

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | NOVEMBER 2022

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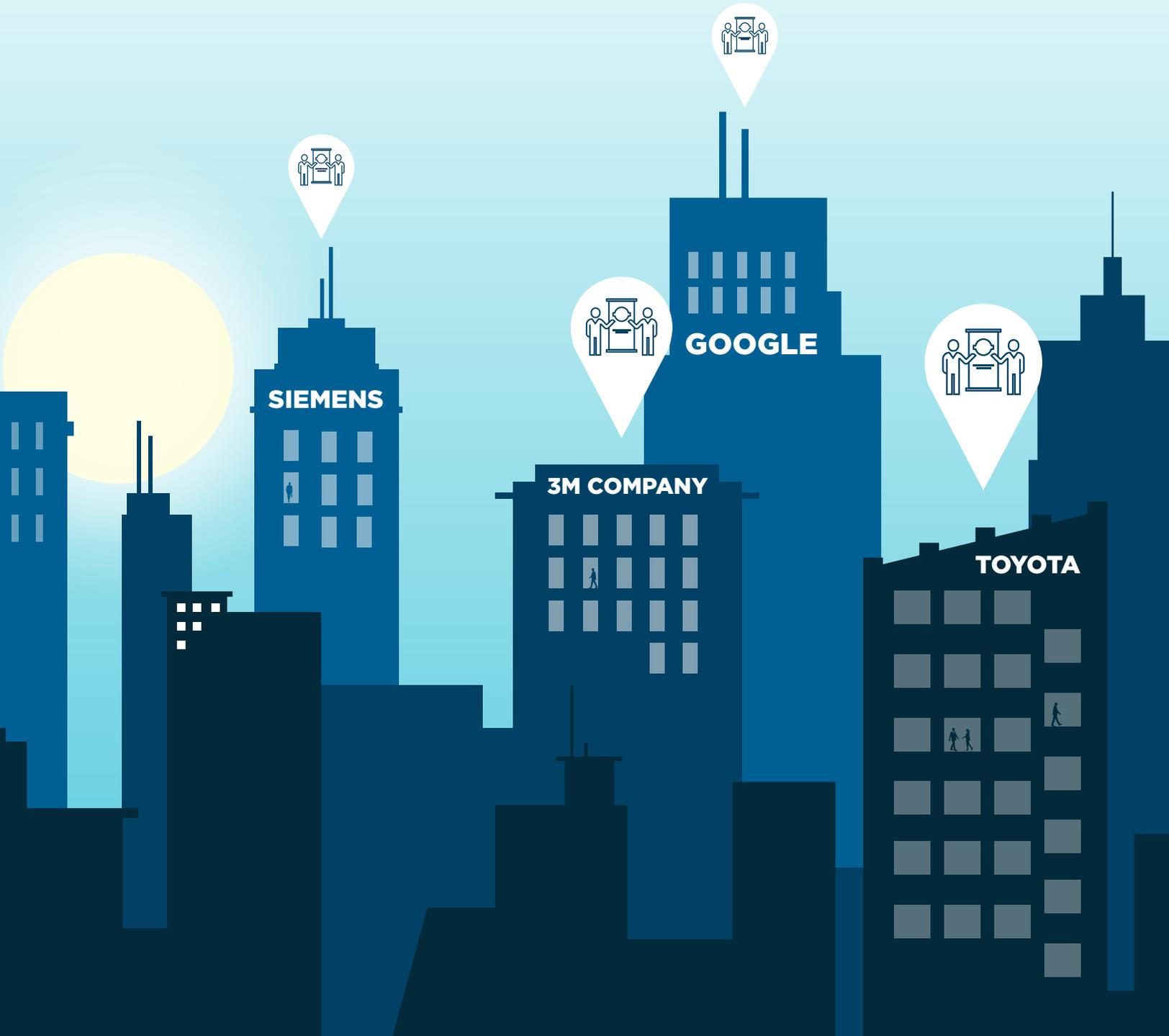
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Let's Celebrate Our 2023 Vision

During this year's International Convention, many members asked me, "What is your vision for the coming year?"

This brings up great questions, such as, "What is vision?" and "Why is it important for an organization, or for a leader?" Perhaps the most straightforward definition of vision is simply "a picture of future success." What will Toastmasters look like

when we successfully accomplish our mission?

The Toastmasters International [Envisioned Future statement](#) is "to be the first-choice provider of dynamic, high-value, experiential communication and leadership skills development." In other words, we want to be the first place people turn to when they want to develop communication and leadership skills using experiential learning methods. This statement drives the activities of the Board of Directors, the team at World Headquarters, District leaders, and club officers. It will only be accomplished through our combined efforts around the world. Yet it won't be accomplished in the next nine months, or possibly in the next nine years. It will take much longer than I will be in office.

I want to celebrate the achievements we've made in changing lives and celebrate triumphs in our recognition programs.

However, the members I spoke with at convention were asking about *my* leadership vision for the year—my focus and priorities for spending and directing resources in 2023. A leadership vision is a leader's personal vision, a focus on where they will place their energies and their time while they are in that leadership position. In other words, they were asking, Matt, what will Toastmasters accomplish while you serve as our International President?

We have struggled to achieve in our recognition programs—the Distinguished Club Program (DCP) and the District Recognition Program (DRP)—during the pandemic. Despite this, we still change lives every single day. We still achieve success. Every time someone joins Toastmasters, every time someone completes an Ice Breaker, every time someone completes a Pathways path, that is success. These accomplishments should be celebrated.

Over the last two years, members, club officers, and District leaders have put in tremendous amounts of effort that have not resulted in the positive outcomes we've been accustomed to. So what is my vision for the year? I want to celebrate the achievements we've made in changing lives, and the triumphs we've had in our recognition programs. Let's increase membership, build new clubs, and support our existing clubs in attaining excellence. Let's help members achieve their individual communication and leadership goals.

Finally, let's come together next August at the International Convention in Nassau, Bahamas, for the biggest Hall of Fame in the history of Toastmasters and celebrate our successes together. Will I see you there?

Matt Kinsey, DTM
International President

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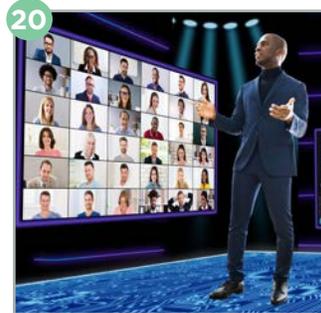
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From maintaining records to keeping other officers on track, the Secretary is the glue that holds the club together.

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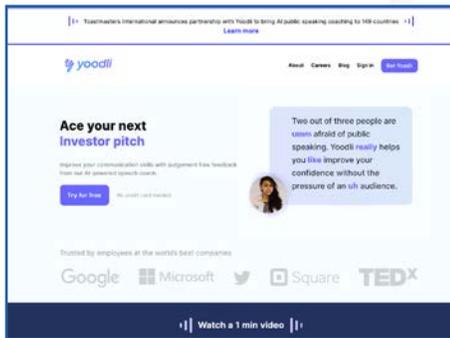
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News



A New Product and Partner

During the Board of Directors Briefing at the 2022 International Convention, the Board announced a new partnership with [Yoodli](#). This artificial intelligence (AI) is a new and exciting technology that will enhance your Toastmasters experience by giving you the ability to get immediate feedback and practice speeches, hone Table Topics® skills, and play fun communication-related games. Yoodli makes it easy for you to collaborate with other club members, friends, and colleagues and get their feedback outside of club meetings.

