

TOASTMASTER[®]

July 2011

**Speechwriting
Tips from
the Pros**

Mentoring Across Generations

**Reap the rewards of
inter-generation collaboration**





What's Your Legacy?

Recently, I've been reflecting on my leadership style. I want to look beyond any immediate, short-term successes. I want to understand how choices I make *now* will impact the future. I want to know what my legacy will be.

I ask myself: "What do I stand for? What do I really believe in?" One question leads to another: "Am I living my life with purpose? How will I be remembered as a leader?" These are fascinating questions for leaders to ask ourselves; they are also important because the answers determine our lasting legacies.

When we, as leaders, make the choice to turn dreams into realities, the future fills with exciting opportunities. Big dreams stretch us and pull us forward while providing focus and meaning in our lives. Because ambitious goals are often outside our comfort zones, they challenge us to show a greater degree of creativity in order to reach them.

When leaders take a stand on things that are crucial, such as ethics and values, we influence and shape our own future as well as that of others around us. All decisions and interactions make an impact. Every moment – and with each movement – consciously or not, we leave something of ourselves behind. Is the legacy we are leaving, whether accidentally or purposely, something for which we want to be remembered?

If we keep our eyes on the legacy we wish to leave, we can imagine a fuller, brighter, more exciting future. If we *live* our legacy in everything we do in our Toastmasters, professional and personal lives, we choose how we influence and shape others and their futures.

There is no roadmap to guide us along the way, and therein lies the excitement! We need to imagine the bigger picture and hold on to the vision and ideals of what can be – the vision that comes from our heart. We need to move forward, toward our vision, realizing our dreams and creating our legacy.

It has been said that leadership is like trying to find a path in a field of newly fallen snow. Once we walk across the field, we have discovered our path. Our legacies are discovered in much the same manner. We answer the important questions with each step forward.

Now, I ask you to ask yourself: "What will my legacy be?"

Pat Johnson, DTM
International President

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Publisher	Daniel Rex
Editor	Suzanne Frey
Associate Editors	Beth Black Paul Sterman
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TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL

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

www.toastmasters.org/members

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Article submission:	submissions@toastmasters.org
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Puerto Rico club uses music and movies to inspire its members.

Singing a Winning Tune!

↑ In the Puerto Rico Toastmasters club, we love to celebrate our successes. We love to see our members grow, stretch and achieve their goals. To that end, we use a variety of fun and creative strategies – from showing film clips to hosting “Achievement Nights.”

For the 2010-2011 year, we played a positive, exuberant rock ‘n’ roll song (“We Are the Champions” by Queen) at club meetings to exemplify what we want to communicate: a powerful belief in members’ ability to succeed. Every time one of us achieves an educational designation during a club meeting, we play the song as the member is pinned. (It is stored in one of our club member’s computer and iPod, and we bring a set of small speakers to each meeting.)

We acknowledge the member immediately after he or she delivers the manual project speech that qualifies them for that designation. Everyone sings the song and applauds the person, recognizing the hard work he or she put in to meet the project’s goals. This boosts self-confidence.

The Puerto Rico Toastmasters club uses other innovative tactics to pump up our members. For example, we show trailers from popular movies. The one- or two-minute movie snippets highlight particular club themes; typically, we’ll send a clip to our members before an upcoming meeting – via Facebook or Dropbox – and we also play it at the beginning of the meeting. We showed the trailer for *Unstoppable* (starring Denzel Washington) as a way to inspire members to reach the “Triple Crown” – achieving three Toastmasters educational awards in a

year. The message: Nothing can stop this train in the movie and nothing can stop Toastmasters from attaining their goals!

Recently, we showed the trailer for the movie *Limitless*, with Robert De Niro, to reinforce the same point: Toastmasters have the inner strength to achieve whatever they set out to pursue. We look for lessons in films and try to adapt them to our club program. The movie tactic has proved to be powerful, particularly since it keeps members of all ages engaged and interested.

In fact, “Movie Night” was the theme for one of our recent club meetings. Members came dressed as a character from their favorite film, and the Table Topics session revolved around film trivia. We decorated the room like a movie theater and served popcorn, candy and soda.

We also have “Achievement Nights.” These meetings are held in special locations to add variety to our program. We recognize every member achievement and the entire membership as a whole. If you show up, we have something for you: gifts, awards, certificates or verbal recognition.

Our club currently has 39 members, and there is plenty of success to celebrate. We *master* the Distinguished Club Program, tracking our progress during regular and executive meetings. In the first half of the 2010-2011 year, our members achieved 22 individual educational designations – from

CC to ACG. However, we want to raise our own bar: Our goal is to produce 30 designations in the 2010-2011 year.

The Puerto Rico Toastmasters club is an oasis in the middle of the desert. Even after a long workday,



The Puerto Rico Toastmasters club celebrates its successes.

our members show up to recharge their batteries. This is the place to be if you want to keep your mind tuned to uplifting and empowering messages and ideas.

It has long been said that Toastmasters is a laboratory. This is exactly what we promote: Try things in our club and implement them outside the club. Within the club meeting walls, we are students; outside in the real world we are experts and masters of our own craft. We are indeed champions! ▣

The Puerto Rico Toastmasters club is located in Río Piedras, Puerto Rico. For more information, you can visit the club’s Facebook page ([facebook.com/prtoastmastersclub](https://www.facebook.com/prtoastmastersclub)) or email club president Elbia Quiñones, ACG, ALB, at elbiaqui@gmail.com.

How Toastmasters in Japan are rising from the destruction.

Courage in Japan

March 2011 began as usual in Toastmasters' District 76. The contest season had arrived and clubs across Japan spent the early part of the month determining who would move up to the area-level competitions. Members' thoughts were turning to the spring district conference scheduled to take place in Tokyo two months later. But on Friday, March 11, at 2:46 p.m., everything changed. A magnitude 9.0 earthquake struck, triggering a tsunami that destroyed much of the east coast of the country. By now this is not news to most of the world. But it is worth noting how Toastmasters in the vicinity responded to the challenge of their lives.

Throughout the crisis, Toastmasters around the globe watched in horror and then in hope that their fellow members – and communities – would survive and rebuild what they had lost.

At first, the messages coming from Toastmasters in Japan were simple – focused on their need to survive and meet basic needs. In subsequent weeks, however, a larger picture emerged. Members in Japan talked of the comfort and strength they derived from the support of other Toastmasters. Members from around the world reached out to them with messages of support and even gifts of clothing and food.

Lending a Voice

Marie-Josée Brassard of the Sendai Toastmasters club in Sendai, Japan, contacted Toastmasters International

soon after the events of March 11 to share what had happened to her home country of more than 20 years. She related how she helped in recovery efforts. Five days after the quake, Brassard gathered a few days' worth of supplies and went to work as a volunteer for the Multilingual Support Center for the Tohoku Earthquake in Sendai, Tohoku, Japan. Her communication skills played an important role.

"I helped foreigners who needed information on how to get back home, how to look for missing persons and how to protect themselves against the radiation," she wrote.

Brassard contacted Toastmasters in the cities of Tokyo and Yokohama to determine ways she could send aid to the most devastated areas of the Tohoku region. She accomplished a great deal while facing acute demands on her personal strength. She dealt with the media and found her Toastmasters training put to a test.

"I have been in contact with a reporter from Radio France Internationale," wrote Brassard. "On two occasions I was asked to give an account of the situation. My little expose was not perfect, but I think I would have made any Ah Counter proud. The second time the reporter called me, I felt as though all those years of sweating during the Table Topics session paid off, and my skills finally came through for me."

As days rolled into weeks, more Toastmasters contacted World Headquarters with reports on their lives, clubs and ongoing struggles.

Survival in Sendai

One town, Sendai, made headlines around the world for the devastation. The Sendai Toastmasters club was caught in the middle when news reports on the extent of this crisis lent credence to the possibility that the club might have been decimated. Fumiko Yoshimura, president of the Sendai club, reported in an email to Toastmasters International that the club was indeed affected powerfully at first.

Fortunately for the club, the meeting location was not in the area destroyed by the tsunami. However, the earthquake struck a blow to the building that housed their meetings. "The short-term effects of the March 11 disaster were our club's inability to meet for about two months," writes Yoshimura. "The building where we usually meet was damaged in the disaster." They have resumed meeting and expect attendance to climb, again, as members and guests return to more normal activities.

Courage to Continue in District 76

Akira Ishido, of the Sendai Toastmasters, struggled through severe professional challenges. His job typically requires that he help people in crisis situations, but the demands in this situation – aiding survivors – proved nearly unbearable. Ishido is a police officer who works for the Communications Command Division in Miyagi. "We, the police, have had a hard time both mentally and physically coping with the disaster," he

wrote in April. Nevertheless, he's worked hard to keep communications smooth with colleagues and used his Toastmasters skills to share information with the public.

Life is slowly improving for Ishido. He was able to take part in his division speech contest held in Tokyo after the disaster and was deeply moved to discover how many Toastmasters around the world sent supportive and encouraging messages to the people in his home region of Tohoku.

A Bond of Ancestry

Japanese Toastmasters share a connection with some District 4 members in the United States. The San Francisco Japanese-English Toastmasters club, also known as SF JETs, is a bilingual club that meets at the Japan Society of Northern California, in downtown San Francisco.

When disaster struck in Japan, this club and its host organization felt an unsettling connection, both emotionally and physically: While these individuals worked to accept the magnitude of what had happened across the Pacific Ocean, the San Francisco Bay Area came under a tsunami watch and the local government ordered an evacuation of low-lying coastal areas. Club President Ken Boyer described their experience in an email to Toastmasters International. "SF JETs held our regularly scheduled meeting on Friday, March 11th – the day of the earthquake," he says. "With the time zone difference, the Japan earthquake had occurred during the California morning. JETs members were trying to verify the safety of friends and family in Japan, including in the worst-affected areas in Sendai."

The coincidental timing did provide one benefit. "We quickly decided to have our meeting as scheduled, in order to lend support



Takako Osawa, CC, president of the Kesennuma Toastmasters club, stands in tsunami-induced wreckage in Shishiori, Kesennuma.

to each other in person and to exchange information," Boyer says. Quickly, the San Francisco group and its sister club, the Silicon Valley JETs (SVJETs), worked out plans to aid friends and relatives in Japan. "The earthquake and tsunami inspired our club here in the U.S. to reach out to clubs in Japan. We wanted to see how they are coping and we wanted to extend our support," Boyer wrote. Through this experience their bond was made even stronger.

District 76 Rebounds

District Governor Seiko Matsumoto, DTM, worked with her team to update plans for the spring district conference, which had to be moved from Tokyo to Kyoto due to aftershocks, electricity outages and other problems. When informing the members of the change, Matsumoto chose to include encouraging and uplifting words. On the District 76 website, she posted the following:

At present, District 76 is facing the unprecedented threat caused by natural disasters. I am, however, amazed by the heart-warming behavior among members in their own ways: an area governor and a member making efforts to confirm

safety of members in the disaster-stricken areas and sending information about them; members who are offering helping hands to the suffering members. Yes. We are Toastmasters. "Helping each other" is our spirit.

That Toastmasters spirit proved valuable and real for several members in the days following the initial event. Mako Watanabe, a veteran member and past president of the Sendai Toastmasters, says that club members took on leadership roles in the community to help with disaster recovery, including volunteering at the evacuation camps.

