLENGE OF A LIFETIME **How one club chartered in a warzone.**

In 2008, a civil war consumed Sri Lanka. Two men, Dr. Arasaratnam Elankovan and Sivasaravanabavan Sunthareswaran, recognized a need for public speaking and leadership skills to defuse the civilians’ wartime stress and frustration.

Sunthareswaran called Morley Lawrence, an employee at the Hatton National Bank, where he worked. He asked Lawrence to participate in an informal meeting to discuss chartering a Toastmasters club in Jaffna, a city in the northern part of the country. Starting a club in the middle of a war would be challenging, but Lawrence and 10 others agreed to attend. They elected club officers and began planning the charter ceremony.

The road that typically connected Jaffna to Sri Lanka’s commercial capital, Colombo, was closed because of the war, so a team of five Toastmasters leaders from Colombo flew to Jaffna to install and train the new club officers. The flight normally takes 45 minutes, but wartime airport delays made their journey a 12-hour challenge. Landing two hours before curfew, the group, led by the 2008-2009 District 82 Governor (and now International Director) Balraj Arunasalam, rushed straight over to help. Everyone moved to a hotel, had dinner and combined club officer training with general Toastmasters education until 1 a.m., despite the sound of shells exploding outside.

The Jaffna Toastmasters club (JTMC) was chartered with 23 members, including doctors, bankers, university lecturers and members of various distinguished organizations. Because of the war, they continued to face obstacles. Evening curfew presented a significant problem, and club leaders were forced to change meeting times to help members attend. Through it all, members and club leaders managed to hold the club together.

Lawrence feels grateful toward the leaders who helped JTMC. “Sudash Liyanage and Balraj Arunasalam helped us keep our morale up at all times and also helped in various other ways to improve our standards,” he says. “Thanks to them and our 2010-2011 Past Area Governor Piyakara Jayaratne, Jaffna Toastmasters club achieved its first Distinguished Club award in the 2010-2011 year.”

The club is progressing well, developing its members into better communicators and leaders in hopes of a more peaceful future for its country.

PAYING IT FORWARD

Singapore student seeks DTM — and to make a difference.

By Jennie Harris

As a 22-year-old area governor, Jasmine Tan, ACS, ALB, thrives on opportunities to make the world a better place. She joined Nanyang Technological University's (NTU) inspYre Toastmasters club in Singapore as a freshman. Since then, she has served as vice president public relations and club president, and she currently oversees four clubs as area governor. Tan expects to graduate from NTU next year with a bachelor's degree in biology, a minor in English and a diploma in education.

Q. Why do you seek Toastmasters leadership positions?

A. I do it to become a better leader in different situations and levels. I feel truly happy when mentoring and seeing members and clubs reach new milestones.

We are never too young to take on leadership roles in Toastmasters. This organization welcomes everyone, no matter who you are or what you do. I feel so blessed to be accepted for me and not based on my age and stereotypes in society.

What challenges have you experienced as area governor so far?

When I started out, I found the administrative matters mind-boggling. There was so much to do that I was not aware of. Of course, with the

guidance of our more senior district officers, I managed to overcome this challenge.

A second challenge was learning to build a good rapport with the new clubs under my charge. I learned that respect is not given based on rank. We have to *gain* the respect, as cliché as it sounds. Different age groups have different working styles and we have to tweak our working style in order to build rapport.

What are your career plans?

After graduation I will teach high school biology. Teaching is a rewarding profession because I have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of my students. I want them to realize that learning is fun and to truly *own* their learning, to become thinkers and problem solvers of the future.

Beyond education, I intend to eventually develop as a professional speaker. Bonding with my audience is simply exhilarating and I love every moment I have on stage!

What type of public speaking do you like best?

I have been an emcee for nine years, hosting corporate and family events, air shows and road shows, National Day celebrations and even the Welcome Night at the District 80



Annual Convention. I put my heart into making every event memorable for everyone in the audience, as well as the performers. My true reward is when I know that everyone had a wonderful time.

What part does Toastmasters play in your future?

Toastmasters will continue to shape me as a public speaker and leader. I appreciate such a safe and warm environment to speak and lead. Mistakes can be made and we learn from them without the fear of embarrassment or criticism. It is simply a respite from the real world, where fear is common.

After I achieve my Distinguished Toastmasters title (hopefully next year), I will continue to be a mentor to my club members. Being in Toastmasters is beyond titles and accolades. We ought to take the time to serve our new members or less experienced peers in order for them to grow. It is about paying it forward. **T**

Contact Jasmine Tan at tan_jia_jing_jasmine@moe.edu.sg.

Jennie Harris is a junior writer for the *Toastmaster* magazine. Reach her at jharris@toastmasters.org.

GAFFES GONE WILD

Pondering the words of bloviating politicians.

By John Cadley

There was a time when “world leader” meant something. If your name was Genghis or Caesar or Napoleon, the world pretty much did what you said, although in actuality, these guys didn’t really have to *say* anything. They just took your country. People got the message.