Yoodli will be available to members through the Toastmasters website by the end of the year. You can read more about the partnership in this Toastmasters [news release](#).

Get to Know the New World Champ

Convention may be over, but 2022 World Champion of Public Speaking Cyril Junior Dim and the top two finalists have been busy speaking and spreading the word about Toastmasters all around the globe. Read the article on page 14 in this issue to learn more about the first-place winner from Poland, and then relive the excitement by watching the top three speeches in this [Toastmaster convention recap](#).

Resources

Review Contest Resources

As the 2022–2023 speech contest season kicks into gear, remember that many contest resources are available to provide assistance. One of the best things you can do is review the [Speech Contest Rulebook](#), which outlines the rules and processes for all Toastmasters speech contests. It is updated annually. As all Area, Division, and District contests must take place in either an online or hybrid format, you will also want to familiarize yourself with the Online and Hybrid Speech Contests Best Practices document. Also helpful are resources on the Toastmasters website, such as [Speech Contest Tutorials](#), the [Speech Contests FAQ](#), and various contest-related articles in the *Toastmaster* magazine, including [this one](#) from Toastmaster Toolbox columnist Bill Brown, DTM.

The more you can familiarize yourself with the contest experience, the more prepared you'll feel when you participate!

District Details

Meet Toastmasters' [2022–2023 District Directors](#)! There are 127 such Directors around the world—three more than in 2021–2022. (The three additional Districts represented are: 124 [India, Bangladesh, and Bhutan], 125 [India], and 126 [India]). With help from their fellow District leaders, District Directors oversee and manage their District's day-to-day operations, finances, and human resources.

Connect With More Prospects; Gain More Members

Do you need help communicating with prospective members? [This new guide](#) will walk you through how to maximize the tools already at your disposal for connecting with potential members. It also includes customizable templates to easily communicate with prospects and to keep track of your communications.

Reminders

Drop Into Your District Website

Do you want to know what's going on in your District? Remember to check out [your District website](#). Most of these sites have information about District events, resources, leaders, and more. You can learn about other Districts in the world by visiting their websites as well.

Improve Your Club Policies

Want to add something new to your club rules? Discuss your [Club Policies](#) document to consider an update or addition. All clubs must follow certain rules, but you can insert ones unique to your own club to help improve the learning environment. The Club Policies document is kept on file by the Club Secretary.



TOASTMASTERS NEWS

The Path to Your DTM

An overview of what goes into earning the Distinguished Toastmaster designation.

So, you want to earn the Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM) designation. Sure, seeing those three letters next to your name would be great, but where do you start? The [DTM Award Application](#) has all the information listed for you. You must complete the following requirements and have a club officer verify that you have done so prior to submitting the application to World Headquarters:

- Complete two learning paths in the Pathways learning experience.
- Serve as a club officer for 12 months. (If your club has six-month terms for officers, you can fulfill this requirement by serving as a club officer twice, but you don't have to do it in consecutive terms.)
- Participate in the preparation of a Club Success Plan and participate in a District-sponsored club officer training program.
- Serve a complete one-year term as a District officer.
- Serve successfully as a club mentor or coach.

- Serve successfully as a club sponsor or conduct a Speechcraft or Youth Leadership program.
- Complete the DTM project. Members are required to create and implement a project of their own design, in which they demonstrate the skills and expertise they have gained.

Tips for DTM Completion

While there are no shortcuts, here are some tips to help you complete your DTM.

- Put Toastmasters on your to-do list every day, even if it's just for completing one small item.
- Find a mentor to help understand the DTM requirements and keep you inspired.
- Keep a print or digital record of everything you do toward the DTM.
- Sign up for speeches as often as you can. If your club has many willing speakers, suggest a Speakathon (a meeting where multiple speeches are given, often without a Table Topics® session) to allow for more speeches to be given.



- Join a second club. This allows you to complete more speeches or to be an officer in another club.
- Ask your Toastmasters friends for help. Your Area Director, Division Director, and District leaders can help you find opportunities to be a club mentor, sponsor, or coach. They also can help with ideas on Speechcraft, Youth Leadership, or forming new clubs.
- Ask non-Toastmasters for help. Friends from work, school, the chamber of commerce, your local library, or charitable organizations may know of places that can benefit from Speechcraft or Youth Leadership. They may also have ideas for where a new club can be formed.
- Remember your DTM project can be done outside the Toastmasters setting. You can do a project to benefit your school, university, religious group, or other volunteer organization. Just be sure to include at least one Toastmaster on your guidance committee.

Traveling Toastmaster



NILESH V. KARANDE, DTM, of Thane, Maharashtra, India, takes his *Toastmaster* magazine underwater while scuba diving in Tarkarli, Maharashtra. His hand signal is a universal sign in diving to indicate that he is safe.



KEIKO MIYAKE, DTM, of Shimonoseki, Japan, displays her digital *Toastmaster* magazine while visiting family in the United States for the first time in three years.

Snapshot



Tortola Toastmasters Club of the BVI in Tortola, Virgin Islands, celebrates its newly installed Executive Committee with a black-tie installation dinner.



PERSONAL GROWTH

6 Tips to Jumpstart Your Journaling

Millions of people around the world keep journals. A journal helps you analyze your past with a purpose and look forward to where you're going. According to the University of Rochester Medical Center in New York, journaling helps you understand your thoughts and feelings more clearly. It can also improve your physical health, including your immune system, sleep, and wound care. Want to get started? Read the six tips below and check out the [Toastmaster article](#) they're based on.

1 Just do it: Take five minutes and just write one sentence. Get started no matter if it's a short time period or a specific word count.

2 Digital or not: Select a notebook and pen or use a Word document on your computer. Use whichever method you're most comfortable with.

3 Keep it simple: If you decide to use a notebook, select a size you like. Don't feel you must use a specific colored pen or a certain notebook or even a particular style of journaling. No need to overcomplicate—do what feels natural.

4 Make it a habit: Consistently write at a set time or when you are in a particular state of mind. Before you know it, you'll be reaching for your journal without thinking about it.



5 Don't feel you need to share: Your journal is for you. You don't need to share its contents unless you choose to.

6 Review and look back: Occasionally take the time to read what you've written before. This helps your reflection and can reveal some patterns in your thoughts and behaviors.

The Power of Podcasting

How I transitioned from a quiet computer engineer to a passionate podcast host.

By **Cristóbal Colón, DTM**

For a long time, I felt invisible. Then I attended my first Toastmasters meeting. It was June 17, 2014, and after two failed attempts at going, the third time was the charm. I was finally checking out Puerto Rico Toastmasters Club. But I was so shy that if somebody got close to me to say hi I'd barely respond. Otherwise, I sat there completely quiet.

Only a couple of days before that first meeting, I had transitioned to a new life after working 25 years as a computer engineer. The first thing I wanted to do was join Toastmasters. From the initial line of code that I wrote on a punch card, to implementing a new \$23 million customer service system for my local electrical company, I've seen both technical evolution and revolution. But my biggest fear, communication, could not be solved with a new optical fiber or a bigger database. I was not afraid of technology—but trying to achieve my dream of becoming a professional speaker was truly a scary challenge.

Toastmasters was a blessing beyond my expectations. Even though I planned that life change, adapting to it was harder than I thought. But Toastmasters helped me develop new goals, find a new social tribe, and work on a personal transformation that I desperately needed. Toastmasters and public speaking became my new great passions. And three years after joining, I became a Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM), one of my greatest achievements.

The next logical step for me was creating my own podcast. My technological background and newfound passion for communication felt like the fuel I needed to start this endeavor. I bought a digital recorder and a couple of microphones, but I couldn't push myself to start. Even some friends who were coaching me on this project were getting tired of my plan-but-no-action attitude.

