

TOASTMASTER®

April 2011

Say Goodbye to
Stage Fright!

Tips on
Filling Those
Club Roles

How to Write Your Speech
In One Hour





The Gift of Evaluation

"Feedback should always be accepted for what it is – a gift. Too often, though, it's deployed as a weapon. Deliver it with care, accept it with appreciation."

– Jim Gray, professional speaker

Effective, constructive evaluations are critical to the health of our clubs. They provide members with the opportunity to either flourish or leave discouraged. We've all heard stories of the overly critical evaluation that devastates a speaker. And we've also heard the empty words, "I can't think of a thing to suggest for improvement." Clearly, evaluators play a vital role in Toastmasters.

One of my pet peeves is an evaluation that begins, "That was an excellent speech" and then paraphrases the message. As speakers, we are well aware of the content. We need helpful and appropriate suggestions on how to improve. Once we know *how* to become better, we do. Evaluators, please articulate clearly what we can do differently. Share your impressions and opinions as a gift to the speaker, and let the speaker decide how to incorporate that feedback.

Some people fear giving an evaluation. Yet the criteria and information found in the Communication manuals make the job easier. When we read the speaker's assignment in advance, we uncover helpful cues that make us more effective evaluators. The manuals even provide us with feedback suggestions for when we are challenged.

As we become present in our listening, a fascinating process occurs: We start to *hear* at a much deeper level. As we listen intently, we develop critical thinking skills. We first hear, then analyze, the amazing transitions, triads, alliterations and turns of phrase. The weaving of the secondary story line throughout the primary message becomes audible, as does vocal variety, congruency, construction and all the other elements of a good speech.

Do not rob your speaker of your valuable opinions; you are a member of his or her audience and if you are reacting in a certain way, others in the audience may have similar reactions.

I love evaluations. I've grown in Toastmasters because of the superb evaluations I've received. I remember the feedback I received during my early years in Toastmasters from Joseph, a fellow club member. Each time I spoke, Joseph challenged me to use more vocal variety. During the four years we were in the same club, Joseph never let me off without an analysis of my voice. I can still hear him today, reminding me to use more vocal variety.

Evaluators have a huge responsibility. Strong evaluations are the gift we give each other as Toastmasters. Indeed, both sharing and receiving evaluations fosters the essence of our Toastmasters Promise and mission statement.

Pat Johnson, DTM
International President

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ARTICLES & DEPARTMENTS

- 2 Viewpoint: The Gift of Evaluation**
By International President Pat Johnson, DTM
- 4 Letters to the Editor**
- 5 My Turn: Have Faith in Your Voice**
Lessons from *The King's Speech*:
communication, leadership and process.
By Ben Decker
- 6 Profile: 101-Year-Old Speaks of Life Lessons**
Dick Hendricks, DTM, joined Toastmasters in 1953.
By Arlyene Deus
- 11 For the Novice: Unleash the Power of Three**
Try this technique to jump-start your next speech.
By Fred Domnick, DTM
- 12 Leadership: Climbing the Corporate Ladder**
Advance your career by following
these presentation tips.
By Patricia Fripp, CSP, CPAE
- 14 Dinner Club Celebrates Eating and Oratory**
If you feed them, they will come.
By Nigel Blackwell, ACB, ALB
- 19 Manner of Speaking: So Shy!**
How I climbed out of my
self-imposed prison.
By Amanda Jaucian Balneg, ACB
- 20 Know Thy Fear**
What's the source of your shakes?
By Matt Abrahams
- 23 Postcards: The Traveling Toastmaster**
- 28 What's the Scoop on Your Group?**
Let your club leaders know
with this easy checklist.
- 30 Funny You Should Say That:
How a Pitch Winds Up**
Finding the Wow factor isn't easy.
By John Cadley

FEATURES

Stress Test Your Speaking Skills

Practice for pressure presentations by
writing your speech in one hour.

By Nathan Magnuson

PAGE 8



Say Goodbye to the Stage Fright Blues

Three steps to calm your fears.

By Lesley Stephenson, ACG, CL

PAGE 16



Fill Those Club Roles!

How to get passive members to
engage more in meetings.

By Robert A. Richert, DTM

PAGE 24



A Toastmaster's Promise

As a member of Toastmasters International and my club, I promise...

- To attend club meetings regularly;
- To prepare all of my speech and leadership projects to the best of my ability, basing them on projects in the *Competent Communication* manual, *Advanced Communication* manuals or *Competent Leadership* manual;
- To prepare for and fulfill meeting assignments;
- To provide fellow members with helpful, constructive evaluations;
- To help the club maintain the positive, friendly environment necessary for all members to learn and grow;
- To serve my club as an officer when called upon to do so;
- To treat my fellow club members and our guests with respect and courtesy;
- To bring guests to club meetings so they can see the benefits Toastmasters membership offers;
- To adhere to the guidelines and rules for all Toastmasters educational and recognition programs;
- To maintain honest and highly ethical standards during the conduct of all Toastmasters activities.

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

Lessons in Language and Laughter

How happy I was to see the *Toastmaster's* January issue filled with great articles for our English as a Second Language (ESL) club to read. Part of our mission is to include more American idioms, language mentors and humor in all our meetings. And there in the January issue, on page 8, is the wonderful article "Creating Your Bucket List," by Craig Harrison, and the idiomatic expression "to kick the bucket."

Then on page 14 is "The Joy of Mentoring" (Bob Armstrong) – a bushel of rewards and dividends to delight potential and existing mentors and mentees. And, since our club feels that humor is important, the article "Humor Boosters" (Gene Perret) on page 16 is simply a great treat.

I encourage each of our members, mentors and friends to read and re-read this January issue and to keep it as a "Meeting of the Minds" to treasure forever.

Dr. Patricia Adelekan, DTM • English as a Second Language Club No. 1 Santa Ana, California

Stuttering Story Resonates

I could relate to many of the experiences described in the article "From Stuttering to Public Speaking" (January) by Julie Bawden Davis. A fellow stutterer encouraged me to join Toastmasters and I am so glad he did. It has been one of the best experiences of my life.

Nobody should be misled into believing that Toastmasters is a *cure* for stuttering. It improved my confidence and provided a forum for me to practice fluency-control strategies that I learned from professional speech pathologists and from The Stuttering Foundation – but Toastmasters is not a substitute for professional help. However, it was a big part of the process for me, and I

encourage anyone else with speech disorders to include Toastmasters as a part of their strategy – along with professional help – to improve their fluency.

Keith Swartz • President, Mead & Hunt Toastmasters Madison, Wisconsin

Stuttering Article Impacts Students

I want to thank the *Toastmaster* magazine for the article "From Stuttering to Public Speaking" (January). I am a speech-language pathologist with an interest in fluency, and I teach master's students in the School of Audiology and Speech Sciences at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. We have a very small onsite clinic for university students who stutter and wish to receive therapy, which is provided by our graduate students.

One client recently joined Toastmasters and is having some success, which is also helping the client's school presentations. Last week this client shared your article with us. I think the article is helping the client better understand the path to increasing confidence and improving public speaking skills.

Lisa Avery, RSLP, Instructor • Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

A Big Accomplishment

I loved the article "Dream Big, Act Big in 2011" (January) by Croix Sather. It was very inspiring and motivating.

As Sather notes, Michelangelo once said, "The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short, but in setting our aim too low and achieving our mark." This is very true.

I have joined the corporate club Alghanim Toastmasters, and so far my journey has been tremendously fun and beneficial. Stage fright always deprived me of speaking in front of large crowds, but now I'm

able to overcome my fear. It's really exciting to think differently and have innovative ideas and style.

This article teaches us that if you are committed and focused, truly nothing is impossible in this world.

Nikita Sequeira • Alghanim Toastmasters • Sufat, Shuwaikh, Kuwait

February Issue Filled with Insights

I just returned from a trip to Bolivia and have been enjoying the cultural flavor of the *Toastmaster's* February issue. Florence Ferreira's article ("What Cultural Lenses Do You Wear?") was right on target! It's difficult to understand that other cultures see and interpret the world very differently from how we do. It's a major challenge in our culturally diverse workplaces.

Ferreira gave great examples and suggestions for seeing the world through another's eyes.

Beth Black's article ("Found in Translation") offers great guidelines for both speakers and interpreters. In my role as an interpreter, my responsibilities often include interpreting impromptu conversations and meetings. Checking technical vocabulary and idioms are especially critical for a good translation. I often share responsibilities with English interpreters, and we help each other with any problem areas – including body language.

Black's comments on the pause are especially important. To give the audience a true interpretation, the speaker should allow time for interpretation of a single thought before continuing. This gives the audience (and the interpreter) time to digest the content.

The February issue will become a permanent part of my research and resource files. Thanks for another fact-filled, value-packed issue!

Linda Allen, ACB • Pacesetters Toastmasters • Stillwater, Oklahoma

Lessons from *The King's Speech*: communication, leadership and process.

Have Faith in Your Voice

† *The King's Speech* is a film relevant to anyone who speaks publicly. Don't miss this inspiring communication experience that, by the time you read this, will probably have won several Academy Awards.

"You must have faith in your voice!"

That's my favorite line from speech therapist Lionel Logue (brilliantly played by Geoffrey Rush) as he exhorts the soon-to-be King of England. And that is the single most important principle that any speech coach can tell their client. The fact is, we all need to speak – powerfully – if we are to influence and lead. We must have faith in ourselves. And as we learn from the movie, that is particularly important to King George VI if he is to lead in a time of crisis.

The Power of Faith

Leaders need faith in their mission and their team. As the movie trailer tells us, "Some men are born great, others have greatness thrust upon them." The latter was the case for King George VI (powerfully played by Colin Firth). The King did not have faith in himself, his leadership or his team.