Today it’s different. World leaders have to be communicators. The thundering hordes of Genghis Khan descending on a defenseless population have been replaced by the ponderous words of bloviating politicians falling on the ears of hapless citizens. It’s a real question as to which is the more painful experience.

We need look no further than France and Italy to see just how bad it can be. While giving a speech to farmers in the *French* border region of Alsace, French President Nicholas Sarkozy referred to it as *Germany*. Well ... only in the sense that Germany has tried to *steal* Alsace from the French any number of times. Some Alsatian farmers do speak German and relations with their French colleagues are cordial enough. Still, neither likes to be mistaken for the other. So when President Sarkozy made his gaffe, he had the distinction of being booed in both French *and* German.

Not to be outdone, Italy’s Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi told thousands of people left homeless by a 2009 earthquake that “they should see it like a weekend of camping.” It’s a wonder he didn’t suggest they toast

marshmallows. He also informed the world financial community that Italy is now a good country to invest in, because “today we have fewer Communists and those who are still there deny having been one.” Meaning? Yeah, we have Communists but it’s okay because they’re liars, too.

If these guys are looking for competition, they’ve met their match in United States Vice President Joe Biden, whose penchant for unfortunate slips of the lip approach Hall of Fame status. This is a man who consoled the Prime Minister of Ireland on the death of his mother, a vivacious lady who just so happened to be very much *not dead*. And this was on St. Patrick’s Day! Must have been a heck of a parade. On yet another occasion, briefing the press on the U.S. administration’s plans to halt the recession, Vice President Biden offered the following confidence-building remarks: “*If we do everything right, if we do it with absolute certainty ... there’s still a 30 percent chance we’re going to get it wrong.*” Investors didn’t know whether to buy, sell or keep stuffing their cash into a mattress.

And then there’s the Middle East. Granted, the complexities of the region make it difficult for anyone to speak with clarity on the issues facing that part of the world. Still, the former Prime Minister of Canada, Jean Chrétien, might have taken a little more time collecting his thoughts before offering this solution to the Middle East conflict:



“The best positive thing you can do is not to tell them to stop on both sides to fight and to go back to talk is the only way out of that. And it’s what I said and I said that.”

What he meant is anybody’s guess.

And if there are no more Caesars or Napoleons, there is one world leader who comes close: Kim Jong-Il, the towering head of North Korea with the platform shoes. What Kim Jong-Il says is law, right down to the dinner table. Refusing all Western influence on his country, Kim refuses to let his people eat “hamburgers.” They can, however, eat what he has officially named “double bread with meat,” which is the same thing. No word on the legality of ketchup yet.

Finally, there’s Russia’s Vladimir Putin, a no-nonsense leader if ever there was one. To the enemies of Russia, he warns: “*We’ll follow terrorists everywhere. We will corner the bandits in the toilet and wipe them out.*” Well, if you’re smart enough to know where terrorists go to the bathroom, you probably will catch them.

Of course, it’s easy to criticize public figures. Who among us could supply a pithy comment on demand with the whole world watching? Maybe it’s best to remember the words of American journalist Michael Kinsley: “A gaffe is when a politician tells the truth.” **T**

John Cadley is an advertising copywriter in Syracuse, New York. Reach him at jcadley@mower.com.

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Lelet McGorry from Jersey City, New Jersey, visits Laiya, San Juan, Batangas, Philippines.



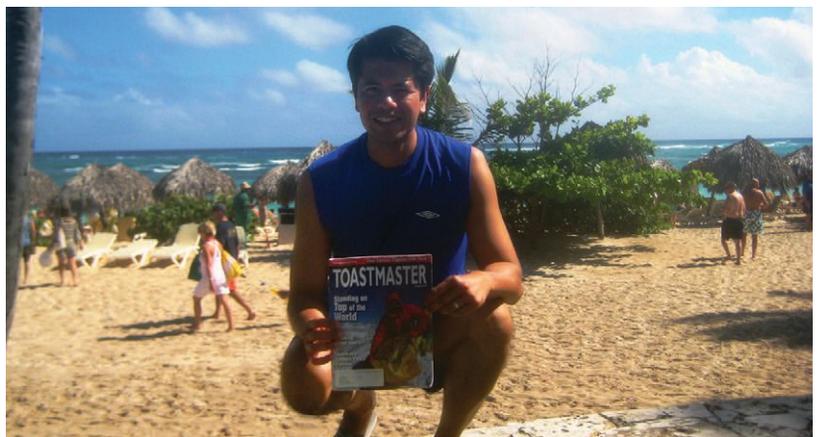
Najeeb Abdul Jaleel, CC, CL, from Doha, Qatar, visits Disneyland in Hong Kong.



Franck Moquette, ACS, ALS, from Québec, Canada, visits Venice, Italy.



Sierk Oudemans, ACG, CL, from Waukesha, Wisconsin, hikes mountain El Montgó, Javea, Spain.



Raúl Longo from Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, vacations in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic.



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