Then, in September 2017, Hurricane María devastated Puerto Rico. I had no electricity for weeks; many people went long months without



Cristóbal Colón, DTM

power. I called María “the great leveler.” Many businesses and projects went back to zero. It was then that I decided to finally start my podcast to share inspiring stories about dealing with adversity, managing drastic changes, and finding reinvention in difficult

My biggest fear, communication, could not be solved with a new optical fiber or a bigger database.

times. My podcast *¡Nos cambiaron los muñequitos!* was born. The title comes from an expression we use in Puerto Rico when somebody or something changes the rules of the game, and we have to adapt.

Since I had no prior journalism or communications training, this podcast became an opportunity to practice and improve all the skills I developed in Toastmasters. Instead of

conducting interviews, I focused on having deep conversations to connect with my guests.

I am able to work on my active listening during every conversation that I record. And when I edit the audio, I give myself feedback, just like I'd receive at a club meeting: reduce the number of filler words, choose the right words for an international audience, and improve my mental agility while speaking.

But the most difficult (and rewarding) task is reaching out and engaging others to have these thoughtful conversations. Even though I'm still shy and introverted, the possibility of an inspiring exchange gives me the courage to invite people from all backgrounds. I've interviewed a famous podcaster from Madrid, a folk singer from Norway whom I've admired for decades, a former FBI agent with more than 14 published books, a sports journalist turned podcaster from Paraguay, an Argentinian-born American political YouTuber with more than a million subscribers, and many fellow Toastmasters. I've learned to do one of the hardest things: ask someone to have a conversation with *me*—this unknown, aspiring podcaster. And even though I am still afraid to speak, my voice has now been heard in 94 countries. That's the power of podcasting.

Are you thinking about creating your own podcast? Let me tell you this: It can change your life. It can help you build your personal brand or strengthen your reputation as an expert in your field. Podcasting is the perfect platform to practice your communication skills.

Editor's Note: Cristóbal Colón earned Honorable Mention in the Pitch Us Your Podcast Idea contest in March 2022. Visit www.cristobalcolon.net/podcast to tune in.

Cristóbal Colón, DTM, is a member of Elite Advanced Speakers and Puerto Rico Toastmasters Club in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Avoiding the Last-Minute Scramble

Plan ahead for new officers, the Distinguished Club Program, and speech contests.

By Bill Brown, DTM

We are now nearing the end of the year. In many parts of the world, that means that there are a lot of events, activities, and obligations that will take up our time. And, if you are like me, a lot of last-minute shopping. Yes, I'm one of those people who leaves it all to the very end.

But isn't that also what many of us do in Toastmasters, as well? There always seems to be a last-minute scramble in June to take care of a lot of important tasks.

Now, I know that June is a long way off. That is good, but that also can be bad. Because all of those last-minute activities are easy to ignore for another six months.

I suggest that before life gets busy with the end of the calendar year, we take a few minutes to get some items lined up for the end of the Toastmasters program year.

The first area is officer selection. Whether you select officers every six months or once a year, you will be selecting officers in May. And my experience is that many of us will still be looking to fill slots right up until the deadline.

My recommendation is to start grooming younger members now to join the Club Executive Committee in July. Encourage them to consider running. Include them in Executive Committee meetings so that they get an idea of what goes on, and ask for their input. In other words, develop leaders starting today.

A second area is the Distinguished Club Program (DCP). Some people (and clubs) wait until the last minute to push for a higher DCP level. A member of one of my clubs asked me to help her complete Level 1 in Pathways). She had committed to get there by the end of June. As it turned out, she still had three speeches to go plus an evaluation role. This, however, was the end of May and we only had three meetings left. That was tight. I was the Toastmaster of the next meeting and we had an opening, so

that one was easy. I then connected her with the Vice President Education to see what could be done. An extra month or two would certainly have helped.

This, unfortunately, happens too often in clubs. Why not start now to work toward members' speaking goals? Then set a target date to achieve your individual and club goals by the end of March or April. Wouldn't it be nice to relax in June, rather than enter the crunch?



I suggest that before life gets busy with the end of the calendar year, we take a few minutes to get some items lined up for the end of the Toastmasters program year.

A third area is speech contest season. We know that in the second half of the program year, the International Speech Contest and possibly other contests will be held at the District level, depending on the District. I know what happens. You wait until the club

contest date is announced, usually two or three meetings away. Then you cram to write a speech. Rehearsal and editing may or may not happen. If you want to win, that is not the way to get it done.

Now is the perfect time to start working on your speech. This gives you plenty of time to test it out, revise it, and test it again.

As I have said many times before, I am a big fan of speech contests. I have grown more in my speaking ability through the contests than any other avenue in Toastmasters. They push you to get better.

Wouldn't it be great to have three, four, or even five members competing in your club contest? They won't all go on to the next level, but that's okay. If the members grow, that is the goal, right?

Find out from your Area Director if there will be other contests in addition to the International Speech Contest. If so, promote the benefits of the contests in your club meetings. The International Speech Contest is a given. Start with your ideas for that now. If a Humorous or Tall Tales contest, for example, is held, include that in your development too. Can you imagine what it would be like to have a club contest with five humorous speeches? What an incredible meeting that would be.

So, yes, it is only November, and your thoughts are mainly on end-of-the-calendar-year activities. But why not take a few minutes to think about where you want to be in April or May with DCP, officers, and speech contests? It will be time well spent. And time you don't have to spend at the last minute.

Bill Brown, DTM, is a speech delivery coach in Gillette, Wyoming. He is a member of Energy Capital Toastmasters in Gillette, and Evening Stars Club in Denver, Colorado. Learn more at www.billbrownspeechcoach.com.

Club Champions Autistic Members



California Gavel Club celebrates 10 years of helping autistic adults find their passions.

By Peggy Beach, DTM

Anthony Cappel-West joined the Orange County (California) Asperger's Support Group (OCASG) Toastmasters Gavel Club in 2017. When he signed on, the club, which turns 10 this month, was already well established as an OCASG-sponsored activity for adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Cappel-West, who has ASD, was quickly intrigued by the club's organization and purpose. "I liked the structure and the ability to practice speaking skills," he says. "It was an eye-opening experience."

Judi Uttal, DTM, a Toastmaster since 2012 and a member of The Contrarians club in Irvine, California, is the driving force behind the long viability of the OCASG Gavel Club, which she launched with a Speechcraft program. She was convinced that Toastmasters training could benefit her son, who was diagnosed with ASD in 1995.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that 75 million people—about 1% of

symptoms that can be present across this neurodevelopmental disorder. Among the symptoms, ASD individuals can experience a high level of anxiety when communicating in social situations and relationships, despite typically high levels of intelligence.

While Uttal's son decided that Toastmasters was not for him, his mother still felt that it would be a good choice for other young people with ASD because it's aimed at developing key skills that are typical deficits for them. "Specifically, improvements in communication skills, understanding others' points of view, and the ability to listen," Uttal explains. A Gavel Club also offers the important advantage of learning in a supportive environment.

Uttal explains that individuals with ASD typically struggle to maintain conversations with others and feel tremendous anxiety when put in uncomfortable situations. They may misunderstand verbal and non-verbal social cues. Many were bullied while growing up, leading

"While many [ASD] therapies try to change you, Toastmasters is about finding your passions."