Faith in yourself. From the age of 8, Bertie, the Duke of York (his title before he became the King), was a stammerer. It likely stemmed from his autocratic father, King George V, who was fond of yelling, "Just get it out!" If Bertie ever had faith in himself, he sure lost it when he had to speak. Particularly when saying any word with a "k" sound, such as *king*. His journey in building faith and confidence in himself,

with a coach who had faith in him, is the storyline of the movie.

Faith in your support team. He always had great faith in half of his support team – his encouraging wife, Elizabeth (who was the mother of today's Queen Elizabeth II). But he didn't have the critical trust in his coach, the other half of Bertie's support team. Lionel Logue took unusual steps to build that trust, and the movie dramatizes the true story of how the King responded to Logue's efforts – to the coach's trust in him – with courage and hard work.

The Power of the Coach

We are all flawed. Although some may be born for greatness, no one gets there without a coach. We all have to overcome barriers, blocks and boulders. It's true of any athlete, any executive, any person of greatness. They all have coaches. It is inspiring to watch the deeply handicapped King allow Logue to be the wind under his wings.

Relationships are critical. The coach must be a friend and peer – as well as the expert who can help with specialized skills. That was Lionel Logue. The trust that developed with the King was critical to the process.

Continual coaching is essential. Logue and the Duke of York kept at it, for years. They became good friends. It was solely due to this long-term relationship that the King could ultimately shout, "Because I have a voice!"

The Power of the Process

Mechanics and Psychology, Science and Art. I have never seen a film that so brilliantly travels the fine line of logic and emotion in the process of behavior change. Lionel Logue was not "academically" credentialed, but was experientially expert. He studied and applied new methods based on behavioral principles that he found worked for more than 30 years.

Hearing is believing. The Duke had to hear himself before he could believe. In those days there was no video, so Lionel used a gramophone (sound recording) to share the truth with the Duke.

The Powerful Pause. The pause is a simple, mechanical behavioral change that is easy to make. It paid extra dividends for King George. As a stammerer he could even exaggerate the pause to allow time for his mouth to catch up to his mind.

Breaking down barriers. Logue broke down emotional, psychological and social barriers using a variety of processes in his work with the Duke. If he hadn't, the process wouldn't have worked.

Without Logue's help, the King might not have inspired England. Who knows what would have happened to the world? Speaking is powerful.

See the movie. And have faith in your voice. ▣

Ben Decker is the president of Decker Communications, a San Francisco firm specializing in communications coaching. He can be reached at www.decker.com.

**Dick Hendricks, DTM,
joined Toastmasters in 1953.**

101-Year-Old Speaks of Life Lessons

Recently, a group of professionals from the local chamber of commerce was invited to a newly opened retirement complex near Seattle, Washington. They were treated to refreshments as well as a speech given by Richard “Dick” Hendricks, one of the residents. The Toastmaster delivered a 15-minute presentation without notes. He told a joke about an elderly couple struggling with memory loss and held the audience’s attention as he outlined the impact Toastmasters can make on a person’s life.

friend for many years. The Wallingford club meets over lunch every Wednesday, in the back room of the EggCetera Blue Star Cafe. Dick never misses a meeting.

Starting Out

In 1953 Dick was employed by United States General Services Administration (GSA) as a purchasing agent for federal agencies. His duties included giving progress reports to division leaders. “I had no problem writing the reports, but when it came time to discuss them

as he learned to communicate effectively. Eventually he was selected for a promotion over two better-qualified co-workers because of the speaking and leadership skills he developed through Toastmasters, Hendricks says.

He has observed a few changes in the organization since becoming a member. “The basics in Toastmasters have not changed in the past 50 years, but there have been impressive advances in the way we accomplish those basics,” he notes. “One example has been the evolution of the educational materials. Another significant improvement is the increased focus on leadership training. Our beloved organization has indeed matured in many, many ways!”

Hendricks becomes passionate when he talks about the language lessons learned in Toastmasters, such as how words can be used as a tool. “You can use words in a song to sing, or use them to growl and bark at another person.”

Certainly Dick’s words sing, as members of the Wallingford club can confirm. “Dick is a testament to the strength of the entire Toastmasters program,” says Joey Pauley. “He was the first person I met as a prospective member of the Wallingford Toastmasters. He is inviting, friendly, humble and one of the main reasons I joined our club.

“Our beloved organization has indeed matured in many, many ways!”

– Dick Hendricks

Hendricks is 101 years old. Public speaking has been a part of his life for longer than many of us have been alive: He has been a Toastmaster for 58 years. As he told the chamber audience, “I admit to being unique, because at this age I am still able to communicate and get around.”

Hendricks, who is indeed a young-acting 101, is a Distinguished Toastmaster and a member of the Wallingford Toastmasters in Seattle. I am a fellow club member and lucky enough to have been Dick’s

in the task force meetings, I would often repeat myself, stop in mid-sentence and start over, grasp for words, lose my train of thought (and my audience) and generally come across as a stumblebum,” Hendricks recalls. “So when I heard about a meeting that taught people how to express themselves, I knew that was exactly what I needed.”

That year he joined the Public Service Toastmasters club, which met in Seattle and consisted of GSA and U.S. Civil Service Commission employees. He grew in confidence

Centenarian Dick Hendricks is an enthusiastic speaker who never misses a club meeting.

I am proud to spend my Wednesday afternoons with such an inspirational speaker and person.”

Pondering a Presentation

Hendricks says he can stand up and give an improvisational talk about any topic and not be frazzled. Indeed, it's a treat to watch this witty Toastmaster respond to a Table Topic. However, when he was tapped to deliver the speech to the visiting chamber of commerce group, Hendricks grew worried. Thoughts of giving the speech consumed him. When asked why, he replied, “Perhaps because at this age I have more time to think about it.”

He had no need to worry. His enthusiasm was a joy to witness. Hendricks talked to the group about life lessons he's learned in Toastmasters – and said he's still learning.

“This year I have embarked on a new highway to match my age. For those of you familiar with Highway 101 on the California coast, you will know what I mean when I say the aging process is an excursion.”

Watching Hendricks speak that day, you saw his vast Toastmasters experience and knowledge come into play. His presentation was like a primer on speaking fundamentals:

- Keep it simple.
- Include humor.
- Speak confidently.
- Project your voice.
- Know how to finish promptly and effectively.

And Hendricks walks his talk. One of the chamber members approached him after his speech and told him that he, too, was a Toastmaster. He had considered quitting his club because he was feeling too old for its predominantly younger membership. But after hearing Hendricks' speech, he was encouraged to look at his situation



differently and see himself as a mentor to the group, with something more to offer. The man invited Hendricks to speak to his club, and the centenarian happily accepted.

Recognized for his Accomplishments

In 1988, Hendricks received a Presidential Citation at the Toastmasters International Convention in Washington, D.C. This unassuming man says the highlight of

popping all over the place. What a moment! I stepped close to the President and quietly said, ‘There are hundreds of Toastmasters who deserve this recognition.’ The President said, ‘I know!’

Last year, when Hendricks moved into the new retirement complex, he told a group of residents and staffers at an orientation session, “One of the problems with Toastmasters training is that when people become fluent,

“The basics in Toastmasters have not changed in the past 50 years, but there have been impressive advances in the way we accomplish those basics.”

— Dick Hendricks, DTM

the Convention was listening to the finalists in the International Speech Contest. “What a thrill it was to hear the winners from the eight regions making their presentations in this awesome setting!”

When it was Hendricks' turn to receive his award, then-International President John Fauvel handed him the plaque and certificate. Recalling the scene, Hendricks says:

“Hundreds of Toastmasters applauded, with flash bulbs

you can't shut them up.” Toastmasters is fortunate to have this unofficial ambassador who knows how to wrap up a speech in a timely manner, but doesn't know how to stop accentuating the positive. **T**

Arlyene Dews is a freelance writer and a member of the Wallingford Toastmasters in Seattle, Washington. Reach her at arlyenedews@yahoo.com.

Stress Test

Your Speaking Skills

Practice for pressure presentations
by writing your speech in one hour.

By Nathan Magnuson M.A., CC

Bang, bang-bang, BOOM! It was 3 a.m. and our military base – named Freedom – was under the attack of small firearms and mortar fire for the umpteenth time that chilly night in North Carolina. No matter that this was a field-training exercise and our U.S. Army Special Operations unit was deployed to the fictional country of “Pineland.” We were undergoing a military “stress test” that tested us to the extreme. We once again jumped from our cots, threw on our gear, grabbed our M4 carbine rifles and rushed out to secure the perimeter of the base.

When we finally did get to sleep, fireguard duty awaited. When it was over, I counted a total of two hours and 50 minutes of sleep in three days. I played football in high school, but this was the worst pain I had ever felt.

Several years later, I was on a bus ride with my unit, heading to another base. My training sergeant looked at me and said, “Sergeant Magnuson, Sergeant Tomlinson isn’t going to be able to make the trip. We’re going to need you to give the 30-minute ethics brief to the battalion when we arrive. And FYI, I wouldn’t count on being able to use a slide projector.”

Gulp. Thirty minutes? The entire battalion? No slides to hide behind? *And only an hour or so to prepare?*

Add Some Stress to Your Speech Preparation

When I was taking “Intro to Public Speaking” in college, our professor told us that good speakers will spend an hour of preparation for every minute of their speech. Furthermore, in a Toastmasters demonstration meeting I attended recently, one seasoned member admitted it had taken him 10 years to finish his *Competent Communication* manual – or, one speech per year. Unfortunately, in professional settings, situations often

**“What better place to ‘practice’
a stress-test project than in
your Toastmasters club?”**

The military has long realized the benefits of “stress testing” in a training environment. The training is designed to push your body past all bounds of reasonable limits, so that if a live mission demanded it, your body could withstand the pressure and – more importantly – your mind would know you could handle it.