Sendai Rebuilds

Yoshimura, the Sendai club president, is positive about the long-term outcome for her group. "I am not worried, because our club is filled with dynamic members who have participated in many contests, won many awards and participated in the many Toastmasters events," she wrote. "We are blessed to have seasoned members who guide us with experience." ■

Beth Black is an associate editor of the *Toastmaster* magazine. Reach her at bblack@toastmasters.org.

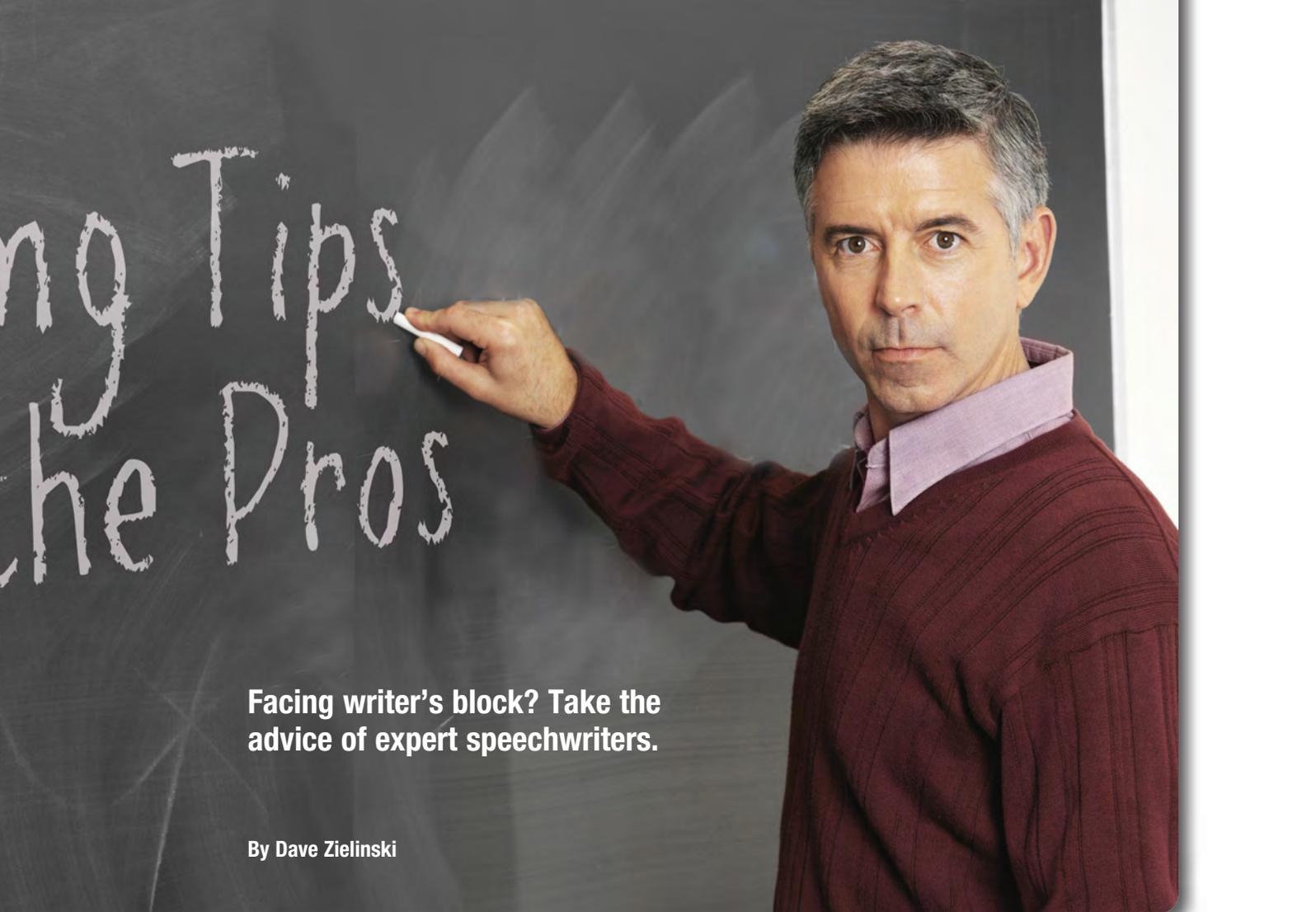
Speechwriting from t

Just as actors are only as good as the quality of their scripts, speakers can only sway audiences if the words they write prove compelling and credible when spoken. The ability to write persuasively for the ear is the essence of good speechmaking. Yet given how PowerPoint's bulleted text blurbs have grown to dominate organizational presentations, it's also something of a dying art.

While not every speech you write will call for soaring rhetoric or ringing phrases, its success or failure will still rest largely on the underpinnings of strong writing and editing skills. Unlike politicians, CEOs or celebrities, Toastmasters don't have professional speechwriters at their beck and call. To help you craft winning presentations, we interviewed some top speechwriters to identify what makes speech scripts memorable, and how to effectively put fingers to the keyboard.

Start from the Finish Line

Most of us have heard this time-honored advice about the beginning phases of writing a speech: Diligently research audience needs and then craft an "elevator speech" or short summary; then build content that meets those needs. Yet like a teenager ignoring Mom's advice to shut off the Xbox and return to his homework, speakers still tend to ignore those fundamentals.



Facing writer's block? Take the advice of expert speechwriters.

By Dave Zielinski

Pete Weissman, who joined Toastmasters when he worked as a speechwriter in the U.S. Senate, also wrote speeches for the CEO of the Coca-Cola Company and worked in the West Wing of the White House before starting his Atlanta-based speechwriting and communications firm. Weissman says one of the best things you can do to achieve focus before starting the writing process is to ask yourself this question: *If a reporter were to write an article about my speech, what would the headline be?*

"Throughout the research process you'll gather a lot more information than you can ever use in your speech, so having that desired headline in mind will help you focus and filter information," Weissman says.

Similarly, one of the most effective tactics to use in crafting speeches – especially those including PowerPoint slides – is to heed author Stephen Covey's principle of "starting with the end in mind," believes Jim Endicott, head of coaching firm Distinction Communication in Newberg, Oregon. To that end, Endicott has his clients create the *last* slide in their PowerPoint decks first, asking them to use three key points or less, and not exceed one line of text per point.

"The exercise helps create a laser focus on what you want the audience to think or believe differently at the

end of your speech," Endicott says. "That concluding slide becomes the litmus test for how you measure the rest of your content, ensuring everything in the body of your speech drives toward those concluding points."

Nick Morgan, president of the speech coaching firm Public Words and author of the book *Trust Me: Four Steps to Authenticity and Charisma*, uses a related method. He tells his clients to begin the speechwriting process by creating a one-sentence summary of what their talk is about.

"Everything that relates to that summary goes into the speech script, and things that don't are left out," Morgan says. "I think one trick of great speechwriting is knowing what to leave out. That kind of focus on your key message also is a good way to save time when writing speeches."

Create Audience-Centric Messages

Weissman says addressing an audience's *pain points* – issues that may be keeping them up at night – early in a speech is the best way to corral their attention. "If you want to hold an audience's attention, you either must be wildly entertaining, like someone juggling flaming sticks, or be absolutely essential," Weissman

says. “The way to make yourself essential is to address the biggest problem or need of the people sitting in the room, and to mention you’re going to do so at the beginning of your speech.”

For example, if you’re speaking to prospective homebuyers struggling to find mortgages, you might include this early on: “In my experience, I’ve learned a few ways to overcome challenges in the credit market, and that’s what I’ll share with you today.”

Morgan also says the old expression, “*Tell ‘em what you’re going to tell ‘em, tell ‘em, then tell ‘em what you told ‘em,*” doesn’t hold up well with today’s impatient or skeptical audiences. The saying emerged from World War II and was a good model for briefing soldiers required to stand at attention and listen, but it lacks a key element, he says.

“If I’m writing an initial draft and think I have to edit a sentence, I just push through instead of stopping to rework it,” says Schmidt. “The key for me is to keep the keyboard moving or I’ll get stuck. Later, I’ll give a first edit to the draft, put it away for a while, then come back to it with fresh eyes and edit again.”

Given the importance of speech openers, Schmidt saves that segment of a speech for last, a practice shared by many of his peers. “I’ll typically write the body of the speech first, write the conclusion and only then come back to the opening,” he says. Having finished the rest of the speech helps him add clarity and punch to the opener.

While it can be easy to think you’re alone in struggling with a blank computer screen, creating good transitions between key points or writing a killer opening, the reality is you have plenty of company. In a recent international survey of frequent presenters conducted by Distinction Communication, speakers were asked, “What do you find to be the most challenging part of creating and delivering a presentation?”

The top response was “*putting together a good message so my presentation flows and connects well.*”

The pros aren’t immune from these same struggles. The difference is they’ve learned to discipline themselves to work through the worry or temporary lack of creative inspiration. “Once I hit upon the big idea or big metaphor for a speech, the rest of the script or message starts to click,” says Weissman. “But it often can feel like I’m wandering around in the dark until I come across that big theme.”

Professional speechwriters also are constantly in research mode, their antennae up for interesting quotes, facts or studies that might be a good fit for a speech, whether it be next week or an unknown event down the road. “I always have a quote file going,” says Schmidt. “I keep an electronic file where I add ideas as soon as they occur to me. I keep clips, links to websites and other information that might be of use in speeches.”

Weissman also has an ongoing idea file and recently began experimenting with EverNote (evernote.com), an online tool that enables you to “clip” news articles, Web pages, photos, research studies and the like. Everything captured is automatically indexed and made searchable.

“It’s very helpful to ‘virtually’ store all of the interesting bits and pieces you regularly come across,” Weissman says.

“If I’m writing an initial draft and think I have to edit a sentence, I just push through instead of stopping to rework it. The key for me is to keep the keyboard moving or I’ll get stuck.”

– Gary Schmidt, DTM, Toastmasters Past International President

“It should also tell them *why* you are about to say what you’re going to say,” Morgan says. In other words, audiences want to know why your content is important to them before they will invest time listening to you.

Tricks of the Trade

The pros concur on one of the biggest challenges in speechwriting: Don’t put on the “critic’s hat” too early in the creative process. You’ve likely been there: You’ve finished writing your opening lines, paused to re-read them, then started feverishly editing or deleting because you were unhappy with your efforts. Twenty minutes later you’ve made little progress.

Speechwriters say it’s important to discipline yourself to write a first draft all the way through without getting too self-critical at this stage of the process. All good speechwriting, it seems, is rewriting. And until you have enough words on the screen and have let your copy “go cold” for a sufficient amount of time, you can’t effectively return to start honing, reorganizing or “wordsmithing” your content.

Toastmasters Past International President Gary Schmidt, DTM, is a believer in letting a first draft flow like an opened fire hydrant. Schmidt currently works as public affairs manager for Clackamas County, Oregon, where he writes speeches for public officials. He also is a former speechwriter for two U.S. senators from Oregon.

Writing for the Ear Versus the Eye

What separates speechwriting from other types of writing is a need to write convincingly for the ear versus the eye. Writing for a listening audience rather than a reading one demands a different approach, requiring that you work harder to create visual images and craft phrases or stories that stand out in the minds of listeners. Writing for the ear often means using shorter sentences, contractions and simpler language, professional speechwriters say. In short, it means being more conversational in your writing style.