—JUDI UTTAL, DTM

the world's population—have ASD. This includes the [World Health Organization's](#) (WHO) estimate that ASD affects one in 100 children around the world. The WHO recently adopted an autism management resolution supported by 60 member countries. The term "spectrum" refers to the variety and severity of

to isolation and depression. Uttal is familiar with these challenges and sees Toastmasters' programs as highly promising activities. She's so convinced that, in addition to her OCASG work, she's a mentor and sponsor of the [Neurodiverse Leadership Toastmasters club](#), an ASD-oriented online club chartered in June 2022.

What Club Members Say

Liam Whitney, DTM, a member of the OCASG Gavel Club, says public speaking skills are important because he teaches high school students with disabilities. While he belongs to several clubs, he feels OCASG is still a good fit for him.

Both Whitney and Cappel-West believe that evaluations are the best part of the Toastmasters experience. "Hearing constructive feedback can be hard but it is necessary," said Cappel-West, who plans to finish his bachelor's degree in psychology at University of California, Santa Cruz, in 2024. "I also like being an evaluator because it teaches me to be more tactful. I can be too honest sometimes."

Whitney enjoyed evaluations so much that he joined the Lakewood Star Speakers Toastmasters in Lakewood, California, so that he could participate in speech contests. He is also a member of the Long Beach Gavel Toastmasters Club in Long Beach, California, and the new Neurodiverse Leadership club, based in New York City. Whitney also served as an Area Director for Area 5 in District 1 in 2020-2021.

Positive connections with others, along with welcomed responsibilities, allowed Whitney to grow his self-confidence and change how he views himself. "Toastmasters helped me to see my leadership potential," he explains.

Uttal says that ASD individuals feel accepted in OCASG because "while many therapies try to change you, Toastmasters is about finding your passions." The club encourages members to share their mutual interests such as music, comic books, and video games, in a way that other clubs may not.

Both Cappel-West and Whitney see definite benefits from their Toastmasters experiences. "I am more aware of my mannerisms. I would use my hands way too much," said Cappel-West. "I am also much more aware of the audience and my professionalism has increased."

Whitney says that he enjoys watching people grow in Toastmasters. "I am excited about being in Toastmasters and being in the autism group. It's great to see them come together. Toastmasters works really well for anyone who puts in the time and effort."

■ Learn more about the [club](#).

Peggy Beach, DTM, is a Past District 37 Governor, and a member of two North Carolina clubs: Top Triangle Toastmasters in Morrisville, and Hi Rise Toastmasters in Raleigh. She is a frequent contributor to the Toastmaster magazine.

Toastmasters and Autism Study

Researchers will test the benefits of public speaking curriculum.

By Peggy Beach, DTM

The [Organization for Autism Research \(OAR\)](#) has awarded a \$40,000 (USD) grant to researchers at California State University Fullerton "to investigate the impact of a community-based public speaking program for autistic individuals." Specifically, a program like Toastmasters.

Researchers include Sasha Zeedyk, Ph.D., a professor of child and adolescent studies at the California State Fullerton campus, and Yasamin Bolourian, Ph.D., an independent researcher and specialist in autism from early elementary to postsecondary education. To help carry out the study, the researchers have partnered with longtime Toastmaster Judi Uttal, DTM, a member of The Contrarians club in Irvine, California, and a 10-year leader of the OCASG Gavel Club for autistic young people.

The viability of such a study began to shape when Uttal invited Zeedyk to an OCASG club meeting.

"One meeting was all it took," says Zeedyk. "I knew immediately I wanted to understand the efficacy of Toastmasters for people on the spectrum. The members were so engaged. They seemed genuinely happy to be sharing their Saturday morning with each other. The speeches were remarkable, and the formal structure of the meeting seemed so appropriate for autistic people, who tend to thrive in predictable environments."

In the first year of the study, Zeedyk and Bolourian will conduct interviews and focus on gaining a comprehensive understanding of whether, for whom, and under what circumstances Toastmasters is a meaningful program for autistic participants. The two will use the findings to identify potential program adaptations, particularly Speechcraft. In the second year of the grant, the researchers will run a pilot study to evaluate the effectiveness of the adapted program for autistic people.

Zeedyk says this study is important because it will include autistic individuals in the creation, implementation, and evaluation of the program. Previous programs have often relied on reports from caregivers and have encouraged autistic individuals to interact socially as if they did not have autism. This phenomenon, known as "camouflaging," causes high stress and anxiety for these individuals. Zeedyk and Bolourian hope to build a program that encourages autistic participants to be their true selves.

Bolourian says the study will be unique because Toastmasters is unique. "Toastmasters provides structure such as a weekly format, while also allowing for individual [speech] choices," she says.

The global reach and accessibility of Toastmasters is also a key element for Bolourian. "Toastmasters is a well-established and widely available community-based program with some 280,000 members worldwide. The broad reach of the organization demonstrates the potential for our adapted program to easily reach across communities," she says.

Uttal and the OCASG club are looking forward to being part of the study. "I'm very excited and can't wait to help with the research," says Uttal.

Editor's Note: The researchers welcome hearing from current or former Toastmasters on the autism spectrum. Contact Sasha Zeedyk, Ph.D., at szeedyk@fullerton.edu.

What's in a Name?

Knowing how to pronounce names correctly makes a world of difference.

By Fiona Swee-Lin Price, Ph.D.

Imagine you're in a Toastmasters club with members from all corners of the globe, and it's your turn to be Toastmaster of the Day. When you receive the agenda, you pause.

The Grammarian will be Qingyu Xu, a recent immigrant from China. The Ah-Counter will be Shelomi Wickramasinghe, a Sri Lankan international student. Speakers include Gert Nieuwoldt from South Africa; Thuy Hoang, who is Vietnamese Australian; and Piotr Krzywdzinski, whose grandfather was Polish. You will need to introduce each of these members by name.

Why Pronunciation Matters

Meeting members from different countries is one of the most exciting things about Toastmasters. This diversity brings with it a challenge: pronouncing names from a wide range of languages.

When we meet someone new, one of the first things we do is exchange names. Names are part of our identity and connect us with other people. If we struggle to pronounce or remember the name of a new acquaintance, connection becomes more difficult, because it's hard for us to greet them, talk about them, and introduce them to others.

People who move to other countries often discover their name no longer fits in the boxes on forms; often, locals mispronounce their name or address them by the wrong part. Many immigrants end up adapting their name in some way to fit in.

Alfio Magnano, a member of Williamstown Club in Williamstown, Victoria, Australia, knows the challenges well. As an Italian immigrant growing up in Australia, he often felt ashamed of his name. "People couldn't say either of my names, and I was constantly having to correct

everyone from my peers to my teachers." He eventually shortened his name to Alf to make it easier for Austrians to use.

Fellow club member Ulrike Andresen-Nikolai had a similar experience. "I wasn't prepared for the many 'creative' ways of pronouncing my name. At first I tried my nickname, Uli, but now I patiently spell out my name and educate people on how to pronounce it if they ask."

Why People Struggle With Unfamiliar Names

Over the last few years, a growing number of voices have proclaimed that we need to do better with international names. Yet they seldom provide advice on how to do better, other than asking the people for help with their names. And while this is a good start, it's not always enough and not always possible.

For most people, hearing an unfamiliar name once or twice isn't enough to commit it to memory (and there's only so many times you can ask to hear it again!) This is especially true when the name includes sounds we've never made for certain letters before, like both the "X" and the "u" in the Chinese surname Xu.

It can also be difficult to figure out how a printed name is pronounced. A name from another language might contain combinations of letters we don't know how to navigate, like Thuy or Krzywdzinski, or have a letter pronounced in a way we don't expect, like the "G" in Gert, which is a guttural "H" sound in Afrikaans.