“What would happen if you took one assignment from your Toastmasters manual and committed to spending only a single hour in preparation?”

arise in which we are simply not afforded one year of preparation for a speech or one hour per minute of speaking time. I'd like to suggest an intrusive, yet effective solution: Rather than crumble under the impending pressure, initiate your own speaking stress test!

What would happen if you took one assignment from your Toastmasters manual and committed to spending only a single hour in preparation? It might feel as irresponsible as a student waiting for the last second to cram for an exam, but the rewards of learning to construct a sufficient presentation without the benefit of adequate preparation time might far outweigh the cost of apprehension, especially if your professional reputation is ever on the line.

If you think spending only an hour in preparation is extreme, visit a college debate. Many of the debaters only have minutes to prepare for their next speech, furiously preparing their arguments while dealing with the added distraction of their speaking opponents, the

judges and the audience. I'm not suggesting that everyone become a debater, nor am I suggesting that you try this strategy with every speaking project, but why not invest in one stress-test project and see how it turns out? And what better place to “practice” than in your Toastmasters club?

Strategies to Guide You

Following is a game plan to keep in mind, especially when preparing for a speech that must be delivered when time is of the essence. Instead of wondering, “*What am I going to do with the short time I have to prepare?*” these tips can serve as a checklist to get you moving quickly!

1 Answer the Key Question. Each speech or presentation has a purpose or an objective, and your very first job is to discover it. Think of the key question as the “main idea” of the speech. More specifically, ask the question,

“What do I want my audience to think, know or do as a result of my speech?” This clarifying question brings incredible focus to the subsequent period of prep time, essentially putting a fence between all of the relevant and irrelevant information you will be contemplating. As ideas pop into your head, you will be able to reference your objective and quickly decide to engage or dismiss them. The beauty of nailing the key question is that it makes efficient use of the rest of your prep time.

2 Ace the Outline. Some speakers use outlines to speak from and some do not, but if you are giving a presentation with minimal time to prepare, you need a way to organize your content – and quickly! Don’t worry about getting each point and sub-point just right. An outline is designed to save time and eliminate stress, not add to

“The less a speaker is prepared, the longer he or she will usually end up speaking because of the tendency to ramble.”

your problems. Use a top-down approach, beginning with the key question, to uncover at least three main points. Ask yourself, “In light of the purpose of my speech, what are the three things my audience *must* know?” Then record them as simple statements. Once you have your main points, take one at a time and give yourself a chance to find the “key supporting content” for each point. This can be easily summarized in a word or short phrase, giving you the chance to move on quickly.

3 Make It Personal. Your notes may only contain a few short sentences and phrases, yet they will serve as the basis for your whole speech. What your outline lacks, however, is a personal touch. You have information, but now you need an emotional appeal to act as a catalyst. As a general rule of thumb, it is often helpful to add a personal anecdote at the beginning of your speech and again at the end. This is your chance to be creative, given your time constraints. You could use a personal example from your life, or an observation, and relate it to the lives of your audience members as a way to introduce or press home your topic. As you conclude, share how your main points worked out well for you or someone in some way.

Perhaps an illustration for one of your main points or sub-points will come to mind and you can use that as an example. You may utilize these in your outline or notes with a simple “tell ____ story here.”

4 Become Comfortable with Elaboration. Finally, your speech is complete on paper and ready for you to deliver. Your notes are fairly light, just a rough outline of points and illustrations. You have all the necessary content, but need to quickly assess your speaking personality. This tip about elaboration is more of a speaking “posture” than a preparation tool. To “elaborate” simply means to “develop” or “express in greater detail.” We have all encountered “death by PowerPoint” presentations where the presenter quoted the bullet points verbatim from the slides. A good speaker is able to read between the lines and tell the story behind each slide rather than just droning information. This skill of reading between the lines will be especially important in this case, since you will not have time to memorize anything! Your outline will serve the purpose of

breaking up your presentation into a handful of smaller speeches that you should be able to handle.

Believe it or not, the less a speaker is prepared, the longer he or she will usually end up speaking because of the tendency to ramble. And the only thing worse than saying nothing is taking a long time to do it. This makes the stress-test preparation process invaluable, because it adds focus to every part of your speech. As you sharpen your ability to quickly organize thoughts and information, your lack of preparation time will become less and less evident to your audience and maybe even disappear altogether.

Finally, in the U.S. Army Special Operations, as with the rest of the Armed Forces, it is true that once a mission starts, even the best-laid plans may have to be promptly revised if the situation calls for it. So, if all else fails, you can always fall back on the impromptu skills you learned in Table Topics! **T**

Nathan Magnuson, M.A., CC, is a member of the Bennie Bough Toastmasters Club in Springfield, Virginia. He is a leadership coach and consultant. Reach Nathan at nathan@visionchampions.com.

Try this technique to jump-start your next speech.

Unleash the Power of Three

Would you like to quickly develop a speech that is easy to deliver and easy for your audience to listen to and remember? The “Power of Three” can help you achieve this goal.

The Power of Three is a rhetorical device used to make a message memorable. You do this by using three sounds, words or phrases in an established 1-2-3 pattern. In the case of sounds, this device might enhance a phrase with the use of a triple alliteration, as in the political slogan “Tippecanoe and Tyler Too.”

But why limit the Power of Three to a rhetorical device? The use of threes is a highly beneficial strategy for structuring speeches, as well.

Toastmasters begin their journey in the program by learning that a speech should have three sections: an introduction, a body and a conclusion. Even as students, we are often taught to “Tell them what you are going to tell them; tell them, and then tell them what you told them.” While experienced Toastmasters often try to make their speech structures more dynamic, that basic pattern – a simplified use of the introduction-through-conclusion design – is a good overture to the Power of Threes. Try some of the following ideas to add a powerful three-part structure to your next speech:

Your Message: *Crafted, Clear and Cogent*

Can you describe your speech in one sentence? If not, you probably are not ready to present it. If you can, then

you should be able to build everything from the title down to the conclusion in a simple recipe for success.

First, you can derive your title from the summary sentence. It’s a good habit to prepare an introduction for the Toastmaster to read about you and/or the subject of your speech; the last line in that introduction should be your title statement – a sentence that includes your speech title. For example: “Today Justin will be speaking on “The Joy of Reading.”

At some point between your introduction and your body of the presentation, you should make clear that the title rings true with the rest of the speech. A simple way is to say so. This is often referred to as a *Specific Purpose Statement* (SPS). In a fundamental speech structure, an SPS helps the audience know where you are going, for example: “I love reading, and you can too!”

Next comes the body, where you talk about your three points.

Shape the Body by Threes

Do you want to ensure that your five- to seven-minute talk will fit the time requirement precisely? Try this: Limit your body to a maximum of three points. I think we’ve all heard the nine-point speech (or was it 10 points?) that dragged on. After the fourth point the speaker lost his or her audience. If you want your speech to be remembered, give them *three* points. Limiting yourself to three points also helps with memorized speeches – less to remember!

If you find that you have more than three, try to condense and combine similar points. Remember, your audience will be okay if you don’t tell them everything you know about your subject.

Keep it Clear

After the body and before the conclusion, repeat the SPS. You can do this in a way that keeps it clear and interesting, and leads to a call for action or a suggestion for future thought, such as: “Now you know why I love reading. What are *you* going to read today?” Which is a great way to conclude your speech ... and you’re done.

It’s *Fun*-damental!

Is the Power of Three the only structure you can use? Is it a panacea for all your speech preparation problems? Is it the Holy Grail of speaking approaches? No, but if you are new to Toastmasters, or need to jump-start a speech, this offers something to try. If you have a Specific Purpose Statement and three points, you’re more than halfway to the finish line.

Try using the Power of Three to structure your next speech. Doing so should make it easier to prepare, easier to deliver – and, most important – easier for your audience to hear, enjoy and remember. ■

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Advance your career by following these presentation tips.

By Patricia Fripp, CSP, CPAE

Climbing the Corporate Ladder

It's no secret: The higher up the corporate ladder you go, the more important your public speaking skills become.

If you have your sights set on increased responsibility and the position and salary that go with them, you will need to position yourself ahead of the crowd in advance. You need to sell yourself, your ideas, your value and your ability at all stages of your career. This requires learning high-level public speaking skills.

What's the worst reaction you've ever received when you delivered a presentation to your senior management? It would probably come in second to the one I recently heard about. A woman – ironically she was interviewing me for an article about “Knockout Presentations” – told me the story of her disaster. It was early

in her career as a policy analyst. She was just out of school, proud of her MBA and working in her first real job. When her supervisor praised a report she'd done, she was thrilled. She was less thrilled when her “re-ward” turned out to be presenting the report to the executive team.

She spent hours writing out her presentation and prepared every conceivable statistic to back up her points. However, it never occurred to her that *how* she presented was as important as *what* she presented. When her turn came, things quickly went downhill. She stumbled through 200 slides, forgot her lines and got more and more flustered. The executives weren't sure what her point was and started glancing at their watches. Desperate, she wanted to flee. When the young woman concluded, the

audience didn't ask a single question. That would have extended the already painful event.

How to Present in the Boardroom

Perhaps you're already speaking up in team meetings and getting your ideas across effectively. If so, how do you feel about facing a room full of senior management, or even five executives around a boardroom table, all staring at you? What is different? Well, for one thing the stakes are higher. All business communications are important, but with senior management as your audience, you are in the hot seat. They are going to accept or reject the recommendations that you, your department or your team have worked so hard on. Weeks, months, maybe even years of work depend on your few minutes.

Who wouldn't be nervous?

Don't worry. You are human. This is a perfectly natural way to feel. But remember – they can't see how you feel, only how you look and act. And you'll look cool and collected when you follow these **Dos and Don'ts**.