“Writing for the ear requires continually honing your sentences, looking to create parallel construction, artful repetition and other techniques that can elevate language so your words become stronger when spoken,” Weissman says.

Schmidt says writing well for the ear takes practice, but studying some of the great speakers – and better yet, acquiring copies of their scripts – can help speed your learning curve.

“Toastmasters groups are great for emphasizing that audiences aren’t reading your speech, they are hearing

you speak it,” Schmidt says. “The choice of language, and how you organize content, is different because the ear has to understand it immediately. An audience doesn’t have the luxury of saying, ‘Hey, could you go back and say that again? I didn’t quite understand it.’”

In writing for others as well as himself, Schmidt has learned the importance of writing the way you speak. “The worst sin in speechwriting is not using the kinds of words or phrases you might use in everyday conversations,” he says. “I can think of some presidential speeches that were beautifully written and read, but in the end you were left thinking, ‘That really didn’t sound like him; that’s not the way he speaks.’ That lack of authenticity can diminish your authority as a communicator.”

Developing Messages for PowerPoint Presentations

It’s also important to develop content in a way that is “audience-centric instead of speaker-centric,” Endicott says. “The number one thing audiences wonder is, ‘Will this presentation be relevant to my life and the issues that

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Think your life isn’t the source of good stories?

By Dave Zielinski

Memorable stories are the lifeblood of any good speech, but too often Toastmasters feel they don’t have good stories to share from their own lives. Instead they believe compelling tales are reserved only for professional speakers, comedians or naturally gifted storytellers.

As a result, novice speakers – feeling a need to include stories in their speeches – often include hackneyed tales or parables taken from books or other sources. In short, they resort to using other people’s stories.

It needn’t be so, say professional speechwriters.

Presentation skills coach Nick Morgan relates the experience of working with a human resources executive on a speech for an industry conference. “The speech was about setting and achieving goals, and for three weeks she kept telling me she didn’t have any good stories to help make her point,” Morgan says.

As the speech date approached, Morgan met with his client one night and she looked upset. When asked what was wrong, she said it was the anniversary of her father’s death, and proceeded to recount how her dad, a janitor, was extremely proud that she was the first in the family to get a college degree and continue to graduate school. Late in the process of pursuing her Ph.D., she learned her father was diagnosed with inoperable cancer. During an emotional phone call, her dad told her he would live long enough to see her get her doctorate. He lived up to his promise, and died a week later.

“I looked at her and said, ‘You’re writing a speech about setting and achieving goals. You told me you didn’t have any stories, but you just told me one of the more powerful stories I’ve ever heard on that topic,’” Morgan says. The client included the story in her speech and it became one of the most highly rated presentations of the conference.

“No person, no speaker, no family is without its stresses and strains, and those travails can be the source of great teaching or inspirational stories,” Morgan says

Think again!

an 8-year-old, Johnson had been a big fan of the movie *Home Alone 2*, much of which was filmed at New York's Plaza Hotel, owned by Donald Trump. Johnson and his parents planned a stay at the Plaza, and he wrote a letter to Trump asking if he could see the hotel suite used in the movie. When he arrived at the hotel, he found that Trump had received his letter and arranged for him and his parents to stay in that very suite. Trump set him up with VIP treatment during his stay in New York City simply because he wrote a letter making a simple request.

When I delivered my post-lunch version of what was basically the same speech, I used both the Garber and Trump stories to emphasize how taking risks in business relationships can pay off. Unlike my earlier rendition, this talk inspired a lively Q&A session, captured the attention of the audience and even generated a few follow-up fan notes.

When you're developing your speech, remember the strength of stories and follow these tips:

1 Collect stories. Keep notes about experiences of yourself or others that contain important lessons. Sometimes I'll use these anecdotes either as the center of a speech or an article, or to supplement the subject. A small pocket-size notebook, or the notes function on a smartphone, make it easy to save ideas.

2 Be relevant. When you use a story, be certain that it applies to the subject at hand. Don't be tempted to talk about something that doesn't relate to the lesson. You may amuse your audience for the moment, but you'll leave them scratching their heads as they struggle to make the connection.

3 Borrow from others. Don't be afraid to use the experiences of others. I often use a story told by Carl Pritchard about how the late

Fred Rogers, host of the children's show *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, graciously taught him how to learn about client needs. When I published a blog article on the subject, "Mister Rogers and Project Management," it was picked up by an international blog and widely repeated. I was sure to give credit for the story to Carl Pritchard, who sent me a nice note on the posting.

Facts, statistics and other supporting material have their place in the written and spoken word. But wrapping them around a relevant story can help engage your audience and give your message staying power. Next time you're called on to deliver a speech, remember the lesson I learned the hard way: There is strength in a story. 

Dennis Brooke, ATMG, is a member of Auburn Morning Toastmasters Club in Auburn, Washington. Read more of his work and contact him at dennisbrooke.com.

Speechwriting Tips From the Pros

(Continued from page 11)

cause me sleepless nights? Too often, sales presentations in particular become a 45-minute solution in search of a problem to solve, rather than addressing a prospect's key problems or needs up front."

If you're using PowerPoint or other design software, the first clue as to whether you've put your audience first is your presentation's title slide. Endicott says a bad title slide might read like this example: "Productivity and Efficiency Tools for Your Assembly Line." A better version would read: "Helping You Drive Higher Productivity & Efficiency from Your Assembly Line."

Bad visuals can destroy good speaking skills, Endicott says, and less is always more when it comes to using text on PowerPoint slides. Consider applying the seven-second rule to your visual content. "Never put more on a slide than you can visually process in seven to eight seconds," Endicott says. "This will cause you to constantly distill down messages to the very essence of what you want to say."

Other experts stress that PowerPoint should be used as a *prompt* and not a *teleprompter*. "Too often the audience is forced to play a horrified game of PowerPoint bingo, wondering if the speaker is going to say every single word on every slide," Morgan says. "That makes them

wonder, 'If they are going to read every word, I can probably read them faster, so why is the presenter even here?'"

Speakers should strive to include more compelling visuals on slides – thought-provoking photos or well-designed graphics – and rely more heavily on speaker's notes the audience can't see to provide spoken context and connective tissue between slides, Morgan says.

"Imagine what a movie or a TV show would be like if they simultaneously ran the script down the side of the screen – 'here's an explosion' – like you often see with all of the speech text included on PowerPoint slides," Morgan says. "It would destroy your enjoyment level. So why would you do that in a speech?"

Endicott says most plane crashes happen on takeoff or landing, and the same holds true for speeches – particularly the landings. "Most presentations today end simply because the speaker runs out of slides, not because they've taken time to craft a well-conceived, well-articulated closing," he says.

Speechwriting is often the most overlooked and undervalued part of the speechmaking process. But if you get that important first step right, you'll be amazed at how often the rest of your speaking experience falls into place. 

Dave Zielinski is a freelance writer and frequent contributor to the *Toastmaster*.

Fostering a club culture of collaboration.

By Misti Burmeister

Generations Working Together

When corporate executives face an aging workforce that's nearing retirement, they want to attract and retain young employees while motivating the older ones to mentor them. This is an area where business leaders who are also Toastmasters have an advantage.

As an expert in generational issues, I've been approached by corporate leaders who ask for a one-size-fits-all approach to motivating employees. I could suggest several perks that appeal to most workers, but the answer to the problem – fostering a culture of collaboration and information-sharing across generations – isn't as simple as that. Research shows that employees, regardless of age, will work harder and stay with the company longer *if they feel valued and trust their leaders*.

The key to retaining and motivating employees is to make them feel that their voices are valued. In the end, leadership boils down to communication. For leaders to be effective, they must learn how to inspire and motivate professionals of different generations. This means getting to know them, *listening* to them and learning how to communicate in ways that resonate.

That's where Toastmasters helps. Whether you're a young professional trying to get your voice heard in the boardroom or an experienced leader trying to get young professionals to care about their jobs, Toastmasters gives you the opportunity to communicate

and build relationships with talented professionals from many generations – in a supportive, safe and low-stress environment. Through Toastmasters, you learn how to:

Value Their Voices: You cannot effectively lead a team of people you do not know. Communicating with professionals from a range of generations requires understanding them – their struggles and challenges, how they experience life, what's important to them and what excites them. Toastmasters provides an environment in which leaders can get to know and learn from people of different generations. Once they've built relationships, leaders can even ask the younger Toastmasters for advice on challenges they face at work with members of other generations. They can take what they learn into the workplace and use those conversations to understand, motivate and retain their employees.

Value Your Voice: Young professionals have fresh, innovative ideas that are helpful on a variety of levels, like innovation and suggesting creative ways to appeal to their demographics. But their voices are often drowned out because their communication styles don't match those of senior executives. By developing relationships with seasoned professionals in Toastmasters groups, younger members learn from the older members' communication styles, which in turn helps them develop their own voices and confidence.

In Toastmasters, I sometimes see young professionals who join hop-

ing to learn how to present their ideas in ways that get company executives to take them seriously. What a brilliant use of Toastmasters! Seasoned executives can help them in a mentoring relationship, offering feedback to help strengthen their communication styles. For instance, with many young professionals, enthusiasm often comes across as impatience or immaturity to seasoned executives. A Toastmasters mentor might explain that enthusiasm is a great tool, just not necessary in all circumstances. Younger Toastmasters can benefit from listening to what's important to the people in charge and using that information to focus their ideas.

For some, getting heard in the boardroom may require work: They must value their voice enough to do a bit of research and prepare their comments in advance. Likewise, being an effective leader requires communicating your vision in a way that makes members of every generation feel thrilled to be part of your team.

What is the first step to communicating across generations? Build trust and credibility through relationships! 

Misti Burmeister is the author of the Washington Post best-seller *From Boomers to Bloggers: Success Strategies Across Generations*. She is a member of the Speak Always With Confidence (SAIC) club and the APL (Applied Physics Laboratory) club, both located in Maryland. Reach her at MB@InspirionLLC.com.



Rely less on speech notes
and more on structure.

By Robert A. Richert, DTM

Say Goodbye to Your Script!

When it's his turn to give a speech, former Founder's District Governor Ken Sisco, DTM, always comes to meetings prepared with a fully written-out script. I've been amazed at his ability to deliver a speech fluently, without revealing his use of detailed notes. Once he steps up to the lectern, Ken has apparently memorized his speech and the pages of notes become superfluous. He seems to be one of those rare people with a photographic memory.

However, Ken says, "I don't memorize my speeches nor do I have a photographic memory. I simply prefer to spend my time putting the words together, rather than rehearsing the delivery. I have perfected the art of reading my speech without appearing to do so. Most Toastmasters can't do that."

Ken is correct – he is the exception to the rule. Most members

struggle to maintain a connection to the audience while trying to read extensive notes. Instead, I advocate using an outline for standard Toastmasters speeches.

Here are the most common problems associated with speaking from a complete script:

- Your head bobs up and down in a distracting manner.
- You lose your place, stumble and the speech becomes disjointed.
- Your vocal variety is stifled, especially when your head is down.
- Your gestures are restrained while your hands shuffle notes or you're reading.
- The above problems can make you more nervous.