In short, pronouncing multicultural names is genuinely difficult, and it's not surprising that so many people struggle with them. So what can we do about it? I built my career around answering this question.



I grew up accustomed to hearing names from different parts of the world—my father is Anglo Australian and my mother is Malaysian Chinese. My middle name is Swee-Lin, which means “auspicious forest” in Hokkien, the Chinese dialect spoken by my mother’s family.

My bicultural background has made me ideally suited to helping people with cross-cultural communication. I advise educators on teaching international students, help service staff manage language barriers, and coach executives relocating overseas. However, the most in-demand services I offer focus on onomatology: the study of personal names. I run training programs on the structure, use, and pronunciation of culturally diverse names, and support organizations with name pronunciation at awards ceremonies.

Saying someone’s name correctly not only shows respect, but it helps meetings and ceremonies move smoothly and quickly because there are no awkward pauses while the presenter struggles, or while someone tries to determine if a mispronounced name is theirs.

I use three main strategies to help people hone their pronunciation skills: phonetic transcriptions, audio recordings, and training.

Strategies That Can Help

1 Phonetic transcriptions

How a name is spelled isn’t always a clear guide to its pronunciation. This is especially true when the name comes from a language you don’t speak. It can help to write down the pronunciation according to the rules of your native language.

For example, at a recent club speech contest, the contest chair—a native English speaker—was struggling with the name of the Vietnamese Australian Chief Judge, whose name was Thuy Hoang. I wrote “Twee Hwang” (how the name sounds in English) under her name on the agenda to help. People can use this strategy at online meetings by typing the phonetic transcription of their name in brackets on screen to help others pronounce it.

Phonetic transcriptions aren’t always easy to create. Some sounds are almost impossible

to spell phonetically in another language, like the “G” in the Afrikaner name Gert. Also, it’s often difficult to write a phonetic spelling in a way that makes sense to you. For example, if you’re a native English speaker and Qingyu Xu is a native Chinese speaker, she might struggle to come up with a phonetic transcription of her name that you can understand. Your best strat-

egy would be to listen carefully to her saying her name and write down your own spelling, or enlist the help of someone who speaks both English and Chinese fluently.

2 Audio recordings

Another method is providing someone or making someone an audio recording of the name. Sometimes I make recordings of myself reading out the names on graduation lists for the presenters to practice with.

Professor Chris Thompson from Monash University, in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, finds these recordings immensely helpful. “As a graduation ceremony reader, the sense of responsibility is enormous and terrifying, knowing you are obliged to pronounce several hundred names perfectly, from countless linguistic and cultural backgrounds.”

For smaller gatherings, you can ask for a recording of the person saying their name, or ask if you can record them saying it with your phone.

What if you aren’t able to connect ahead of time about a pronunciation? Don’t panic: There are several options you can try. You can find out which language the name comes from and ask someone who speaks that language to help. [Google Translate](#), while not perfect, has an audio option that allows you to hear the pronunciation. There are even websites where you can search for a word or name and receive a recording and/or phonetic transcription of its pronunciation.

3 Training

If you regularly need to pronounce a variety of names from different cultures, there are professionals in cross-cultural communication who can provide coaching, modeling, and explanations of variations in languages, as well as help you practice and refine your pronunciation.

If we struggle to pronounce or remember the name of a new acquaintance, connection becomes more difficult.

For example, Williamstown Club, my home club, has a number of members whose names are difficult for native English speakers. I recently ran an education session where I provided background on the origins and meaning of the names of 11 members and coached everyone on how to pronounce them.

“It was impressive to hear the correct pronunciation of my full name [including my middle name],” says fellow member Kunal Narendra Binivale.

If people are struggling with the names of your colleagues or Toastmasters club members, encourage them to do better. Create phonetic transcriptions and/or audio recordings of people’s names and include them when you print an agenda, meet online, or put up an online personal profile. If you have a member who’s confident and capable with international names, your club could even organize your own training session.

Most importantly, don’t sit back while people at your club fumble with someone’s name or try to avoid saying it. Find a way to provide support. Remember that one of the main goals of Toastmasters is effective communication, and that’s something that begins with a name.

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Meet the Winners

of the 2022 World Championship of Public Speaking

Cyril Junior Dim took first place, with Alexandre Matte in second and Mas Mahathir Bin Mohamad in third.

The theme of the 2022 Toastmasters International Convention, held online and in Nashville, Tennessee, in August, was “storytelling.” And the finalists at the World Championship of Public Speaking® were indeed superb storytellers. Keep reading to learn more about the top three winners and their speeches.

Cyril Junior Dim – Poland

By Laura Mishkind

When Cyril Junior Dim spoke with the *Toastmaster* a mere five days after becoming the 2022 World Champion of Public Speaking, it hadn't quite set in. “It's slowly getting there,” he says, with a laugh. “The moment they announced it, I was out of myself really.” It wasn't until he unwrapped the trophy at home and started to have former World Champions reach out that it began to feel like less of a dream.

The 24-year-old Zimbabwean software engineer wanted to create a speech that would give the audience a sense of who he is. “I knew my age could potentially be a handicap,” Dim says. “There's no way the audience is going to look at me and accept anything that I lecture on. I'm still figuring it out.” Instead, he opted to take a mistake in his life, confront it onstage, and come to the realization, alongside the audience, that he—and everyone else in the room and online—could do better.

And so, “Ndini” was born.

The Speech

Dim explains that *ndini* is a word in the Shona language of his native Zimbabwe that means “this is me.” This one word encapsulates the importance of accepting yourself and your true identity.

Dim grew up hating his Nigerian middle name (His father, whom he never met, was Nigerian). It was long and complicated, and he was teased by other kids. When he was 18, Dim removed his middle name from all his documents and tried to leave it behind. It became his greatest secret.

When he moved from Zimbabwe to Poland for university he felt like he still stood out, until he made a few friends. One day in the library his friend Nick dropped his ID card; Dim scooped it up and read his full name—a complicated and long Congolese name. Dim made a joke about it, but his friend held fast in his pride for his name and identity.

The encounter made Dim realize an important life lesson. He told the audience, “We're all different ... but [Nick] was special because he accepted himself.” Almost everyone has felt uncomfortable about themselves at some point, but “You are beautifully you. The only you.”

With that, Dim invited listeners to join him in embracing *ndini* and making it a part of their language. Then he shared his full name, a name no one but he, his mother, and his girlfriend had known for years ([watch his speech](#) to hear it), and closed with a final reminder—“This is me. Ndini.”

The Preparation

Dim wore traditional African clothing onstage, noting that he wanted to “dress as African as possible to deliver a message from the heart of an African.”

He rehearsed, and rehearsed, and rehearsed again. During convention, he even went to downtown Nashville, and asked strangers if he could tell them a seven-minute story that had the power to change his life.

Leading up to the competition, Dim wasn't sure a story in his speech packed enough of a punch. He wanted to speak not only to Toastmasters, but to the world. While dancing backstage before the finals (“don't ask,” he says) and brainstorming a universal moment to share, it came to him. He didn't rehearse the new twist to the story—there was no time—he simply stepped onstage and began, trusting that his previous practice, plus the adrenaline of the moment, would kick in.



The Starting Point

It takes a skilled speaker to improvise on a such a big stage, and Dim has had years of practice. He began speaking competitively 11 years ago, participating in competitions organized by the National Association of School Heads, who invited advanced Toastmasters to be judges. “They would always make it a point to tell us they were members of Toastmasters International, so we were always aware of them. And we always had this sense that this is what happens next when you want to graduate to the next level of speaking,” Dim recalls.