Dos:

- **Practice.** A report to senior managers is not a conversation; however, it must sound conversational. Once you have your notes, practice by speaking out loud to an associate, or when you are driving to work or exercising on the treadmill. Make sure you are familiar with what you intend to say.

- **Open with your conclusions.** Don't make your senior-level audience wait to find out why you are there.

- **Describe the benefits** if your recommendation is adopted. Make these benefits seem vivid and obtainable.

- **Describe the costs**, but frame them in a positive manner. If possible, show how not following your recommendation will cost even more.

- **List your specific recommendations**, and keep them on target. Wandering generalities will lose the audience's interest. Focus on the bottom line.

- **Look everyone in the eye when you talk.** You will be more persuasive and believable.

- **Be brief.** The fewer words you can use to get your message across, the better. Shorter is more memorable and repeatable.

Don'ts

- **Don't try to memorize** the whole presentation. Memorize your opening, key points and conclusion. Practice enough so you can "forget it." This helps retain your spontaneity.

- **Never, never read your lines** – do not read from a script or from your slides. Your audience will go to sleep.

- **Don't wave or hop.** Don't let nervousness (or enthusiasm) make you too animated – but don't freeze. Don't distract from your own message with unnecessary movement.

Where to Start When Preparing a Presentation

- **What is the topic or subject** you are reporting on? Be clear with yourself so you can be clear with your audience.

- **Why is your topic important** enough to be on the busy agenda of senior-level managers?

- **What questions will your audience have?** Can you answer them early in your presentation?

What Should You Present?

- **Present your conclusion:** What is the central theme, objective or big idea of your report? How can you introduce it in one sentence?

Suppose that you've been in charge of a high-level, cross-functional team studying whether there is a need for diversity training in your company. You might start by saying, "Our committee has spent three months studying diversity-training programs and whether one could benefit our company. Our conclusion is that diversity training would be an exceptionally good investment. We would save money, increase employee retention and improve company morale."

- **Present your recommendations:** "We recommend that the company initiate a pilot program, starting next quarter, using the ABC Training Company at an investment of \$.... The ABC Company has successfully implemented this program with one of our subsidiaries, as well as with many Fortune 100 companies. All 27 members of the cross-functional team agreed with this conclusion."

- **Describe what's in it for them:**

Address the needs of senior management, as well as the company. Answer the questions they will be asking, and show them how your recommendation can make them look good.

For example, senior management is usually charged with increasing sales and reducing costs. What if this program means saving money by lowering employee turnover yet has a relatively modest cost?

"Why is this a good idea, just when we are cutting unnecessary spending? One of our company's key initiatives is to recruit and retain 20 percent more of the best available talent than we did in the last fiscal year. If this training had been in place last year, not only would morale have been higher, but our minority associates – who represent 23 percent of our company population – would have rated their employee-satisfaction survey higher. For the last three years, our minority associates rated their satisfaction 3 percent lower than the other company employees. This training could have helped increase satisfaction and retention."

- **Wrap it up:** "On behalf of the 27-member committee, thank you for this opportunity. The friendships we have formed and our increased company knowledge is invaluable to us all. The entire team is committed to this project. We are asking for your okay to start the pilot program."

You'll make a strong impression and increase your chances of acceptance when you can be brief, clear and concise. Practice your presentation and be prepared. It's okay to be nervous, because nobody sees how you feel – just how you look and act. ■

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If you feed them, they will come.

Dinner Club Celebrates Eating and Oratory



William Shakespeare once said, “*If music be the food of love, play on.*” I say, “*If love of food is the music of life, then it’s time for a scrumptious symphony.*”

Indeed, “The Scrumptious Symphony” was the theme for a recent meeting of a unique and creative club: Le Gourmet Toastmasters. Based in Costa Mesa, California, the club holds dinner meetings in a different restaurant each month. This particular meeting, however, had a personal touch: It was held in my home and our members met around my dining room table. As the self-appointed “executive chef,” I prepared a six-course gourmet dinner for the group, and the Toastmaster and I carefully coordinated the meal with the meeting agenda.

When I first heard about the Le Gourmet club nearly five years ago, I was excited. A Toastmasters club that meets in fine restaurants? It’s the perfect combination for someone like me, who relishes speaking almost as much as he does eating. When I found out that the club counted among its members an unusually high proportion of Distinguished Toastmasters (DTMs), past district and division governors, and speech contest winners, I was sold. Here was my opportunity to learn from some of Toastmasters’ finest while savoring, perhaps, the textures and complex flavors of a *Tournedos Rossini* with a Cabernet reduction.

But, alas, few affordable restaurants these days rarely, if ever, offer

anything that comes close to earning the much-desired “gourmet” accolade. Nonetheless, gathering in a different restaurant every month offers club members the opportunity to learn different communication and leadership skills, such as meeting planning, price negotiation, fixed-price menu planning and cooperating with restaurant managers and their staff. As a result of the occasionally high ambient noise levels in restaurants’ public areas, we also gain experience in the real-world challenge of simply making ourselves heard above those around us. This is truly the art of *public* speaking.

Food and Toastmasters is a recurring connection, shown in numerous breakfast clubs as well as groups such as the Panasonic Flying Toasters, a corporate club in Lake Forest, California, that holds lunchtime brown-bag meetings and features potlucks twice a year as successful recruiting events. I know of other clubs that do the same. Eating food is a biological imperative, but the *sharing* of food is one of the most basic societal norms around the world. A sense of bonding and club community is strengthened when people break bread together.

A Tradition is Born

The Le Gourmet club’s November meeting typically had low attendance because of the American Thanksgiving holiday; restaurants weren’t interested in a group of eight, or fewer, who wanted fixed-price menus and separate dining areas. So club

meetings were held at various members’ houses, with perhaps spaghetti Bolognese, pizza or a pot of chili as fare. This was about to change.

After joining the club in 2006, I volunteered my table, kitchen and cooking skills to offer a fine-dining experience in November – all for about the same price as the usual “rubber-chicken” restaurant meal. Eighteen people signed up! We planned and then published a menu for club members. The five-course lavish meal we created that night was savored by all, and a precedent was set. November 2008 continued the pattern with an encore performance.

Now, I know what you’re thinking: You would not expect a man from England – a country not well known for its culinary excellence (to say the least) – to turn out to be a gourmand, let alone an aspiring gourmet chef. But I’ve been cooking from the age of 13, when I persuaded a skeptical headmaster of an English grammar school to allow the formation of an after-school “2nd Form Boys’ Cookery Club.” The rest, as they say, is (culinary) history.

Fast-forward to 2010. Le Gourmet Toastmasters is strong with many new members. The dinner meeting at my home has become a tradition. As the November event approaches, this is how the meeting is shaping up: a six-course meal, with 20 people seated around the table, staring down more cutlery than most have ever seen in their lives.

I was executive chef for the event, and I had the active and skilled



From left to right, Nigel Blackwell and meeting co-host Kandi Christian prepare an appetizer with three different cheeses. The finished product is shown to the right. On the far right is the Grammarian Soup. Opposite Page: These large green, yellow and red bell peppers were used by the timer to time speeches.

support of my life – and culinary – partner, Kandi Christian, as head chef. This year’s more elaborate meal would be a veritable gourmet feast requiring additional hands in the kitchen, so we recruited Colleen Hildebrand (a member of faculty at the nearby University of California, Irvine) to be our sous-chef.

Coordinating the Meal with the Meeting

As the head of the culinary team, I met with the Toastmaster a week before the meeting to plan the complex coordination of agenda and course-service times. We also charted when club members could be “volunteered” to act as waiters and busboys for one course each, so as not to interrupt their participation in the meeting.

Paralleling the sequence of a Toastmasters meeting, the appetizer was a *Flag Salute Plate* offering Red, White and Blue Cheese morsels, a three-meat *charcuterie* and a major whimsy of sauces, crackers, honeycomb, endives, pickled onion slices and toasted almonds. That was followed by the *Grammarian Soup*, made from wild mushrooms and leeks with alphabet pasta letters – can you spell the Word of the Day?

The next offering was the contest-themed *Not-So-Tall-Tails Fish Course* – a dish consisting of subtly spicy whitefish in a shallot and Boursin sauce, served in cups made from baked wonton wrappers. Then the palate-refreshing *Timer’s Sorbets*: a towering trio of

red (cherry), yellow (pineapple) and green (lime) sorbets, served at the center of a clock face, the hours marked by tiny mint leaves with clock hands traced out in lines of cherry sauce. Then came the *Speakers Course*, the main prepared entrée featuring medallions of beef with an anchovy, paprika and parmesan butter; garlic and red pepper mashed potatoes; baby carrots glazed with just a touch of ginger; asparagus; and a panoply of wild mushrooms served with a dark savory gravy. This complex dish took far more than five to

red, white and blue ribbons given to winning speakers, the awards were napkins hand-made by the head chef from red, white and blue Irish linen, each embroidered with our club’s name, the date and the award category. Club members cut out the usual end-of-the-meeting “restaurant review” speech and instead generously paid tribute to our culinary efforts with a standing ovation.

So what exactly was this dinner meeting all about? A unique, (almost) one-of-a-kind magical evening of Toastmasters fellowship and an affir-

“A sense of bonding and club community is strengthened when people break bread together.”

seven minutes (even with a 30-second grace period) to plate, let alone enjoy.

Finally, all club members were declared to be winners and got their just desserts, so to speak, in the sixth and final *Awards Course* – a light, chilled organic cranberry and orange torte.

In between courses, the business of a Toastmasters meeting proceeded apace. Table Topics on the theme of “the scrumptious symphony” were posed, timed by the timer holding up large green, yellow and red bell peppers. Three speeches were served up and three evaluations offered. In place of the usual

mation that the *Gourmet* was back in Le Gourmet Toastmasters, if only for one night. A feast for the Toastmaster soul, as much as it was for each Toastmaster body.