A common misperception, especially among new members, is that to be properly understood a Toastmaster must communicate every word of a speech in a precise manner. Yes, in

certain professions and situations, precise wording is essential to public speaking – for example, prominent politicians, instructors, lecturers, speech contestants at the upper levels of competition and professional speakers. However, rarely do these examples apply to club meetings.

Audiences retain at best about 10 percent of the words in any speech. People will remember the *main message* of a speech *if it is delivered in an organized and effective way*. However, speaking from written text invariably inhibits speech dynamics – eye contact, vocal variety and gestures – that form your *physical* connection to the audience.

A Personal Choice

While most experienced Toastmasters distill their thoughts into outline form, some speakers begin by writing out their speeches word for word. This method enables them to better organize and remember the speech. Judy

Murphy, DTM, member of Lilydale Club in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, follows this approach. "It's my way of knowing that I have the right amount of material and that all the ideas flow," says Murphy. "Once I am satisfied with the script, I map out the speech in my mind. Rehearsal is a must. On the day of the speech, I just remember my main points and I can lose the notes entirely. On the occasions when I haven't had sufficient time to practice, I write out main ideas in bullet points in a large font and have them on the lectern to the side."

To new members struggling through their first few speeches, talk about subjects you care about and know well. This will make preparation easier and delivery more comfortable, plus boost your confidence. I'm mentoring a new club member, Michelle Phung, who is Vietnamese – English is her second language. She explained to me that her second speech would be about her grueling experiences as a "boat person" when she and her family escaped the fall of Saigon.

I recommended that she speak from an outline because she knew her story so well that following a detailed script was unnecessary. I also pointed out that reading this poignant story from her notes might make her appear insincere and stifle her passion. However, Michelle said, "I need to write out my speech because it helps me with structure, organization and makes me feel more comfortable with English words and sentences." When she gave the speech, she brought her script but did not read from it at all.

Steps to Success

How to create an outline? Begin by thinking about your main message, writing ideas down and then start organizing and prioritizing the material. Subdivide it into three or so main points for a five- to seven-minute speech. Decide which facts, anecdotes, quotations or jokes to include and which to leave out, and roughly

how much time to devote to each main segment. Hone your speech into outline form on a note card or single sheet of paper. Replace fully written text with trigger words or phrases. Allow single words, phrases or pictures to generate in your mind the concept or story you have prepared and rehearsed earlier.

For better clarity and quicker access to the correct place on your outline, use the computer to employ colors, varied fonts, indentation and spacing to help guide your eye. Visually oriented people respond more quickly to a simple picture or symbol than a phrase. Ultimately, trust in your natural ability to formulate the right words and speak in a coherent manner.

Know Their Purpose

If you must convey a quotation or information precisely, then by all

means write it down in your notes, but also practice and commit it to memory. Here's a tip: Picking up a card, reading a brief quotation and then putting the card down can effectively punctuate the rhythm of your speech. It also communicates to the audience that the quotation is important. Reading a brief quotation, though, is only effective if used once or twice in a five- to seven-minute speech.

If you intend to convey quantities of technical, statistical or detailed information, make use of visual aids or handouts as an alternative to a written script. PowerPoint slides or a flipchart may also serve as an effective replacement for written notes. They help you to stay on track and eliminate the problem of constantly looking down at notes placed on the lectern. Even so, these aids should

act as an adjunct to your oral presentation, not a crutch. Don't just read the text on your slide; leave that for the audience. Instead, expand upon those words.

Discovering Gold

Mike Meier, DTM, of the Seoul Advanced Toastmasters in Seoul, South Korea, won the District 25 International Speech Contest in 2008. "When I started out as a Toastmaster, I would not allow myself to do a speech without detailed notes, because I was scared the speech would not come out right or I would forget something," says Meier. "However, one night when I was scheduled to give a speech, I accidentally left my script at my seat! To my surprise, my speech went well!"

Meier's technique evolved from that experience. "Ever since then, I vowed to use a half sheet of

"The speech comes to life when you are able to lift the text off the paper and tell a story people will remember."

paper at the most for a few notes and key points. The speech comes to life when you are able to lift the text off the paper and tell a story people will truly remember. One of my speech mentors once said, "Whatever comes out of your mouth is golden. No one knows you lost your place in your speech unless you tell them."

By focusing on improving speech dynamics instead of reading precise wordage, you will become more charismatic. Your audiences will better connect with you and be more eager to hear your message. 

Robert A. Richert, DTM, has been a Toastmaster for 25 years. He belongs to the Helmsmen Toastmasters club in Huntington Beach, California. Reach him at RichertArt.com.



Wake up your audience by telling tales.

By Dennis Brooke, ATMG

The Strength of a Story

My ship was on the reef, snapped in two like a dry stick; I was face down in the boxing ring and the referee was about to count “Ten.” In short, my speech was bombing – big time.

How could I, an experienced Toastmaster, flop so miserably? I had researched my topic – building business relationships – made sure it was relevant to the audience and practiced my delivery. But halfway through my speech to the local high school group,

deliver the 40-minute speech at the regional conference for the Future Business Leaders of America, it didn’t take long to see that the only thing between my teenage audience and lunch was me, and they’d just as soon go straight to lunch. My question-and-answer sessions are usually lively, and I had reserved 10 minutes at the end of this particular speech for Q&A. I could have reserved 10 seconds and still had time to spare.

thing important: When it comes to capturing the attention of an audience, *there is strength in a story.*

Mention “The Tortoise and the Hare,” “The Trojan Horse” or “The Good Samaritan,” and people from cultures all around the world can repeat these millennia-old stories and the lessons they teach us. Any associated statistics, facts or papyrus flip charts associated with these tales have long been forgotten.

To recover from my pre-lunch speech flop, I decided to draw on two stories related to business relationships. I recalled a situation when I was in high school and had attended a national leadership course. One of the speakers was Paul Garber, who founded the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C. The next year I was in that city to visit the museum with a classmate from the leadership course. On a whim we called Mr. Garber to tell him how much we enjoyed his talk. He invited us to lunch in the Smithsonian staff dining room, where he told us stories of the early days of flight, including not-so-well-known anecdotes about the Wright Brothers.

I also drew on a story from a book I had recently read, *You Call the Shots* by Cameron Johnson. As

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it was clear that I was not capturing their interest. It didn’t help that a junior heckler was competing with me for the audience’s attention.

To gather material for my presentation, I talked with executives at the aviation-technology company where I worked as a program manager. They offered suggestions from their experiences in the business world. Their ideas were terrific, and I wove them into relevant, humorous and interesting points – or so I thought. When the time came to

Getting a Second Chance

Usually when a performance bombs, the speaker doesn’t have a chance to try again anytime soon. They get to stew for weeks or even months about what they could have done better. However, I had a unique opportunity: I was scheduled to deliver the same speech to another group at the conference after lunch. This gave me an hour to revamp it so that the encore performance wasn’t a repeat disaster. Fortunately, I remembered some-

an 8-year-old, Johnson had been a big fan of the movie *Home Alone 2*, much of which was filmed at New York's Plaza Hotel, owned by Donald Trump. Johnson and his parents planned a stay at the Plaza, and he wrote a letter to Trump asking if he could see the hotel suite used in the movie. When he arrived at the hotel, he found that Trump had received his letter and arranged for him and his parents to stay in that very suite. Trump set him up with VIP treatment during his stay in New York City simply because he wrote a letter making a simple request.

When I delivered my post-lunch version of what was basically the same speech, I used both the Garber and Trump stories to emphasize how taking risks in business relationships can pay off. Unlike my earlier rendition, this talk inspired a lively Q&A session, captured the attention of the audience and even generated a few follow-up fan notes.

When you're developing your speech, remember the strength of stories and follow these tips:

1 Collect stories. Keep notes about experiences of yourself or others that contain important lessons. Sometimes I'll use these anecdotes either as the center of a speech or an article, or to supplement the subject. A small pocket-size notebook, or the notes function on a smartphone, make it easy to save ideas.

2 Be relevant. When you use a story, be certain that it applies to the subject at hand. Don't be tempted to talk about something that doesn't relate to the lesson. You may amuse your audience for the moment, but you'll leave them scratching their heads as they struggle to make the connection.

3 Borrow from others. Don't be afraid to use the experiences of others. I often use a story told by Carl Pritchard about how the late

Fred Rogers, host of the children's show *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, graciously taught him how to learn about client needs. When I published a blog article on the subject, "Mister Rogers and Project Management," it was picked up by an international blog and widely repeated. I was sure to give credit for the story to Carl Pritchard, who sent me a nice note on the posting.

Facts, statistics and other supporting material have their place in the written and spoken word. But wrapping them around a relevant story can help engage your audience and give your message staying power. Next time you're called on to deliver a speech, remember the lesson I learned the hard way: There is strength in a story. 

Dennis Brooke, ATMG, is a member of Auburn Morning Toastmasters Club in Auburn, Washington. Read more of his work and contact him at dennisbrooke.com.

Speechwriting Tips From the Pros

(Continued from page 11)

cause me sleepless nights? Too often, sales presentations in particular become a 45-minute solution in search of a problem to solve, rather than addressing a prospect's key problems or needs up front."

If you're using PowerPoint or other design software, the first clue as to whether you've put your audience first is your presentation's title slide. Endicott says a bad title slide might read like this example: "Productivity and Efficiency Tools for Your Assembly Line." A better version would read: "Helping You Drive Higher Productivity & Efficiency from Your Assembly Line."

Bad visuals can destroy good speaking skills, Endicott says, and less is always more when it comes to using text on PowerPoint slides. Consider applying the seven-second rule to your visual content. "Never put more on a slide than you can visually process in seven to eight seconds," Endicott says. "This will cause you to constantly distill down messages to the very essence of what you want to say."

Other experts stress that PowerPoint should be used as a *prompt* and not a *teleprompter*. "Too often the audience is forced to play a horrified game of PowerPoint bingo, wondering if the speaker is going to say every single word on every slide," Morgan says. "That makes them

wonder, 'If they are going to read every word, I can probably read them faster, so why is the presenter even here?'"

Speakers should strive to include more compelling visuals on slides – thought-provoking photos or well-designed graphics – and rely more heavily on speaker's notes the audience can't see to provide spoken context and connective tissue between slides, Morgan says.

"Imagine what a movie or a TV show would be like if they simultaneously ran the script down the side of the screen – 'here's an explosion' – like you often see with all of the speech text included on PowerPoint slides," Morgan says. "It would destroy your enjoyment level. So why would you do that in a speech?"

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Dave Zielinski is a freelance writer and frequent contributor to the *Toastmaster*.



Reap the rewards of mentoring across age groups.

By Maureen Zappala, ACS

Intergeneration *Collaboration*

What is the age range of the members in your Toastmasters club? In my club of 30 members, the youngest is about 25 and the oldest is over 70. Quite a spread! People of all ages are drawn to the personal development opportunities in Toastmasters. Whether you were born in 1982 or 1922, you can experience the richness of intergenerational relationships when you mingle and learn from each other.

If you are aware of generational differences and learn the best way to work with people of various ages, you not only enhance the culture of your club or company, you also become a stronger and more versatile communicator and leader, says Misti Burmeister, a Toastmaster and an expert on generational diversity. As founder and CEO of Inspirion, she helps businesses overcome communication

barriers and better understand their employees and customers.