Knowing he wanted to advance, Dim joined WrocLove Speakers in Wroclaw, Poland, four years ago while attending university.

There he learned an important lesson—drop the ego. As a new member, Dim felt he was a good speaker and wanted to show off his skills, but he quickly discovered he still had a lot to learn.

Dim learned through Toastmasters that speaking is a selfless sport. “If you’re going to make a speech that connects, people need to know that you’re there for them,” he explains.

Dim began what he calls “the pursuit of authenticity.” During his Toastmasters training and contest season, he had lots of opportunities to learn. “The greatest lesson I learned was to come to grips with who I am and leverage that to give a message that is both important to me and useful to the crowd.”

The People Behind the Champion

For the past two years, Dim has been mentored by Naomi Isaacs, a Toastmaster in Germany. Early on, she told Dim she could tell he was driven by the desire to win. “She is a very keen judge of character,” Dim

says. “She could read me through and through.” While the speech contest is indeed a competition, it’s important to focus on leaving an impact, and that matters more than winning, Isaacs explained. This began Dim’s “long journey to erase that aggressive competitor’s spirit,” as he describes it.

Of course, this desire to be the best still crops up, including in 2020 when Dim didn’t advance past the Semifinals stage of the International Speech Contest. He was devastated, but Isaacs explained how he still did wonderfully and could move past this. She even brought his girlfriend, Kamila Tokarska, on the call to express how neither of them were disappointed in his results. “Kamila was a huge emotional cushion, and sometimes an absolute goofball,” Dim says. “She was exactly who she needed to be for me to shine onstage.”

Another one of Dim’s supporters is Aaron Beverly, 2019 World Champion of Public Speaking. Dim had reached out to Beverly after his win in 2019, and Beverly liked Dim’s drive to become a better speaker. He decided they should work together.

“He became a brother, mentor, coach,” Dim says. “He was really busy, but he always made time for me.” The two would work on the technical aspects of the speeches, focusing on word usage, the proper vocal inflections, and refining the speeches until they were just right.

It really takes a team to help build a champion, and at the heart of Dim’s team was Isaacs, Tokarska, and Beverly. “I would say those are the three people who were cornerstones in this championship run.”

The Next Steps

“This past year, all the writing and refining we’ve done, I’m kind of hooked,” Dim says of his speaking experience. “I picked up so many stories along this journey that I think it would be a shame if I didn’t make speeches about them.”

He always dreamed of speaking professionally and making it his career, and with a World Championship title under his belt, that dream is feeling like more of a reality. Dim says he’s working to brand himself as a public speaker because he truly loves doing it.

TOASTMASTERS NEWS

Another dream is to give a TED Talk, and that door may be opening for him, along with other plans.

“I’m still mindful of work I could do back in Zimbabwe to empower the youth because I strongly believe that there are far more talented individuals back home who simply don’t have the opportunity or the means to access world-class coaching,” he explains. “I think with the right help those people could blossom. They could really find themselves, find their voice.”

Dim believes that in finding your voice, you can contribute a lot to the world. He says the world needs more people who are brave enough to be themselves and share what matters to them. “I really want to be part of empowering the voices that will do that.”

And along the way, he will continue to remember who he is. *Ndini.*

Laura Mishkind is assistant editor for the *Toastmaster magazine*.

Alexandre Matte - Canada

By Paul Sterman

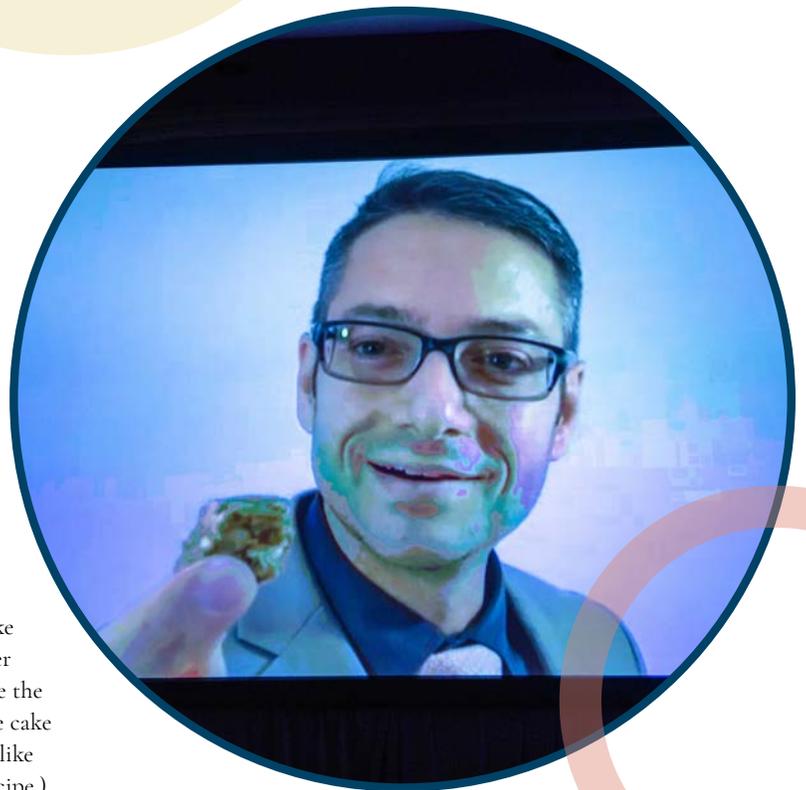
Let them eat cake! No, really, let them, says Alexandre Matte, DTM, maker of a mouthwatering creation called the “no-bake cake.” His family members gobble up the coffee- and cocoa-flavored confection with delight. The cake was the centerpiece of Matte’s 2nd-place-winning speech, “[Missing Ingredient](#),” in this year’s World Championship of Public Speaking.

As sweet as the treat is, its significance lies in what it symbolizes: tradition. The French Canadian’s extended family has gathered for an annual celebration for several generations, and the cake created by his “grand-maman” has been a longtime highlight. After his grandmother died last year, Matte was determined to continue the family tradition. So he made it his mission to prepare the no-bake cake for the gatherings. The cake, he says in a recent interview, “tastes like childhood.” (Visit www.AlexandreMatte.com to see the special recipe.)

A 15-year Toastmaster who belongs to two French-speaking clubs in Sudbury, Ontario, Canada, Matte was the only one of the top three winners in the hybrid World Championship to participate online. He used the platform effectively, moving expertly within the frame, and employing animated facial expressions that played well on the screen. He accented his speech with the occasional French flourish.

Matte has had lots of practice with the format: His two clubs, Mots du Midi and Voix du Nord, in Sudbury, have been meeting only online since the pandemic began. In addition, he has been presenting online the past couple of years for his work as a professional storyteller. Drawing on his Toastmasters skills, he runs a business venture where he does storytelling to engage students of all ages in Canadian classrooms. He unspools entertaining tales and helps the young people craft their own stories as well.

“It’s rewarding and fascinating to see the eyes of the children light up when we bring them into a different world,” Matte says. “I can talk about a dragon who’s in the Great White North in Canada, and who makes his way to the suburbs of Toronto, and finally ends up in the school. And it’s like, for those moments that is true—the dragon does exist. So I bring them into an imaginary world with me.”



In the wake of the Toastmasters World Championship, Matte has received a number of requests to speak about how to present online effectively. The father of three girls, he says finishing in 2nd place was like “the cherry on top of the sundae.” Having competed in the International Speech Contest since 2009, and making the Semifinals twice before this year, he says his biggest goal was to reach the finals, where he could “share a message with thousands of people at once.”