If you’re looking for a way to build up a club, then consider this (to borrow from the movie *Field of Dreams*), “If you feed them, they will come.”

Bon Appétit! 🍴

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SAY GOODBYE TO THE STAGE FRIGHT BLUES!



Three steps to calm your fears.

By Lesley Stephenson, ACG, CL

I *t's the night of your speech. You've worked hard to get it just right. But when it comes time to deliver, you're so nervous that you can barely breathe. Your hands are sweating. Your heart is pounding. Your muscles are tense. You can't even remember what you want to say.*

You feel as if you're fighting your own body all through the speech, and afterward you're disappointed. The symptoms of stage fright have stopped you from being your best. The Stage Fright Blues set in.

Sound familiar to any of you? It certainly is familiar to me, because some years ago that *was* me. But I have good news: My study of this phenomenon over the past decade has taught me that stage fright really is curable. I have helped many people leave these problems behind them, and I'm going to share with you the three main things you need to know to say goodbye to the Stage Fright Blues forever.

First, let's take a fast ride back through time. To handle Stage Fright symptoms successfully, we have to understand where and how they originated and what their purpose is.

Welcome to the Stone Age! Back then, cavemen faced constant physical danger from other cavemen who wanted to steal their cave or food – or from wild animals who wanted to devour them. As part of a brilliant survival kit, these early people were equipped with a built-in defense mechanism. When the caveman was threatened by physical danger, his fear triggered an

alarm that prompted an intense physical change; he was prepared to either run away or stand and fight. When peril was closer at hand, more physical changes spurred additional strength.

Speeches Can Trigger Survival Instincts

This fight-or-flight mechanism is still part of our survival kit today. It's there to protect us from threatening situations. This is great for facing saber-toothed tigers but not so great for giving a speech or confronting a hostile group in a business meeting. If making a speech makes you even slightly fearful, the symptoms of stage fright will kick in.

So what should we do? Should we run away from activities that scare us? Well, we could, but think of all the fun and growth we would miss. Instead, try using the following three strategies:

1 Accept that stage fright symptoms are part of a normal response. If you focus on the task at hand rather than on the unusual state of your body, the symptoms will diminish. Instead of deciding there is something “wrong” with you, move forward despite these reactions.



2 Save your creativity for writing your speeches rather than figuring out clever ways to “fight” your stage fright. In my work with singers, speakers, teachers and salespeople, I have seen some ingenious but destructive strategies at work. And my own earlier strategies were some of the most creative! Not content with wearing long skirts to hide my shaking legs, I tried to hold them rigidly still throughout my speeches. I used so much force that I could barely walk off the stage at the end; my leg muscles hurt more back then than they did 20 years later after they carried me to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro. Tensing your body to stave off nervous reactions is not a good idea, even if it tricks you into feeling stronger.

Often speakers try to combat their physical struggles by tightening up their chests. This usually includes tensing muscles that assist with our breathing – so the result is even *more* difficulty in breathing. I have seen strategies like these used hundreds of times, and they are often the main reason a speaker (or singer) is still struggling with stage fright after years of trying to overcome it. The answer is to not physically fight the symptoms at all.

3 Pay attention to what you are doing differently with your body to remedy your nervous reactions. Ironically, putting yourself on your “best behavior” could stop you from being the great speaker, sales rep, singer or teacher you want to be.

When I train business people, I see the same thing happen time and time again, and I see it with Toastmasters as well: Someone stands up to make a presentation and before she starts to speak, she tenses or stretches her body in an effort to look more confident, bigger or stronger. Thousands of us erroneously believe that the best way to make a good first impression is through additional physical effort. We try to “stand tall” or “stride and glide” or “anchor” ourselves by adopting some artificial physical attitude or posture. Unfortunately, what we do to achieve those postures can interfere with our effectiveness.

Put It to a Test

Try it right now. Put down your magazine (if you’re on a bus, this might have to wait until you get home) and stand up. Imagine, really imagine, that you’re walking

into that important interview, or that you're about to begin your club or area contest speech, and just check what happens to your body. My experience as a trainer is that seven out of 10 people (or more) will start to stretch themselves upward, or tighten their upper bodies to "get ready." But by stretching up or tightening your rib cage, you will interfere with your breathing, and your sense of discomfort and tension will actually increase.

To resonate with your audience, you just need to be you. You don't need extra height and you don't need to puff yourself up. Additional muscular effort will only detract from your performance, not improve it. Try reading about the Alexander Technique, a method of preparing for the stage that teaches us that we often perform better by removing unnecessary physical effort, not adding more.

"In order to resonate with your audience, you just need to be you. You don't need extra height and you don't need to puff yourself up."

Finally, if you are one of the people who experience really strong stage fright, even in the face of smaller situations such as making a point in a meeting, you may need to get more physical exercise (if possible, exercising shortly before your presentation). This reduces the level of chemicals released into the body by the "fight-or-flight" reflex, and helps you to settle down. When I was an opera singer in an earlier life, it was not uncommon to see me dancing backstage shortly before I performed. I didn't know why this helped me then, but I know why now, and it works.

I was once a very nervous performer. Today I work as a professional speaker and trainer, and stage fright is a thing of the past. If you incorporate these strategies into your own performance preparation, your experiences will likely be similar to mine, and you can then say goodbye to the Stage Fright Blues! 

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Exercises to Help You Relax

Excerpted from **Controlling Your Fear** (Item 272), part of Toastmasters' *The Better Speaker Series*.

If you have a few moments of privacy before you are called upon to speak, try these exercises:



While standing, inhale and stretch your arms toward the ceiling.



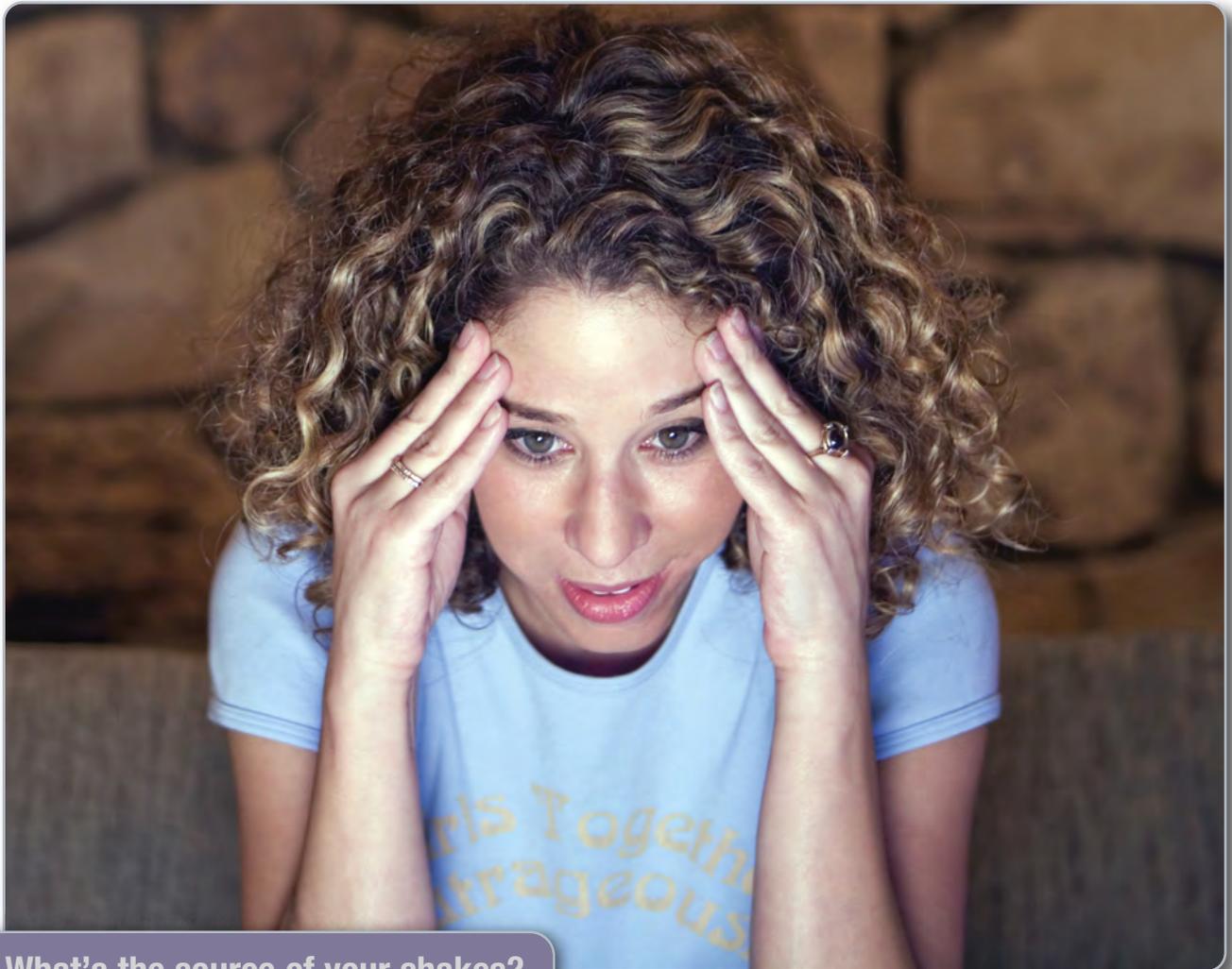
Then exhale as you bend forward and touch your toes, keeping the knees straight. (If you can't reach your toes, bend as far as you comfortably can.) Repeat this several times.



Hold your arms out to the sides, parallel to the floor, and rotate them in small circles, first forward 10 times, then backward 10 times.