“Seasoned professionals have the experience and knowledge, while young professionals are exploding with enthusiasm, a fresh perspective and a desire to learn. Imagine what’s possible when the two respect and value one another!” says Burmeister, who is the author of *From Boomers to Bloggers: Success Strategies Across Generations*.

Finding the Win-Win

What is possible is indeed exciting. Jenilee Grabenhorst of Stark Community Toastmasters in Canton, Ohio, is 29 years old. She joined Toastmasters at 24 and fast-tracked her way to DTM in less than three years. She employs that same positive attitude as a mentor to members of all ages.

“Growing up, I was taught I could do anything,” says Grabenhorst. “All I had to do was believe I could, and I would [do it]. I take that approach when I mentor other Toastmasters. It’s easy to share my knowledge. My passion is contagious! A mentee will quickly adjust an ‘it’s impossible’ attitude when there is an energetic, ‘anything is possible’ mentor behind them.”

Jamie Suter, of the Kettering Toastmasters club in Kettering, Ohio, discovered a mutually beneficial aspect to her mentor relationship. “When I joined Toastmasters, I was 27 and my mentor was twice my age, soon to be a DTM. He mentored me on the structure, the how-tos and the history of Toastmasters. I mentored him on technology and new manuals (such as the then-new CL manual). He encouraged me to take on officer roles and participate in contests, and I mentored him on all of the newer Toastmasters features, like the websites, extra learning modules and how to promote the club using social media.”

Avoiding Pitfalls

Intergenerational mentoring as described by Suter happens all over Toastmasters, and most often it’s positive and fruitful. But when the age difference between mentor and mentee is significant, there may be a tendency to focus on or be distracted by that difference. Reducing the distraction must be a priority in order to cultivate a rich mentoring environment. Burmeister says, “Learning is critical throughout our careers. Having an honest interest in helping each other achieve a specific result creates unity, diminishing the distraction of generational differences.”

At age 47, Danny Chu, a member of Xerox Xeroids Toastmasters in Rancho Palos Verdes, California, was mentoring a 23-year-old female club member who was often reluctant to speak. Chu says, “A year after joining, she had only done two CC manual speeches. I convinced her to compete in our club’s Humorous Speech

Contest and she won, beating the previous district winner! She was thrilled, and so was I.”

In his desire to help, Chu completely diminished the distraction of age difference.

Ask any Toastmaster who has mentored someone and they’ll tell you: Mentoring makes you a better leader. With generational diversity, leadership requires understanding. Burmeister says, “When we understand *why* people react the way they do, we can let go of judging them and remain focused on the mission – pulling people into their greatness,” says Burmeister, a member of two Toastmasters clubs in Maryland.

Isn’t that the role of a leader... to pull people into their greatness?

People of different ages respond, desire and aspire differently, and a leader should seek to understand that. Carol Kormelink, age 78, a member of three Toastmasters clubs in Ohio, is a three-time Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM). She says, “I learned to listen to [our members’] needs, not to what I think they needed. For instance: the author of a 4th grade science book joined our club to get comfortable speaking at her book signings. She had lots of ‘ahs’ that I thought she should eliminate. But at her book signing, I saw her dramatic science experiments. I realized that the crowd was so awed by the experiment that all her ‘ahs’ would not keep them from buying her book. She left Toastmasters when she met her goal of feeling comfortable with speaking in public. Even though she didn’t meet my goal of conquering her ‘ahs,’ she met hers, and had a successful Toastmasters experience.”

Kormelink, who falls in the most senior age group in her club, personifies the helping/serving attitude characteristic of her generation. But her mentee, quite a few years younger, demonstrated characteristics of her generation by being more focused on increasing financial security through higher book sales. Once they understood each other, the relationship flourished.

How to Bridge the Gap

Here are four specific things you can do in your club to involve people of different age groups more effectively:

Four Generations Defined

The generations in many clubs might be divided into four groups.

Those born between:

1922–1945

1946–1964

1965–1980

1981–2000

1 Understand the differences between the generations.

Conduct research to learn more about generational characteristics. Generations are defined by the common social, political, economic, geographical and cultural influences that shaped the people of that particular time. Over the last century, the world has seen extraordinary changes that have influenced generations in different ways, creating clear distinctions in how each generation responds to life. Being educated about *why* people do what they do will only empower you to be a better mentor.

2 Clarify expectations. This is essential in any mentoring relationship, but especially when age is a factor. Allow your new club members to have a part in choosing a mentor. If they prefer, let them see who they interact well with after several weeks of club meetings, and

“Make it a habit to seek to understand people of different age groups, and watch what happens.”

if they're comfortable with someone from a different age group. Then make a mentoring assignment. Angie Key, DTM, a member of Lennox International Toastmasters in McKinney, Texas, offers excellent advice: “Encourage your new mentor/mentee pairs to formalize their relationship with a face-to-face discussion. This will make it clear what a mentor actually does (I had one new member who expected the mentor to help them write their speeches!) and how they'll communicate. Have a checklist of what to cover during this meeting and let the new member and mentor sign it when they're done – like a mentoring contract.”

As in any relationship, clear expectations go a long way to eliminate conflict and misunderstanding.

3 Be flexible in your communication. Each generation communicates differently. Those born between 1922 and 1945 prefer written communication. Those born between 1946 and 1964 tend to prefer face-to-face meetings. The next generation grew up with microwaves and remote controls, and prefer efficiency and directness. The youngest generation prefers texting and social media. Each group prefers different feedback styles as well. Happy with a job well done, older members don't

need a lot of recognition. Middle-aged members appreciate titles to identify their accomplishments. Those born at the onset of the information age need ongoing feedback and affirmation. The young professionals want purpose in their lives and need to see their role in a bigger picture. Be flexible and willing to adjust.

Anthony Kung, 44, of Prospeak Club in Garland, Texas, has mentored many Toastmasters who are both older and younger than himself. He observes, “I find there is a degree of enthusiasm that I need to bring to the younger members that I don't with the older ones. For the older ones, simply sharing knowledge and feedback seems to be enough for them to feel like they are receiving something valuable. For the younger Toastmasters, I find that I have to add extra emotion, and speak their lingo before they are inspired to make improvements.”

Kung understands the importance of being flexible, and like all good Toastmasters, of understanding his audience. Be willing to try something new, such as texting.

4 Realize that *experience counts more than age.* People want guidance from those who have been where they want to go. It's tempting to assign an older member as a mentor, but that may not be the best choice. Age isn't the factor ... experience is. Salman Al Fardan of the Bahrain Toastmasters club, in Hammad Town, Bahrain, says, “Traditionally, mentoring is done from a senior position. I do not see a problem of cross-age mentoring, but the seniority (experience) in Toastmasters is preferable to enforce Toastmasters culture and credibility.”

He makes a good point: Experienced Toastmasters are instrumental in preserving and promoting the mission of the organization. And – depending on your group – the member with the most Toastmasters experience may be the 23-year-old.

A Good Habit to Have

Generational differences create a treasure of opportunity! Remember that regardless of age, everyone wants to be appreciated and included, respected and understood. Make it a habit to seek to understand people of different age groups, and watch what happens. Not only will your club flourish, but you will be a better and more fulfilled leader as a result. Imagine what's possible! 

Maureen Zappala, ACS, ALB is a member of the Independently Speaking club in Independence, Ohio, and Westside Advanced club in Westlake, Ohio. She was a finalist in the 2009 World Championship of Public Speaking. Contact her at mzappala@roadrunner.com.

Fostering a club culture of collaboration.

By Misti Burmeister

Generations Working Together

When corporate executives face an aging workforce that's nearing retirement, they want to attract and retain young employees while motivating the older ones to mentor them. This is an area where business leaders who are also Toastmasters have an advantage.

As an expert in generational issues, I've been approached by corporate leaders who ask for a one-size-fits-all approach to motivating employees. I could suggest several perks that appeal to most workers, but the answer to the problem – fostering a culture of collaboration and information-sharing across generations – isn't as simple as that. Research shows that employees, regardless of age, will work harder and stay with the company longer *if they feel valued and trust their leaders*.

The key to retaining and motivating employees is to make them feel that their voices are valued. In the end, leadership boils down to communication. For leaders to be effective, they must learn how to inspire and motivate professionals of different generations. This means getting to know them, *listening* to them and learning how to communicate in ways that resonate.

That's where Toastmasters helps. Whether you're a young professional trying to get your voice heard in the boardroom or an experienced leader trying to get young professionals to care about their jobs, Toastmasters gives you the opportunity to communicate

and build relationships with talented professionals from many generations – in a supportive, safe and low-stress environment. Through Toastmasters, you learn how to:

Value Their Voices: You cannot effectively lead a team of people you do not know. Communicating with professionals from a range of generations requires understanding them – their struggles and challenges, how they experience life, what's important to them and what excites them. Toastmasters provides an environment in which leaders can get to know and learn from people of different generations. Once they've built relationships, leaders can even ask the younger Toastmasters for advice on challenges they face at work with members of other generations. They can take what they learn into the workplace and use those conversations to understand, motivate and retain their employees.

Value Your Voice: Young professionals have fresh, innovative ideas that are helpful on a variety of levels, like innovation and suggesting creative ways to appeal to their demographics. But their voices are often drowned out because their communication styles don't match those of senior executives. By developing relationships with seasoned professionals in Toastmasters groups, younger members learn from the older members' communication styles, which in turn helps them develop their own voices and confidence.

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ing to learn how to present their ideas in ways that get company executives to take them seriously. What a brilliant use of Toastmasters! Seasoned executives can help them in a mentoring relationship, offering feedback to help strengthen their communication styles. For instance, with many young professionals, enthusiasm often comes across as impatience or immaturity to seasoned executives. A Toastmasters mentor might explain that enthusiasm is a great tool, just not necessary in all circumstances. Younger Toastmasters can benefit from listening to what's important to the people in charge and using that information to focus their ideas.

For some, getting heard in the boardroom may require work: They must value their voice enough to do a bit of research and prepare their comments in advance. Likewise, being an effective leader requires communicating your vision in a way that makes members of every generation feel thrilled to be part of your team.

What is the first step to communicating across generations? Build trust and credibility through relationships! 

Misti Burmeister is the author of the Washington Post best-seller *From Boomers to Bloggers: Success Strategies Across Generations*. She is a member of the Speak Always With Confidence (SAIC) club and the APL (Applied Physics Laboratory) club, both located in Maryland. Reach her at MB@InspirionLLC.com.



Twitter + People = FUN!

By Jeff Bailey, CL

Finding Tweeples

I recently used my cell phone to solve a real-life television mystery. Celebrity chef Rick Bayless stars in the show *Mexico – One Plate at a Time*, where he talks about cooking Mexican food. Bayless grows vegetables on the roof of his famous Chicago restaurant, Frontera Grill, but he doesn't explain how to grow rooftop veggies – and I had to know.

Enter Twitter.

Using the search feature, I quickly found his Twitter username (**@Rick_Bayless**) and became a follower. One tweet was all it took to get my answer. Today, I grow vegetables just like he does. I don't think that I would be doing it without Twitter.