That message was about the value of traditions, whether they be cultural rituals or the continued serving of a treasured cake. Such things bond people and can unite families, colleagues, or communities, Matte says.

In the eyes of one special observer, his speech deserved the top prize. When he greeted his excited family—who had watched the contest online—after the results were announced, “One of my kids said, ‘I know that the judges didn’t think you were the best, but I think you were the best.’”

Paul Sterman is senior editor, executive & editorial content, for *Toastmasters International*.

Mas Mahathir Bin Mohamad - Malaysia

By Stephanie Darling

Mas Mahathir Bin Mohamad's experience winning third place in the 2022 World Championship of Public Speaking (WCPS), in person from the International Convention in Nashville, Tennessee, was electrifying.

It was quite a change from 2020, when he advanced to the International Speech Contest Semifinals, confined by COVID-19 to a small computer screen in an empty room. He loved the experience anyway.

For a young Toastmaster, some 10,000 miles from his home in Subang Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia, it was a thrill to participate—let alone place—in the World Championship.

“Reliving the experience on the big stage in 2022 was such a crazy experience! I felt alive! The energy, the people, the community! Everything made it worthwhile to be there,” he enthused. “Of course the change from online to onsite was huge, but that’s the fun of the sport, isn’t it?”

Mahathir is the third Malaysian to place in the WCPS, a feat that has drawn widespread media attention in Southeast Asia. To date, he is the fourth among his countrymen to have competed in the championship finals.

His speech, “[Two Gifts](#),” blends humor, self-awareness, and insight gained from his parents—an amiable father and a stern mother with high expectations for her son. He began to avoid his mother and, with a nod to his degree in psychology, somewhat jokingly labeled her with “Heartless Mother Disorder.” It was not until the two sat down to talk that their relationship was completely transformed by listening and understanding.

“In today’s world we witness so much labeling and avoiding that divide us, but a listening ear and understanding heart are two gifts that unite us. Give them to anyone and everyone,” Mahathir said in an interview with *The Sun* newspaper in Subang Jaya.

While his message was serious, Mahathir sprinkled humor throughout his speech, even though it’s a technique he struggled with at first. He credits mentors, friends, and coaches for helping him find humor “in the simplest things.” Now, believing it’s a bonding bridge to audiences, he uses humor in many of his speeches and presentations.

Mahathir joined MII Toastmasters Club in 2016, following his parents, who have been Toastmasters for some 40 years and still participate in MII meetings. Mahathir is a former Club President of the District 51 club, based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. He’s also served as club Vice President Public Relations several times, including the 2022–2023 program year.

Communication is his beloved hobby and life’s work. He is the founder of MicFront Academy, which emphasizes confidence and enthusiasm, among other traits, to teach public speaking skills to adults and children in Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Hong Kong, and other locations.

“We have helped thousands of kids, students, corporate clients, and companies build and develop their confidence in speaking, communicat-



ing, and leading in this new era ... seeing it happen really makes me feel so alive!” he explains.

Although the 2022 competition is over, Mahathir is continuing as a firm believer in all the long-term benefits of Toastmasters International.

“Great things take time, and the more you’re involved in Toastmasters, the more you understand how to further develop and grow yourself,” he says.

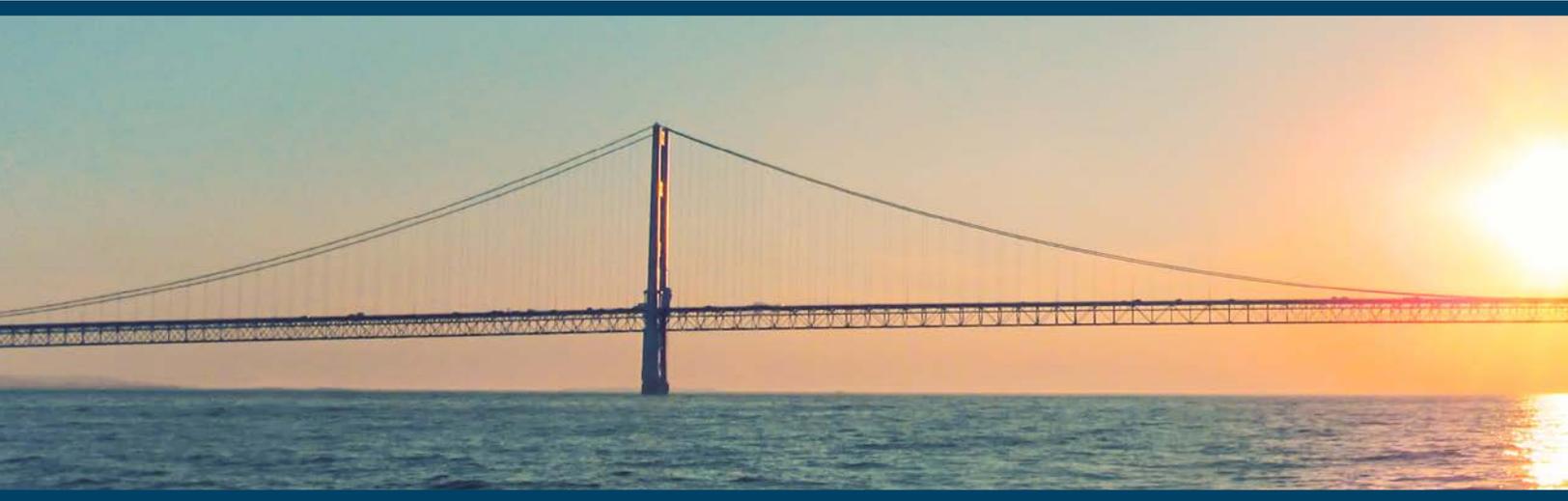
Stephanie Darling is senior editor for the *Toastmaster magazine*.

International Speech Contest Hybrid Guidelines

In the first-ever hybrid World Championship of Public Speaking, guidelines were put in place to help provide a fair and equitable experience for all contestants.

The onsite camera provided a full view of the speaking area and did not zoom in on contestants. This ensured audience members and judges viewing online had a consistent, full view of all contestants and did not miss any movement or gestures.

Judges were carefully briefed on each format and judged contestants only on the criteria listed in the judge’s guide and ballot, which did not take into consideration the format in which a contestant presented. Though some elements—such as speaking area—differed, judges focused on how contestants used those elements as they were available to each contestant.



Gratitude Builds Bridges

How to practice the art of acknowledgment.

By Elizabeth Danziger

GratITUDE builds bridges. People who feel appreciated are happier, more satisfied with their work, and more productive. Moreover, gratitude benefits the grateful person, too. Grateful people are measurably happier and healthier than ungrateful ones. It makes sense that the more opportunities we take to express gratitude and appreciation, the happier and more successful we all will be.

As a Toastmaster, you have many opportunities to acknowledge club members. When giving feedback about someone's speech, share constructive advice *and* emphasize what the speaker did right. For example, after a member gives a speech that was clearly challenging for them, you can say, "Henry, I love the enthusiasm you brought to your subject. Your passion really came through." Every speech has some good elements. Your job is to find the hidden gems and praise them.

When sharing news of a club achievement or the success of a volunteer project, be sure to call the achievers by name and tell the audience what those team members did. At the end of a successful social event, for example, ask for everyone's attention and then briefly describe what each person contributed: "Shirley found us this great venue and Todd took care of the food and drink. Mary did all our marketing and look how many people are here! Thanks to everyone who participated in making this event so successful!" People tend to repeat the behaviors they are rewarded for, so be generous with your praise.