Drop your head to your chest, rolling it to the right, to the back, then to the left, in a circle. Repeat this several times, and then reverse the procedure, rolling your head to the left, to the back and to the right.



What's the source of your shakes?

Know Thy Fear

By Matt Abrahams

Toothpaste is the root of all evil. At least, it seemed so when my wife and I first began to share our household. You see, my wife is a roller, and I'm a squeezer. She is meticulous in her delicate rolling of the toothpaste tube, where I strive for the speediest delivery. Now, I grant that the tube looks nicer and she maximizes its output, but squeezing just feels right to me. The simple solution to our problem was for each of us to have our own tube, which is what we did.

However, our next problem quickly arose – an up or down toilet seat. Our toothpaste and toilet traumas caused us to question if there was some deeper, underlying

issue causing these bathroom conflicts. And of course, there was. We each wanted the other to respect our own way of doing things. Until we addressed the respect issue and developed specific remedies for it, we were simply finding fixes for the symptoms and not for the cause.

In my experience as a public speaking instructor, I find that most presenters fall victim to this same problem when dealing with speaking anxiety. Specifically, they develop techniques to manage their *symptoms* of anxiety without focusing on the underlying cause. Speakers may find workarounds for specific symptoms – like a jittery stomach or forgetfulness – but

because the underlying causes have not been identified, their fears simply reappear as new symptoms, such as profuse sweating or repeated “ums.” As with my journey toward marital harmony, calm, confident speaking can only occur if speakers first identify the true reasons for their nervousness and then address those issues.

Thankfully, research into speaking anxiety (known also as communication apprehension) can provide you with useful insights into the sources of your distress. In addition, these studies offer targeted anxiety-management techniques that help you reach into the center of your fears and conquer them.

Sources of Speaking Anxiety

Communication researchers have identified three types of speaking anxieties that are related to a speaker's environment. Most speaking anxiety originates from one or more of the following sources:

■ The first source is your situation.

The setting and audience size may cause your anxiety. For example, you might be passionate about recycling, and you might think it is extremely important to recycle. When you talk about this topic with friends at the dinner table or a coffee shop, you're not nervous at all. But when you have to stand in front of many people in an auditorium and give a presentation on recycling, you're nervous. In this case, the situation or context in which the communication occurs causes the anxiety.

How do you manage it? The technique found to best manage this type of speaking fright is called "reappraisal," which means reframing the speaking situation as a conversation rather than a performance. It's just a conversation where you do most of the talking... and your audience responds with nonverbal feedback.

So how do you reframe the situation as a conversation? First, when you begin to practice, don't stand up and practice in front of a mirror or video camera. Practice by sitting at a coffee table or at a coffee shop with supportive friends or family to talk through your speech. Your rehearsal and practice become a conversation, thus short-circuiting the source of your anxiety. After many conversations about your topic, then and only then should you practice more formally.

Another reframing technique is to use the word "you" frequently when speaking. When you are engaged in a conversation, you personalize your speaking to your audience. Using "you" or the names of some of your audience members keeps you conversational.

Finally, hold your eye contact a little longer with members of your

audience. Conversations are all about connection, and eye contact is the primary way in which you establish and maintain that bond with individual audience members.

■ The second source of speaking anxiety is your audience.

Who are those people? Their status, expertise and attitude might ignite this fear. You might not have any trouble speaking in front of your peers or family members, but speaking to your superiors or potential customers might cause you great trepidation.

How do you manage it? Visualization is the most therapeutic management technique for anxiety caused by your particular audience. It effectively extinguishes the stress brought on by power and status issues. You probably already know how to use visualization techniques.

During this visualization process you don't want to focus on the speech itself. Avoid thinking of the specific words you plan to say. Instead, focus on your entire speaking experience, not any one particular element of it; try to relax and visualize positive things happening. You can improve your skills, reduce your anxiety and increase your confidence just by visualizing a successful speaking experience in this way.

■ **The third source is your goal.** What are you trying to accomplish? For example, you might be able to talk to your boss and colleagues about your work progress or even the latest football score without a problem. But when you need to ask for more resources or have to explain a failure, you become nervous. It's the goal you're trying to achieve that

"Is your anxiety caused by your audience, your situation or your goal?"

If you've ever played a sport, your coach might have told you to imagine yourself doing whatever that sport requires - maybe kicking the ball into the goal, having the bat hit the ball or making the ball go into the basket. Research from sports psychology shows that the best way athletes can improve their skills is to practice. The second best is to visualize.

Visualization requires that you find a quiet place and time to reflect on your upcoming speaking event. After some deep, relaxing breaths imagine a successful speaking experience. Feel yourself as calm and confident. See your audience responding positively and being engaged. End with a positive affirmation - a short statement you say to yourself - that summarizes the success you just envisioned. This entire process takes only a matter of minutes and should be repeated several times, beginning a few days before your speaking engagement.

makes you nervous. In other words, your fear originates from your concern about potentially negative future outcomes, such as not getting the needed resources, losing your job or not getting the promotion.

How do you manage it?

Since your fear is a result of potential future outcomes, an effective management technique is to focus on the present and avoid thinking about the consequences of your actions. Having a present-oriented experience, sometimes referred to as a *flow* experience or paying rapt attention, means you're so involved in the present that you lose track of time, external stimuli and your overall self-awareness. You have likely had moments of extreme present orientation in certain situations, like when you play a sport or musical instrument, or when you engage in a deep conversation with a loved one.

Many techniques are available to help you become more present

oriented. Being physical is one technique. I know a professional speaker who deals with his nervousness by doing 100 pushups immediately before he speaks. After this speaker completes his pushups, he jumps up and then steps on the stage to speak. He carries his present orientation with him, along with a little sweat and tingling shoulder muscles. When you're challenging yourself physically, it's hard to think about the future.

Listening to music can also help induce a present-oriented perspective. Find a song or a play-list that you find engaging and practice becoming absorbed in it.

Using humor can also be a fun way to become present oriented. Watch a funny video clip, listen to a comedy routine or engage in a humorous exchange. Enjoying a good laugh often involves being "in the moment." The ability to live in the present and not worry about

future consequences not only helps your speaking anxiety to abate, but can make speaking fun.

As you prepare for your next presentation, I recommend that you think about the source of your speaking anxiety (situation, audience or goal). Knowing about the cause of your anxiety can help you develop targeted anxiety-management techniques such as reappraisal, visualization and present orientation. With these tools at

hand, you'll conquer your speaking fear and enjoy more calm and confident speaking. **T**

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The Science of Shyness

The three kinds of speaking anxieties based on situation, audience or goal are also called "state-based" communication apprehension by researchers. A more internal kind of anxiety, known as "trait-based" communication apprehension – better known as shyness or extreme introversion – has also been studied. However, a relatively small percentage of any population is clinically shy. According to the Stanford University Shyness Clinic, only about seven percent of those living in the United States suffer from trait-based communication apprehension.

Wish You Were FUNNIER?

Dear Fellow Toastmaster:

Do you wish you were **funnier**? Do you believe that "funny people" think differently?

The truth is... funny people *do* think differently. Truer still; **you will never be funnier unless you change the way you think**. That is exactly what *Get More Laughs By Next Week™* will do for you. I Darrentee it.

Would a **step-by-step process** for getting laughs be helpful?

I never got laughs. I was quiet and shy and had severe stage fright. It was quite an epiphany for me when I discovered the simple exercises comedians use to develop material. A whole new world opened up for me when I was shown that humor was a *learned skill*, as opposed to a trait one must be born with.

Naturally, I did things the hard way, so it took me years of struggle and tens of thousands of dollars to uncover the steps that would take me from bumbling amateur to sought-after professional. This is a *proven system*. I've been teaching this process for more than ten years.

Stage time,

Darren

Darren LaCroix
2001 World Champion of Public Speaking

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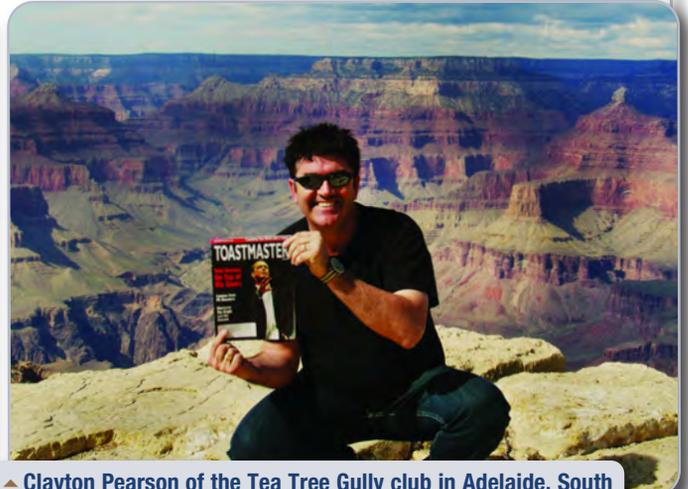
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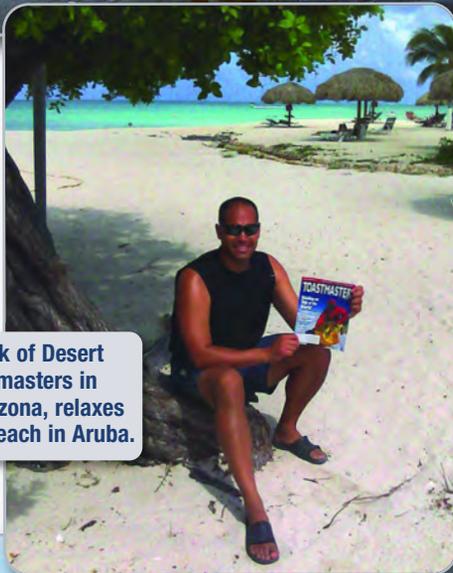
► Alyssa Chrizelle Ng Micalat of AdU ChE Falcons Toastmasters in Malabon, Philippines, visits the shore of Iba, Zambales, Philippines.