You have the same opportunity. Do you want to ask Bill Gates (**@BillGates**) about his foundation? You can. Do you want to laugh? Follow funnyman Tim Siedell at **@BadBanana**. Do you want to know what American business leader Jack Welch is thinking? Follow him at **@jack_welch**.

Finding Folks to Follow

Now that you're on Twitter, you'll want to find *Tweeples* – that is, people on Twitter. Twitter makes this easy. There is a "Who to Follow" section on its main Web page. The names listed there are based on things such as your location and who you currently follow. If you see someone who looks interesting, click the "Follow" button to the right of their username.

The Twitter search feature is a great way to find people who are discussing things that interest you. After finding them, don't immediately join the conversation – observe for a while. Once you understand the flow of things, jump in with both feet. You'll be ready to meet "tweeps" like these:

Presenters at the 2011 Toastmasters International Convention

Arrive at the Convention early – and then make the most of it while you're there by following these confirmed Convention presenters:

@Toastmasters – This is the Twitter account of Toastmasters International. Be sure to keep up with the latest news and organization updates from World Headquarters.

@Santojcosta – Sandy Costa, author, business leader and Toastmaster, dips into his 40 years of leadership experience to share stories and advice to help people improve their personal and professional lives.

@Sindymartin – Sindy Martin, DTM, an expert on personal brand and generational differences, can "Smartin'Up" your professionalism and etiquette know-how.

@LaughLadyDiva – Linda Henley-Smith will help you "lose the excuses" so that you can accomplish your goals in life.

@transitionman – Accredited speaker, Johnny Campbell, DTM, shares important things about the Accredited Speaker program.

@DarrenLacroix – Lacroix, the 2001 World Champion of Public Speaking, will show you how to speak outside of Toastmasters for fun, profit and club-building.

@Comediandan – Stand-up comedian and Toastmaster Dan Nainan will perform for the audience at the opening night ceremony.

@RockStarSystem – Craig Duswalt explains how to achieve Rockstar status in your industry.

@ByronEmbry – Toastmaster Byron Embry, a former professional baseball player, discusses how to protect yourself from assaults on your character.

@_robin_sharma – Golden Gavel recipient and leadership expert Robin Sharma will speak at the Convention.

@davelogan1 – Dave Logan will inspire you with his keynote speech, “Tribal Leadership: How to Build a Thriving Organization.”

Public Speaking and Leadership

@BertDecker – Bert Decker is the founder of Decker Communications and the author of *You've Got to be Believed to be Heard*, an outstanding book on communicating to influence.

@DrNickMorgan – Morgan is a presentation coach who wrote one of my favorite books on public speaking, *Give Your Speech, Change the World*. When I was a Toastmasters club president, I used to buy this book and give it to new members. He routinely tweets presentation tips.

@maxatkinson – Dr. Atkinson is a United Kingdom researcher, consultant and public speaking coach. He is a thought-provoking individual who offers many good tips about communication.

@MartinShovel – Martin Shovel is a communications expert, speechwriter, animator and blogger from the United Kingdom. He is highly interactive and his animations are a treat.

@maniactive – Laura Bergells, who possesses a great sense of humor, tweets and blogs about “the art + creativity of presentation.”

@LisaBraithwaite – Braithwaite is a public speaking coach who helps her students build skills and confidence.

@scottmckain – Scott McKain writes about all things related to leadership. He is also an outstanding public speaker.

@MichaelHyatt – Michael Hyatt tweets about leadership-related topics, and he has a stellar blog.

@MarionChapsal – Marion Chapsal is a leadership blogger based in France. She also is very interested in public speaking.

@StephenRCovey – Covey has helped countless people and organizations worldwide learn the power of his book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*.

@lizstrauss – Liz Strauss offers information on brand strategy and leadership. She'll help you find ways to connect with potential members.

@tom_peters – Peters tweets daily and offers expert advice on corporate leadership.

@Leadershipfreak – Dan Rockwell offers many great tips on leadership and reaching higher goals.

@J_Canfield – The co-creator of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* book series has plenty to say about setting goals and reaching them.

@ProfessorGary – Gary Schirr offers practical advice on creativity in business.

@mwbuckingham – Do you know your strengths? Best-selling author Marcus Buckingham, a former Toastmasters Golden Gavel recipient, shares valuable information.

@KevinEikenberry – Eikenberry, a former Toastmaster, offers tips to help you become even more remarkable in your supervisory role.

@MeredithMBell – Bell offers encouragement and thought-provoking quotes to help you stay on track in your personal development.

Social Media, Marketing and Blogging

@ChrisBrogan – Chris Brogan is a noted blogger and speaker. He is very responsive to questions.

@ThisIsSethsBlog – Seth Godin is one of the best bloggers on the Internet. If you don't read his blog, you should. He tweets links to his blog.

@probblogger – Darren Rowse is an Australian blogging institution. He knows it all and shares.

@waltmossberg – Mossberg, a technology columnist for *The Wall Street Journal* and co-executive editor of **allthingsd.com**, offers expert opinions on ... *all things digital*.

@Pistachio – Want to learn more about Twitter? Laura Fitton is the founder and CEO of **oneforty.com**, a website devoted to Twitter and business. She also co-authored *Twitter for @Dummies*.

Have Fun!

This should give you enough information to get started. Remember to have a good time. The tweeples described in this article are popular or growing in popularity, and they often “engage” with their followers, meaning that you can send tweets and receive a response. Sticking with Twitter is a surefire way to meet some very nice people, and it is a great learning experience.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me on Twitter. 

Jeff Bailey, CL, a former Toastmaster, is a computer consultant and trainer in Cary, North Carolina. Reach him on Twitter at **@Jeff_Bailey** or visit his Twitter home page at **twitter.com/Jeff_Bailey**.

Announcing Toastmasters' 2011 Golden Gavel Recipient:

Robin Sharma



This summer, at the 2011 International Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada, Toastmasters International will honor Robin Sharma with the prestigious Golden Gavel award for his achievements as a leadership and management expert, author and advisor to Fortune 500 CEOs. The award is given annually to an individual distinguished in the fields of communication and leadership.

"Leadership comes in many forms. It is dependent on your confidence and ability to communicate and relate to others," says Toastmasters International President Pat Johnson. "We selected Robin Sharma as this year's Golden Gavel recipient because his messages of leadership resonate with the world today – especially his point that you don't need a title to be a leader."

Known for his insights regarding self-improvement, Sharma is the founder of Sharma Leadership International Inc., a global training firm that assists people to "lead without a title." Sharma says the biggest misconception about leadership is that it's only for CEOs. "Real leadership is not about prestige, power or status. It is about responsibility."

In his newest book, *The Leader Who Had No Title*, Sharma encourages everyone to take responsibility and show leadership. "Titles are important for structure and order, but real power does not come from titles," he says. "It comes from bringing passion to the workplace by making each person realize his true potential. We all have the power to show leadership at work and in the world. Because leadership really comes down to three things: Influence, impact and inspiration."

To motivate volunteers, Sharma says, "Once volunteers are mentored and reminded of the difference they make, you don't really need to motivate them. Their natural energy and passion begins to take over."

The former lawyer delivers seminars and keynotes around the world and is known for his dynamic speaking style. Sharma's clients include Microsoft, General Electric, NASA and IBM. He has been profiled by media outlets such as CNN, MSNBC and the Biography Channel. His 11 books, including *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* and *The Greatness Guide* series, have been published in more than 50 countries and 70 languages.

While a student, Sharma served as a judicial law clerk to the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia. After earning two law degrees, he worked as a lawyer for the Canadian federal government and published scholarly articles. His interest turned toward personal development when he left law to embark on a 10-year quest for knowledge, traveling around the

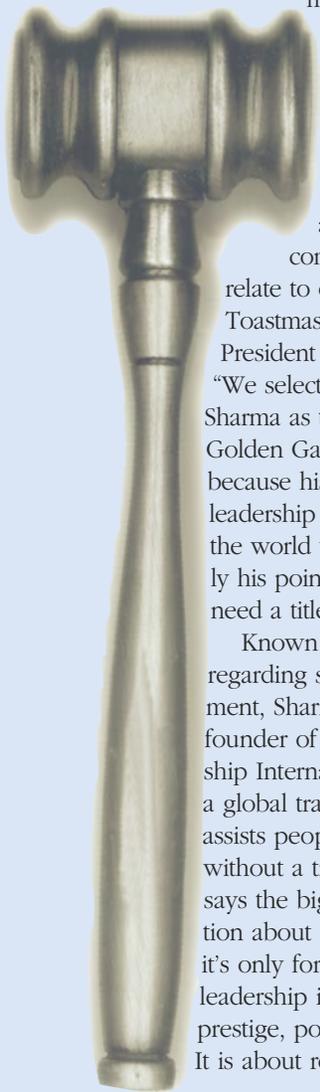
world. "I had lost a clear sense of the vision and values instilled in me as a child and was no longer driven by any mission or passion," he says. "I made the difficult decision to pull back from the noise of my life and reinvent the way I was living and leading."

Sharma self-published his first book, *MegaLiving*, at a print shop in the early '90s. It was edited by his mother, and he stored a few hundred copies in his kitchen. His second book, an allegory titled *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, was originally self-published. Eventually, a major publishing company's president discovered it in a bookstore and took over its publication.

Through his website, robinsharma.com, and conferences such as "The Remarkable Entrepreneur SuperConference" held in Toronto in June, he offers leadership content and advice for business owners and entrepreneurs.

Sharma pays it forward by helping children become leaders through The Robin Sharma Foundation for Children. To be a leader, says Sharma, "being a good communicator is significant, but not as significant as helping other people."

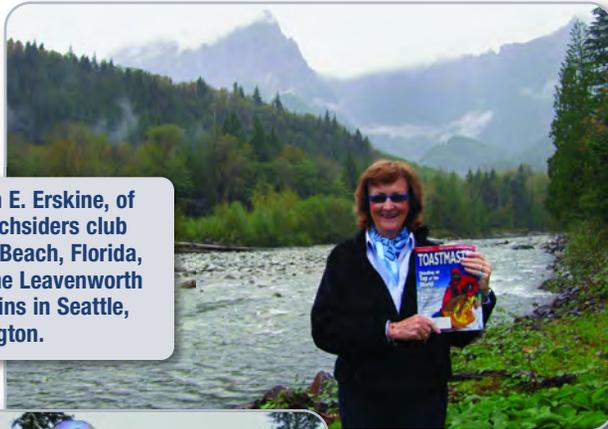
Robin Sharma will speak at the Golden Gavel Dinner on August 19 at the Toastmasters International Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada. Don't miss your opportunity to learn from this remarkable leadership expert. For Convention details and registration information, please visit toastmasters.org/2011Convention. 



The Traveling *Toastmaster*

Picture yourself here! Bring the *Toastmaster* magazine with you as you travel and pose with it in your exciting surroundings. Email the high-resolution image to photos@toastmasters.org. Bon Voyage!

► Gwyn E. Erskine, of the Beachsiders club in Vero Beach, Florida, visits the Leavenworth mountains in Seattle, Washington.