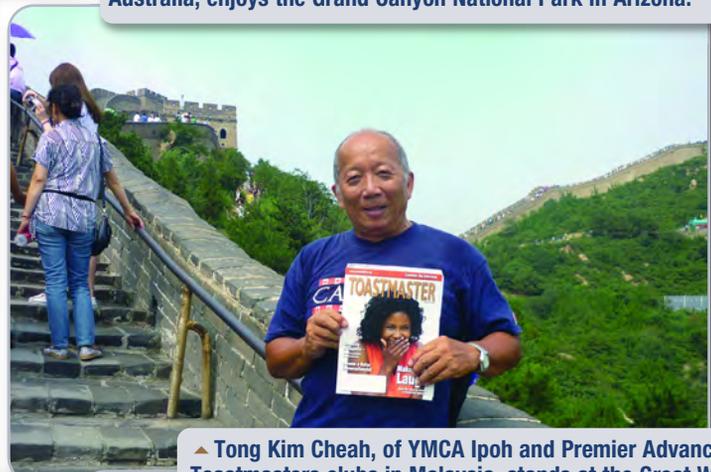
▲ Clayton Pearson of the Tea Tree Gully club in Adelaide, South Australia, enjoys the Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona.



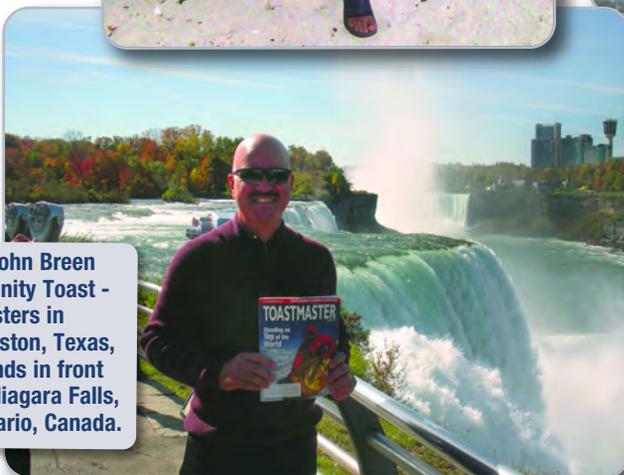
► Ted Stark of Desert Gold Toastmasters in Tempe, Arizona, relaxes on Eagle Beach in Aruba.



▲ Tong Kim Cheah, of YMCA Ipoh and Premier Advanced Toastmasters clubs in Malaysia, stands at the Great Wall in Simatai, China.



► John Breen of Unity Toastmasters in Houston, Texas, stands in front of Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada.



▲ Marita Angie Turner of Gunnedah club in Gunnedah, NSW Australia, visits Lake Lucerne in Switzerland.





Maartje Schut and Bill Monsour



Nic Oosterveer



Fill Those **Club Roles!**

How to get passive members to engage more in meetings.

By Robert A. Richert, DTM

Some Toastmasters jump in feet first. They sign up to speak and are active in their clubs from the outset. Other members, however, are reluctant to participate fully or regularly. They may have practical reasons for less active participation; some feel intimidated by the abundance of experienced speakers in the club, while others are particularly frightened about public speaking.



Willy Cortus

Carol Caraway (standing),
Carmen Diaz (on left), Jessica Frost

Getting Involved: Members of the Het Sprekersgilde club in Amsterdam, The Netherlands (far left, second to left and far right), and the Memorial City Toastmasters in Houston, Texas (third from left), participate in club activities.

Clubs should not let any member slip through the cracks. We must encourage active and balanced participation by everyone, while understanding that each of us learns at our own pace.

Try these proven strategies to help you engage all your club members:

“All of us can help encourage new or shy members and instill confidence in them by fostering an atmosphere in which anyone has a chance to win a ribbon.”

Methods

What’s the Best Method for Filling Meeting Roles?

Some clubs allow members to voluntarily fill club roles, while others instruct the vice president education (VPE) to prepare an assignment schedule. Some clubs use a combination of the two methods. Advantages and disadvantages exist for both the voluntary and non-voluntary systems. The volunteer method allows people the freedom to fill roles as they see fit; however, this usually leads to an imbalance of participation – some members tend to volunteer quite often and others may not sign up to participate as often as they should.

In one club that uses the volunteer system, the VPE tracks each member’s participation and plots the information on a chart. Those who are not participating fully are contacted privately and asked if they’d like to participate more. Thus, the volunteer system requires careful tracking of member participation.

The advantage of the VPE assigning meeting roles on a schedule is that everyone is rotated, so everyone participates equally. At least, that’s how it is supposed to work.

My experience with this method is that invariably those who do not wish to participate actively will find a way to back out; they will cancel or just not show up regularly. Juggling this system can frustrate the VPE, the Toastmasters of the respective meetings and others, because the schedule often undergoes last-minute changes.

For clubs that assign roles, consistent communication between the VPE and membership is vital. Merely placing names on a schedule and distributing it with expectations of full participation is seldom effective. Members must be notified of their assignments well in advance and later reminded. In my club, the schedule is sent out at least one week before the meeting and again one day before. Also, members on the schedule must confirm their participation to the VPE and Toastmaster. Thus, in order to be effective, this system requires two-way communication.

Whatever role-filling method your club chooses, be aware of the potential pitfalls and act to alleviate or eliminate them.

Mentors

Assign mentors who can help and encourage.

It is important to promptly assign a mentor to each new member. These mentors must take an *active interest* in the participation and progress of their mentees. In most clubs, a few members do not participate regularly. I recommend that their assigned mentors speak with them *privately* (preferably face to face and away from the club meeting place) and find out why. Some members have good reasons for not being active, such as heavy work loads, job changes, family commitments and temporary emergencies. These reasons should be respected. We should try not to place excessive pressure on these members, because it may backfire and cause them to leave.

Each of us is entitled to learn at our own pace. On the other hand, if the member is not actively participating out of fear of failure or intimidation, the mentor and club leadership should actively offer encouragement.

Mindset

Establish a club climate that fosters learning and growth.

Create a club atmosphere in which one is not expected to be near perfect in the performance of speeches and club meeting roles, in the way one would expect on opening night of a stage play. Instead, instill the mindset that your club is more like an ongoing rehearsal than the play itself. And like ongoing rehearsals, your club should be a comfortable place that encourages its members to work out the kinks in their speeches, try new things, hone their skills, and, yes, maybe look awkward at times in the process. However, *none of the above should be interpreted as an excuse for lack of preparation.* Members should always prepare adequately for each assigned role.

Your goal should be to create a relaxed and inviting climate, one that encourages balanced participation

“If the club atmosphere can resemble a rehearsal more than the ‘play,’ it reduces the sense of intimidation.”

and where no one is made to feel inadequate. Twenty-five years ago, my Toastmasters mentors created a similar mindset for me. Consider my story:

Metamorphosis

Becoming a strong speaker took patience and perseverance.

Impressed by my public speaking ability, a member of my current club nicknamed me “Mr. Smooth.” Believe me, neither I nor anyone else is born to appear polished and professional in front of an audience. For example, 25 years ago I gave my first Ice Breaker, and about halfway through I lost my place and froze up like an iceberg; I nervously stared into space for what seemed like minutes until I regained my composure. I was quite embarrassed, but the club gave me the encouragement to move forward. Members told me that what I perceived as a disaster was merely a minor bump on the road.

In my early speeches, I was overly animated; my arms were flailing all over the place. As I worked toward more refined, purposeful gestures, I felt and appeared quite awkward at times. However, with practice and guidance from the club, my gestures gradually became more controlled and purposeful.

The moral of my story is that it required time and focused effort coupled with many moments of awkwardness – a lot of “rehearsal” – for me to become Mr. Smooth. It also required a club climate in which I was not expected to be perfect, and my development as a speaker and leader was encouraged and mentored.

Measuring Up

Create fair and fruitful activities.

It may be a cliché, but it’s true: Your only competition is you and you alone. New members, please do not feel that you are competing with the experienced members of your club. Instead, *absorb* their knowledge and experience.

Clubs also need to think about how to best encourage success in club activities. All too often, the most entertaining, but not necessarily best delivered Table Topic, speech or evaluation wins top prize at a club meeting, or the ribbon goes to a popular club member. However, it is detrimental to the club’s overall well-being when one member continues to win most of the ribbons, or the awards become a popularity contest. Each club must offer incentives for improvement, pose challenges and avoid whitewash evaluations to the more advanced or popular members. All of us can help encourage new or shy members and instill confidence in them by fostering an atmosphere in which anyone has a chance to win a ribbon. Implement the following guidelines for the voting process at each meeting:

1. Consider each individual performance on its own merits instead of measuring each participant against the rest of the group.
2. Consider which individual exceeded his or her personal level of experience the most.
3. Consider who best meets the Toastmasters guidelines in that particular competition.

Practice these three suggestions and every member will feel that they have an equal chance of becoming recognized for their efforts.

Me – Ready?

Yes, you are, and the audience is on your side. How many times have we heard a scheduled speaker say, “I’m just not ready” and then back out of giving

a scheduled speech? In fact, statements like this often imply underlying anxiety; the speaker fears suffering failure or embarrassment in front of an audience. This brings up the “rehearsal” issue again. If the club atmosphere can resemble a rehearsal more than the “play,” it reduces the sense of intimidation. New members, it will help you if, in the beginning, you talk about subjects you *care about and know well*. This will make preparation less difficult and delivery more comfortable; plus it will boost your confidence.

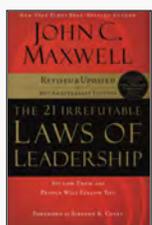
I can't tell you how many times I have heard speakers tell me they were quite nervous during their presentation, yet sitting in the audience I could barely detect nervousness at all. Understand that a speaker perceives his or her nervousness, mistakes and mishaps to be much more noticeable than they really are. One piece of advice that I give to new members is this: “When you get up to speak,

don't think the audience is looking at you; instead, think that they are looking *with* you! Almost all of us have been through those first few nerve-wracking speeches and we are empathetic. Believe that the audience wants you to succeed and you are more likely to succeed.”

No one should be made to feel embarrassed by a performance in front of the group, and there is no such thing as a failing speech in the Toastmasters club environment. We are here to support and encourage our members to move forward. Follow the advice and guidelines in this article and your club will retain and better serve its membership. **T**

Robert A. Richert, DTM, is a member of the Helmsmen Toastmasters in Huntington Beach, California. He is a professional artist specializing in landscapes and seascapes. Reach Robert at www.richertart.com.

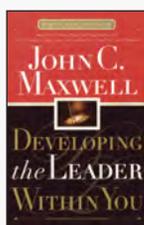
Literature Guide



The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership

By John C. Maxwell
In this book, John C. Maxwell sets out the essential “laws of leadership” as well as the principles behind them.

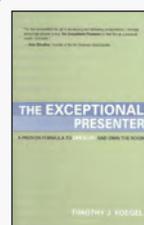
B117 Hardback **\$22**



Developing the Leader Within You

By John C. Maxwell
This book gives a fresh perspective of your leadership potential now and in the future.

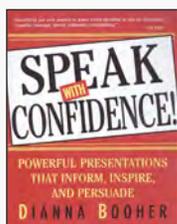
B118 Paperback **\$14**



The Exceptional Presenter

By Timothy J. Koegel
This book breaks down the art of presenting into a series of skills and then provides a systematic formula to master each skill.

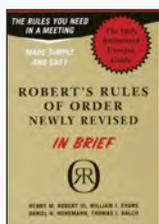
B8 Hardback **\$20**



Speak With Confidence

By Diana Booher
Hundreds of tips and techniques to make the most of any presentation opportunity.

B9 Paperback **\$16.95**

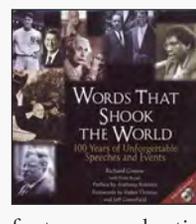


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What's the Scoop on Your Group?

Let your club leaders know with this easy checklist.

We all have ideas on what an ideal Toastmasters club would be like. Most members might agree that enjoyable meetings, unlimited learning opportunities and a sense of belonging are what they look for in that “perfect” club. Well, they’re right.

This checklist offers you the chance to measure your club against the “ideal.”

Complete this questionnaire, then **give it to your club president**. The president will discuss the answers with the club’s executive committee, who should work on implementing any necessary changes.

Your answers, and the changes that your club may make thereafter, will put you well on the way toward becoming an ideal club!

Club Meetings

	YES	NO
1. Is your meeting location conveniently located, accessible and user friendly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Are the program and agenda publicized, via e-mail or a club website, in advance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Do club meetings start and end on time?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Does the club president follow the pre-printed agenda?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Does every member wear a name badge and membership pin?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Are all guests and members warmly greeted at the door and made to feel welcome?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Are all guests introduced to others?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Is there a friendly atmosphere during the meeting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Is the meeting atmosphere comfortable, pleasant and enjoyable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Is your club meeting place easy to find, with signs posted?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Is the Toastmasters International Product Guide displayed at every meeting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Is the business meeting conducted quickly and efficiently?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Are programs interesting and varied?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Are speakers, evaluators and other meeting participants reminded of their responsibilities well in advance of the meeting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Are speeches well-prepared and based on manual projects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Are evaluations positive, helpful and constructive?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Is everyone given an opportunity to participate in the program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Are your officers effective in their roles as leaders?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Do officers report on the club’s progress in the Distinguished Club Program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

Membership

	YES	NO
20. Does your club set a membership goal each year and try to maintain a minimum of 20 members?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. Do your club’s leaders maintain a “member services” perspective?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. Does your club regularly have membership drives and promote its meetings to media and in the community?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. Does your club participate in Toastmasters’ membership-building programs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. Are guests introduced during the club meeting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. After the meeting, are guests invited to join the club?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26. Are new members oriented to the Toastmasters program immediately after joining?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- | | YES | NO |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 27. Are new members reported immediately to World Headquarters so that they may receive their membership materials? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 28. Are new members assigned a mentor? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 29. Are new members scheduled to speak soon after joining? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 30. Are new members assigned meeting roles soon after joining? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 31. Are new members formally inducted and given a membership certificate, pin and name badge? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 32. Does a member contact those who miss more than one meeting and encourage them to attend regularly? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 33. Are all members assigned to a club committee? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 34. Is your club free of members who disrupt meetings and have a negative influence on meetings and members? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 35. Are members recognized during meetings for their accomplishments and contributions? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 36. Does your club have a presence on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 37. Do your club leaders follow @toastmasters on Twitter? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

Educational Activities

- | | YES | NO |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 38. Does your club begin each meeting by reading the Toastmasters Mission Statement? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 39. Does your club regularly conduct programs from <i>The Better Speaker Series</i> , <i>The Leadership Excellence Series</i> and <i>The Successful Club Series</i> , in particular, working through Moments of Truth at least twice a year? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 40. Are members encouraged to visit other Toastmasters clubs? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 41. Does your club enjoy occasional joint meetings with other clubs? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 42. Does your club encourage members to attend area, division, district, regional and international functions? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 43. Do you know the value of and requirements for the various educational awards? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 44. Does your club display wall charts for the CC, CL and AC programs (Items 307, 308 and 309)? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

General

- | | YES | NO |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 45. Do you have a club newsletter or Web site? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 46. Does your club take advantage of freetoasthost.org to host its Web site? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 47. Do you have a formal and impressive installation for club officers? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 48. Are you encouraged to attend your club's executive committee meetings? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 49. Are you familiar with the proxy your club receives each May, which entitles it to vote at the International Convention? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 50. Does the club treasurer begin collecting October and April dues early and give members plenty of reminders about the due dates? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 51. Do your officers thoroughly understand their responsibilities and carry them out? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 52. Are members encouraged to assume leadership roles in the club? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

Take this tool to your club meeting and make your club even better. For even more help, be sure to work through the Moments of Truth with your club, available for free download at www.toastmasters.org/members.



Finding the Wow factor isn't easy.

How a Pitch Winds Up

Advertising is the art of separating people from their money. Before you can do that, however, you – the ad person – must separate your client from the paralyzing fear that the advertising will fail and he will be separated from his job. This is called the pitch, where the advertising agency presents its ideas and tries to convince the client that they will work. It's an interesting bit of linguistic tap dancing since the advertising agency has no idea if they will work. Nobody does. I can tell you from personal experience that when an ad campaign runs and sales go up, no one is more surprised than the people who created it.

Nevertheless, when the agency executives make the pitch, they must exude confidence. They must walk in and say, "Today we are going to present an idea for your product – Hair Today – that will be a game changer in the hair replacement category, a paradigm shift that will cut through the clutter and engage your target demographic at every touch point, leveraging your brand persona to build equity, increase share and create a point of differentiation that will move the sales needle and produce real ROI (return on investment) for your marketing dollar."

These words are directed to the marketing manager, who has invited several other people to sit in. They know nothing about advertising – one person manages the loading dock – but these people will serve to spread accountability if the whole thing fails. They will also, despite their total ignorance, feel free to comment and critique at will, as we shall soon see.

The marketing manager opens the meeting with his usual team-building, inspirational remarks: "We only have the room 'til eleven. Will that be enough time?"

The agency begins its pitch, only to be interrupted immediately by the loading dock manager, who fancies himself somewhat of an ad man himself. "How about 'Hair Today, Hair Tomorrow'? That's kind of catchy."

Whenever a client makes a moronic suggestion, you always have to say, "That's interesting," before ignoring it completely.

AGENCY: "That's interesting. So...our commercial opens on a man with hair loss –"

"Should we say hair loss? That sounds negative. Maybe it's hair attrition."

AGENCY: "That's interesting. So we see this guy with...hair attrition...and he uses Hair Today and instead of a before-and-after shot of hair growing, which you always see... he grows a crown on his head!"

"He grows hair on the crown of his head? What about the back and sides?"

AGENCY: "No, no – he grows a real crown. It's symbolic! Hair Today makes you feel like a king! Everyone else shows the outer results. We show the inner results, the psychic benefit! It's breakthrough stuff! And then we underscore it with the tag line: 'Use Hair Today and Be the King of Self-Confidence.'"

"Is the crown made of hair? Is it like a new hairstyle?"

AGENCY: "No, it's a real crown."

"But he's still bald. He looks like Yul Brynner in *The King and I*."

AGENCY: "The crown stands for his hair. It makes him a king."

"Are there any kings left? Prince Charles won't be a king until his mother croaks."

"Denmark has a king."

"Is he losing his hair? Would he do a celebrity endorsement?"

AGENCY: "It's a metaphor! It's symbolic!"

"People don't like kings. They have a superior attitude."

AGENCY: "The qualities of a king – power, strength, masculinity."

"A lot of kings got beheaded. You have to be alive for the product to work."

The marketing director looks at his watch. "Okay, what do we think? Let's get some reactions."

"It just doesn't hit me."

"Where's the Wow factor? It doesn't Wow me."

"I still think he looks like Yul Brynner."

And so it goes. Your brilliant idea is being pecked to death by ducks. It's eleven o'clock and people are waiting outside the room with a cake and party hats to celebrate November birthdays. The marketing director says, "I think we're almost there. If we can just get rid of the crown, change the tag line and show a guy with hair, we'll have something."

What can you say? "That's interesting." ■

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