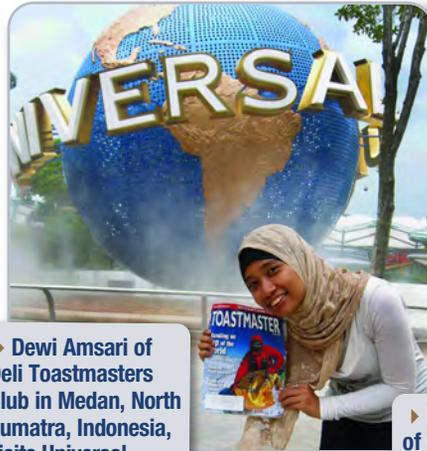
▲ Robinson D'Souza of Bangalore Toastmasters club in Bangalore, Karnataka, India, visits Three Sisters rock formation in the Blue Mountains, NSW, Australia.



▲ Jonathan Siegel of the Thornhill Club in Thornhill, Ontario, Canada, skis at Lake Louise in Alberta, Canada.



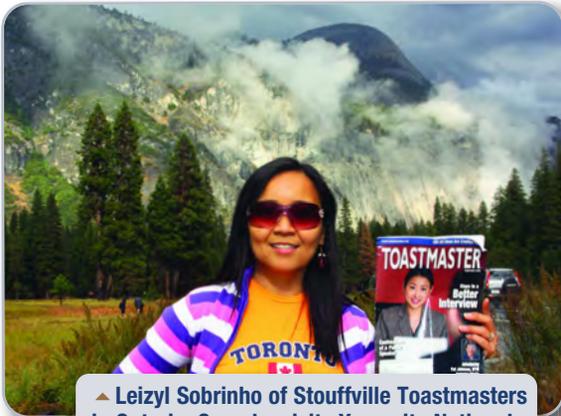
► Dewi Amsari of Deli Toastmasters Club in Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia, visits Universal Studios Singapore.



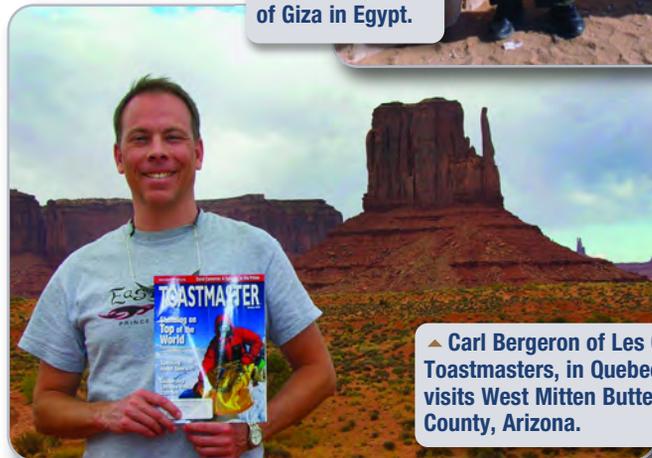
► Penny Cochran of 610 Talks Toastmasters in Chicago, Illinois, visits the Pyramids of Giza in Egypt.



▲ Leizyl Sobrinho of Stouffville Toastmasters in Ontario, Canada, visits Yosemite National Park in California.



▲ Carl Bergeron of Les Optimates Toastmasters, in Quebec, Canada, visits West Mitten Butte in Navajo County, Arizona.





You've Got *Guests*

**How to turn nervous club visitors
into eager club members.**

By Craig Harrison, DTM

Do you remember your first visit to a Toastmasters club and the nervousness you felt? Did it begin at the door – or even earlier, when you parked your car? Or did it start the week before, when you told someone you would visit her club?

Considering how nervous you were then, isn't it remarkable how confident you feel now? We've all come a long way!

Karina Lawrence is a native of Russia who lives in Oakland, California. When one of her business-school friends at San Francisco's Golden Gate University raved about Toastmasters, Karina decided to visit a local club. She felt nervous and apprehensive.

"Would I like them?" Lawrence remembers thinking. "Would they like me? Would they aggressively sell me on joining?" Then she arrived at the meeting – and her anxieties were put to rest. "People were so nice – to me and to each other – before, during and after the meeting," Lawrence recalls. "They cared and made it fun. People were professional, yet warm." Naturally, she joined the club!

Going From Fear to Fun

Guests visiting your club may feel the nervousness you long ago vanquished. The secret to allaying their anxieties? Turn their fear into fun. Your attentiveness toward guests comforts and nourishes them. When you prepare for their arrival, welcome them on entry, take the time to understand their needs and fears, you show them that you care. This thoughtful approach helps guests want to join your club.

Once the meeting starts and people are laughing, applauding and succeeding, your club sells itself. It's a wonderful example of the law of attraction.

Did you realize the guests who come through your club's doors represent your club's future? Aim to meet their needs and they'll serve your club well. Together you'll succeed.

Make Your Club Easy to Access

For some people, finding your club, or even information about its meeting time and location, poses an obstacle. Is your club listed accurately on the Toastmasters International website – with a current contact name and phone number, meeting day and time, and address? How about your own district's website? Are you listed with online community calendars of local newspapers? Are you using **MeetUp.com**, **Craigslist.org** or other websites and services to promote your club? Current information signals to guests that yours is a well-functioning club.

Literally as well as virtually, can your club be found? Is your banner displayed prominently? Do you display any signs? Some community clubs can be more difficult to find because they meet within companies, within business parks or in meeting rooms at banks, churches or shopping malls. Don't frustrate visitors and provide reasons for them to give up.

Enlist the help of security personnel, receptionists and concierges to route wayward guests to your meeting. Purchase signage from the Toastmasters online store to help direct guests to the right place.

Helpful Hints

Each club can designate a phone number for guests to call to get more information.

- Is yours a recording?
- If you record an outgoing message on behalf of your club, is your voice pleasant? Do you sound upbeat and friendly? Do you identify yourself clearly so strangers know they've reached a club representative?
- Do you clearly enunciate when and where your club meets?
- Do you encourage callers to record their name and phone number, slowly, so someone can call them back?
- Do you share your club's website clearly so people can find more information about when and where you meet?

Reassuring callers is as important as imparting the who, what, where, when, why and how of your club's meetings. Remember, people are nervous and likely uncertain of what Toastmasters is about. Your ability to paint a rosy picture makes visiting your club more inviting.

On Arrival - Badges, Banter and Buddies

When guests arrive it's important to welcome them with open arms. Officers in particular should be on the lookout for guests. As you approach them, wearing your badge and demonstrating interest, guests relax and open up.

“Is your club listed accurately on the Toastmasters International website – with a current contact name and phone number, meeting day and time, and address?”

Their doubts about Toastmasters start to disappear. It's a good idea to brief club members in advance about visitors you know are coming; that will make for a warmer welcome when they arrive.

Don't underestimate the importance of casual banter with guests before the meeting starts. Ask them how they heard about the club, whether they've attended a meeting before and what they are looking for. Congratulate them on their courage to visit.

Gently invite them to sign your guest register and to include a phone number or email for follow-up.

Introducing guests to others is both hospitable and helpful, since they might be nervous among people they don't know. Remember, they're in your house! You are the host; it's your duty to help guests feel welcome.

Accord visitors a seat of honor, and make sure a veteran sits next to them who can help make sense of the parade of participants, titles and roles. If you're a "buddy" seated next to a guest, help them sift through the various sheets of paper in front of them: the agenda, evaluation forms, voting slips and other items.

Alert guests that they will be asked to introduce themselves toward the beginning of the meeting, though they will be under no obligation to speak otherwise. Most clubs will offer guests two other opportunities to speak: during Table Topics and toward the end of the meeting, when they are asked to share their impressions of what they have seen.

If the guest has been invited by a club member, allow that person to introduce them. Praise both the guest and member – and offer some applause.

Sensitivity to Guests

When guests visit your club, be aware that they don't know how a club meeting works. Each member, upon being introduced for a meeting role, should describe to guests how that role works and how it fits into the meeting. For instance, the Topicsmaster and timer should each explain their roles during the impromptu portion of the meeting, before initiating the Table Topics session. In addition, don't call on guests to participate in Table Topics until they've seen several responses. That way, guests will be more familiar with, and thus confident in, responding to a topic when asked.

Mind Your Manners

One of the quickest ways to offend guests and scare them away is when members tell inappropriate jokes or use offensive language. I've visited clubs where I got the impression everyone in the club shared certain political beliefs; this made me feel less than welcome. No club should be so politicized that people of any political leaning or religious belief (including non-believers) might feel self-conscious or out of place. Toastmasters should be open to all who are respectful, polite and supportive. The only loyalty oath required is the Toastmasters Promise!

Be a uniter, not a divider. Make your club inviting to all.

Provide Materials

Many new clubs provide visitors with a sample *Toastmaster* magazine, brochures, information on the history of their club, a newcomer's orientation sheet and other documents that help guests understand club and district missions, meeting processes, club roles, educational programs and even the district hierarchy. These tangible

A Cordial Contact

By Craig Harrison, DTM

Your club can benefit greatly by designating an experienced member to be the "first contact" for guest inquires. Bill Young serves in that role for Lakeview Club in Oakland, California. He shares his insights on how to help guests enjoy the Toastmasters experience.

The Toastmaster: Bill, as the contact for club visitors, what are your goals when someone calls to inquire about Toastmasters?

Bill Young: I introduce myself and ask a few initial questions:

- What do you know about Toastmasters?
- What would you like to know about Toastmasters?
- What are your objectives for calling? What is motivating your interest in us?
- Have you ever been to a meeting before? If so, what were your impressions?

What about your style on the phone?

I chat with them. Sometimes callers are nervous talking to a stranger. I try to relax them.

What else do you ascertain during this initial call?

After giving them our meeting address, time and frequency, I ask if I can send them directions to our meeting room. If so, I collect their email address. Otherwise, I ask for their phone number so we can follow up.

I also make sure I have their full name and can pronounce it. In turn, I share with them particular information about our club – not just where and when it meets, but also the dress code, parking information and a bit about the demographic makeup of our members.

Do callers have pre-conceived notions of what will occur at a meeting?

Some do. I let them know they're under no pressure to speak at the meeting. They can simply observe.

Then what do you do?

Once a guest has attended a meeting or two, or even joined, I'll suggest we meet over coffee to orient them to the club, its members and what's available to them. I'll provide them with some materials, such as the booklet *A Toastmaster Wears Many Hats*, to familiarize them with roles and responsibilities. I also suggest they watch the DVD *Welcome to Toastmasters!*

Why do you serve in this role?

It is gratifying. You never know when people call if they'll even show up to a meeting. Those who attend, and join, benefit greatly from the experience. It's fun to see them grow.

materials may add to the guest experience and provide visitors a resource during and after the meeting.

Request Feedback

Before the meeting ends, it's important to ask guests for feedback. Giving them the option to reply, the club president can let visitors know how important feedback is for all Toastmasters. You can learn a lot about the guest's experience by their responses. Some are dazzled by meetings, others just dizzy. For some, it can be dull or drab; others experience meetings as dynamic. If they have questions, you can answer them during the meeting or thereafter. Invite them to return to the next meeting, or – if they seem ready – invite them to join.

Toward the end of the meeting, as your club confirms next week's assignments, you can ask guests if they'd like to return to the next meeting and fulfill a modest role such as delivering a closing or opening thought or joke, or serving as timer. Either way, you are subtly setting an expectation that they will return.

Both publicly and privately, thank your guests for coming. Encourage other officers and members to chat with them, thank them for coming and invite them to return. And of course, invite them to join!

A follow-up phone call from a club leader after the meeting is often a nice touch and vital to making guests feel welcome. During this call you can allay any new or lingering fears they may be harboring. Some members even meet for coffee or tea with a guest after their first meeting to seal the deal.

Realistically, not every guest will or should join your club. Through no fault of your own, some guests aren't ready, or prefer a club meeting in a different location, at a different time of day or with a different feel, culture or blend of members. Sometimes timing, cost or other issues are at play. Don't force it. It's all about fit!

The good news: When you are inviting and hospitable, put on a good show, and listen and share, chances are good that a significant number of guests will want to join your club. Simply put, these guests represent the future of your group. So remove the guessing from guest visits – welcome these people graciously and soon you'll be voting them into your club! 📌

Craig Harrison, DTM, is a professional speaker and member of Lakeview Club in Oakland, California. In July 1992, he was a guest of Lakeview Club – and he has returned weekly ever since. For more information about Craig, visit SpeakAndLeadWithConfidence.com.

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Susan Lawson, ACB, ALB, enjoys being a club officer and helping her fellow members.

Three leadership opportunities at the heart of every club.

By Dee Dees, DTM, PID

Making the Most of Club Officer Roles

So, the leader is the boss, right? I remember asking that question as a youngster, playing the game “follow the leader” for the first time. It had just been explained to me that I had to do everything the leader told me to do. It sounded pretty much like my Dad’s favorite expression: “Because I’m the boss and I said so!”

I’ve long since learned that a leader is not always a boss. In fact, a good leader is part of the team, but he or she also knows when to be a follower. In Toastmasters clubs – as in other organizations, corporations and even countries – the president is the avowed leader, the person others look to for guidance. But the other club officers are also leaders. They’re either leading a committee or the activities associated with their office. For example, a vice president membership (VPM) leads membership campaigns.

How these officers accomplish their goals can make the difference between a well-run, fun club and a disorganized, struggling one. It can also mean the difference between officers enjoying their terms... or just getting through them.

In a previous article about club leadership (“Congratulations! You’re a Leader!” March 2011), I looked at the offices of president and vice president education. This article will focus on the vice president membership, vice president public relations (VPPR) and sergeant at arms (SAA); these officers work together to bring guests into the meeting, make them feel comfortable and, ideally, help them become new club members.

Members who are successful in these roles use creative and resourceful thinking to make an impact. After all, innovation is a hallmark of a good leader!

Vice President Public Relations

The VPPR officers are tasked with generating publicity about their clubs to help gain more members and create a favorable image of the Toastmasters program. They spread the word to nonmembers, organizations and the media about the club’s existence, activities and successes.

One of the most determined VPPRs I have come across is Donoley Williams in Chicago,

Illinois. A Toastmaster for less than three years, he has already served as VPPR, club president and area governor – and he is currently a division governor. Williams was instrumental in forming the Mercer Chicago Toastmasters club in May 2009. When he took on the role of VPPR, he thought big – *really* big!

“I wanted to do something different in terms of promoting the club to attract more members,” he says.

Williams contacted local government officials and local sports figures, knowing that visits from individuals of this caliber would draw guests and potential members. Realizing these high profile individuals had busy schedules, he didn’t expect responses any time soon. But letters and phone calls came within a week. Many declined the invitation, but some – including Senator Dick Durbin from Illinois – expressed interest in attending a district event. And former National Football League player Nolan Harrison joined a club, viewing it as an opportunity for him and his two daughters to learn from the Toastmasters experience.

Williams is not afraid to ask for what he wants – he knows the worst that can happen is that he'll receive a "no." The "yeses" make it worth the effort, says Williams.

Daphne Gilman also blends creativity and enthusiasm to impact her club. She is the director of strategic alliances at BIO5 Institute, a renowned science research center at the University of Arizona. In 2009 she founded the Women of Biosciences Toastmasters club at the university.

"I knew how beneficial Toastmasters training had been for my career and wanted to offer the same professional development opportunities to the research scientists affiliated with the BIO5 Institute," Gilman notes.

Currently the club's VPPR, she generates interest in Toastmasters with a variety of tactics. Gilman's club often has a booth at public events, and usually offers a raffle ticket to people who sign up for Toastmasters information. The prize? A DVD of the Academy Award-winning film *The King's Speech*. The movie demonstrates how anyone – even someone with a speech impediment – can become an accomplished speaker. The movie prize was perfect for motivating individuals to improve their communication skills.

One of the best payoffs for Gilman stemmed from a casual invitation. When, at the last minute, a fellow club officer had to cancel attendance at a Toastmasters Leadership Institute event, Gilman spontaneously invited a non-Toastmasters friend to go with her, since the slot had been paid for. Her friend, Angelika Reiss, was so impressed that she immediately joined Daphne's club. A few months later, Angelika was instrumental in starting the University of Arizona Toastmasters club, with a large charter membership of university employees. Sometimes just a thoughtful gesture is the best PR!

Vice President Membership

The Vice President Membership (VPM) is responsible for building and maintaining a strong membership base. Jim Davis, DTM, came up with a fun idea to motivate his fellow club members to bring new people into the group. A member of four clubs in Arizona, Davis served as VPM last year for his home club, the Eye-openers, in the city of Tucson. Showing an appetite for creativity, he instituted the "Steak and Hamburgers" contest. The club was split into two teams for the month-long event: When a member successfully invited a guest to a club meeting, the person's team won points; if an invited guest eventually joined the club, the member responsible earned even more points for the team.

At the end of the month, the club held a social function, and the team with the higher points was served steak... by the team that lost. The latter team ate hamburgers.

Recently, Davis came up with a new twist: He encouraged his club to host individual contests, where one member challenges another to see who can bring in more members in a month. At the end of the month, the one with more points is treated to breakfast by the other member.

Sometimes your club's reputation is its strongest selling point when it comes to drawing new members. Davis, a Toastmaster for nearly 30 years, says the Eye-openers typically gets about 25 to 35 guests at club meetings during a year – and a third of those typically join the club.

"The thing that's always worked best for us is word of mouth," he says.

Sergeant at Arms

The sergeant at arms (SAA) is responsible for maintaining club properties, arranging the meeting and welcoming members and guests at each meeting. Andrew Hatch, SAA for the University of Arizona Catmasters Club, goes out of his way to make everyone feel as comfortable as possible.

"When someone new attends, I make sure they will be interested in returning," he says. "I always greet every person who walks in the room. First-time attendees are probably nervous and second-guessing whether they should even be there. I was the same way."

Hatch hands guests a ballot and explains its use, so they'll have an opportunity to participate in the meeting. He also makes sure guests get a copy of the *Toastmaster* magazine, so they will have a better understanding of what the organization is about and what it can do for them.

"A little gift like that usually relaxes people and also gives them a physical reminder," he says. The magazine prompts them to say, "Hey, remember that Toastmasters thing? I should go to that."

"I believe sergeant at arms is the most important social role within a club," adds Hatch. "It's their job to make sure everyone has a good time, so I always try to be enthusiastic and make meetings as much fun as possible."

He is indeed making an impact. Marcia Roberts, Lt. governor marketing for District 3, says of Hatch: "His enthusiasm is contagious!"

These three officers – vice president membership, vice president public relations and sergeant at arms – are all crucial to creating quality meetings, increasing membership and retaining members. Working together, the three can do much to build a strong, healthy club. And when they employ creative thinking in their roles, they have more fun and contribute to the enjoyment of other club members. 

Dee Dees, DTM, is a 30-year member of the Gilbert Toastmasters Club in Gilbert, Arizona, who served on the Toastmasters International Board of Directors from 1994 to 1996. A Personal Historian and author of two books on life-writing, she can be reached at deedees@lifestorylady.com.



What does your teen mean?

Peace Out, Dude

When my editor asked me to write about intergenerational communication, I said, “Oh, you mean you want a column on oxymorons?” If you have a teenager in the house, you know what I mean. (If you don’t, I’d be happy to loan you mine. He comes with all his papers and shots and I can personally attest to his pedigree as a McDonald’s-fed, MTV-raised, purebred American teenager, with all the trademark characteristics of the breed.)

Communication means to impart knowledge. When my teenager talks to me, no knowledge is imparted.

“What did you do in school today?”
“Not much.”

This is what I’m paying school taxes for. I’ll be spending even more when he goes to college. For what? A bachelor’s degree in Not Much.

I realize my son does a good many things in school. He just doesn’t want to tell me about them. Okay, I get it. I’m the authority figure he is programmed to resist. I know he communicates with his friends. I overhear them. For instance, my son doesn’t say “good-bye” when parting with his peers. He says, “Peace out.” What does *that* mean? Peace is a noun, not a verb. I’m assuming it has something to do with maintaining a state of tranquility, but then why the “out”? Is it like “bliss out,” which in my generation meant living in a commune with a guru who was actually a disbarred attorney from Sandusky, Ohio, wanted in 14 states for tax evasion? In my peace-as-noun world, one seeks the condition

through the things one does. The peace-as-verb version seems to assume that one has already attained the blissful state and is doing something with it. Well, my son sleeps 14 hours a day while I stay up all night worrying about him sleeping 14 hours a day. Maybe he is at peace.

I’ve also heard my son refer to something as “sick.” It doesn’t mean sick. It has nothing to do with health, diseased or otherwise. It means the opposite: cool, hip, with it. You’ll be pleased to know that as a parent you will never, ever be referred to as sick. Even when you really are sick the phrase is more likely to be, “Hey Dad, if you’re gonna throw up all day, can I have the car?”

Then there’s “mad sick,” which if I understand correctly is sickness multiplied. Caution: If you hear something referred to as mad sick, it will probably be very expensive, in which case you’ll either be mad that they’re asking for it or sick because you bought it. Things that are mad sweet or mad crazy are probably things you don’t want to know about, either.

Things can also be “sketchy.” My understanding of sketchy is a little, well, sketchy, but from what I can gather it implies a degree of suspicion regarding a person or situation. I like the word. It pretty much sums up the way I feel about teenagers in general. But I can’t say it. If you think your offspring regard you as a Doddering Old Goat now, wait until you try to sound hip by appropriating one of their catchphrases. The room will become

silent. You will feel stares of contempt burning into your flesh like surgical lasers. And you will know beyond a shadow of a doubt that you have just become the Most Uncool Carbon-Based Life Form in the Known Universe.

And finally, there’s “dude.” Boys are “dude,” girls are “dude” and, saints preserve us, Dads are “dude.” I remember the first time it happened. My son was 14 and we were in the car. Directing me to his friend’s house, he said, “Dude, turn here.”

“Excuse me?”

“Turn here.”

“No, the first part. Did you say ‘dude’ or ‘dad’?”

“Why?”

I then proceeded to tell him why: “When you call me dude you are putting me on an equal footing with your friends. That would mean that I have no authority over you. Rest assured, that is not the case. I feed you, clothe you, educate you and house you. I have 60 years of life experience and you have a 14-year-old brain driven by hormonal surges, primitive impulses and unbridled self-interest. You need guidance, authority and boundaries, and I am here to provide them. That’s what Dads do, not dudes. Understood?”

My son looked at me and said, “Dad, I was just giving directions. I mean, dude... chill.” ☐

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