Whether in your business world or your social life, thanking people is one of the most valuable and impactful things you ever do. However, there is an art to acknowledgment.

What Elements Should All Thank-You's Share?

Your thank-you must be authentic. Writing a perfunctory *thanks* will probably not register as genuine to your reader. Most people have finely tuned sensors for insincerity: If you plan to thank someone, be sure you feel appreciative. If you're having a tough time drumming up enthusiasm for your thanks, stop and consider what went into the other person's actions.

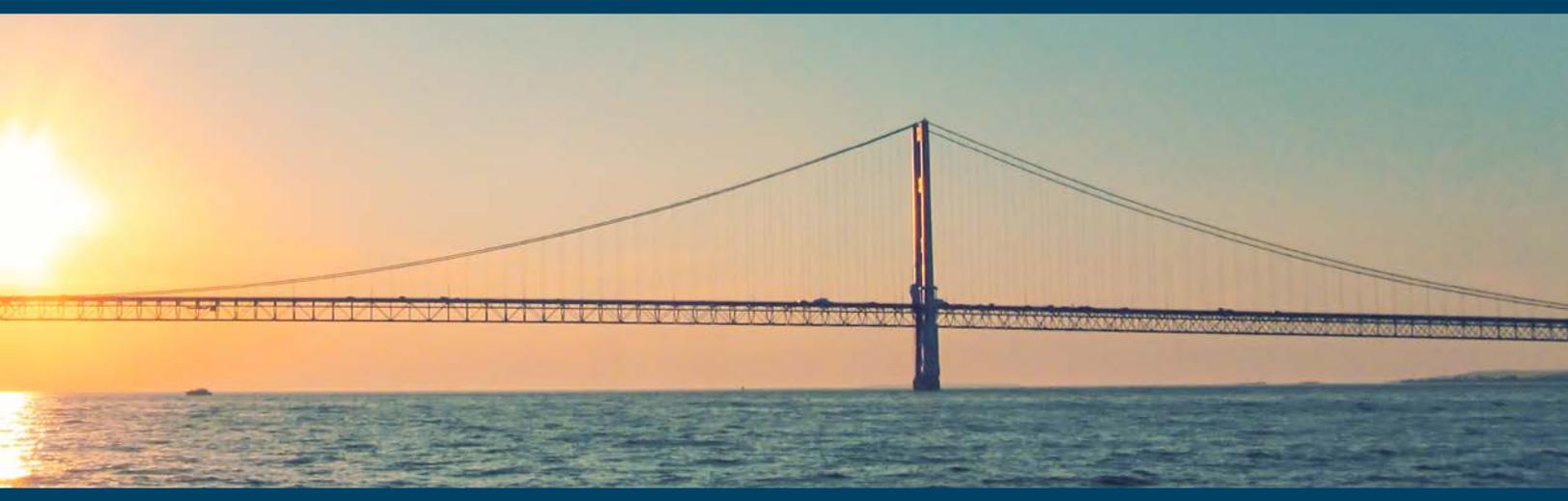
If a colleague has done a great report or presentation, don't just say, *Thanks! Great job!* Demonstrate your awareness of the steps that went into the person's work. Did they check the details carefully? Is the layout pleasing? Is the writing clear? If it's a presentation, are the images strong? Every aspect of the other person's work product took effort, and you can acknowledge that effort. Even if the results were less than stellar, you can always appreciate the effort that went into the task.

Additionally, be specific in your thanks. Use the person's name. (Be sure to spell or pronounce it correctly!) Tell them precisely why you are grateful. For example, you could write or say, "Amelia, thanks for digging up those old files for the Jones project. You saved me a lot of time."

Being specific shows that you've thought about the energy the other person put in and are not taking them for granted.

Gratitude That Stands Out

Any thank-you is better than none. But some expressions will do more to build a relationship than others. Consider these options the next time you want to show genuine gratitude:



A handwritten note. Handwritten notes are the gold standard in written thank-yous. Most people rarely receive a handwritten document, so the envelope elicits curiosity. The effect is powerful when the receiver sees that you have taken the time—and invested in a stamp—to tell them how much you appreciate them.

Seer Interactive, a digital marketing company based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, keeps stacks of blank thank-you notes by the elevators. Team members may jot down an acknowledgment of a colleague while they get from the first floor to the fourth floor. Then they put those notes in the office mail to make another person's day.

An email note. Emailed expressions of thanks are also influential. In fact, emails that close with thanks are 36% more likely to trigger a response than those that don't. As long as you are sincere and specific, what matters is that you show your respect for the person by putting your appreciation into words.

When you email a thanks, double-check the email address to ensure that your auto-correct function has not filled in the wrong name. You don't want to send a thank-you to another person with the same initials!

Also, when emailing, consider copying the person's manager or teammates. That way, everyone will know what a great job the person did.

A public shout-out. Often, we feel that our private efforts are unknown or overlooked. A public shout-out of thanks—whether in a team

meeting, on social media, or in a company-wide publication—gives recipients the satisfaction of having their work acknowledged. Toastmasters meetings provide a natural occasion for public praise. Don't be shy about telling your club members about someone else's success.

Avoid Advance Thank-You's

Many people feel it is appropriate to write “[thank you in advance](#)” when asking for another person's cooperation. They want to show that they appreciate what their reader is about to do.

However, at its root, this usage is presumptuous. It assumes that the other person will fulfill your request, thereby removing the person's choice and the pleasure they might get from deciding to do as you asked. Moreover, it seems to say, “I'm so sure you're going to do what I want you to do that I'll thank you in advance—and then I won't have to thank you afterward.”

Instead of “thank you in advance,” you could write:

- Thank you for your assistance.
- Thank you for considering this request.
- Thank you for any assistance you can give in this matter.

And then, if the person fulfills your request, take a moment and thank them afterward, being sure to tell them how their assistance contributed to your life or your project.

Examples of Effective Thank-You Notes

Here are two sample thank-you notes. Notice how they use the person's name and show an

awareness of what went into the action being acknowledged. These notes convey sincerity, specificity, and simplicity.

*Dear Janelle,
Thank you for agreeing to help the team when we were short-staffed last week. I know it meant rearranging your plans, and I appreciate your willingness to step up for the team.*

*Dear Andy,
You are wonderful! I thought I would never be able to solve my computer problem, and you fixed it in just a few minutes. Because of your help, I could meet the deadline on an important project for the executive team. Thank you so much for your support.*

Just Do It!

Whether you choose monogrammed personal notepaper, an email, or public praise, the point is to step up and thank people when they have done you a service or if they are giving you their business.

They'll feel a boost as long as your appreciation is sincere, specific, and authentic. And guess what? You'll feel great, too.

Elizabeth Danziger is founder of *Worktalk Communications Consulting*, a Los Angeles, California-based company that teaches clients effective writing principles to use amid today's pressures of constant communication. She is the author of four books, including *Get to the Point!* 2nd edition. For more information and to sign up for *Writamins* monthly writing tips, visit www.worktalk.com.



Presenting in Today's Virtual World

The online environment is here to stay—learn what's changed and how you can adapt.

By Dave Zielinski

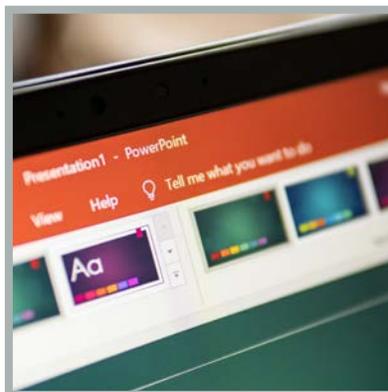
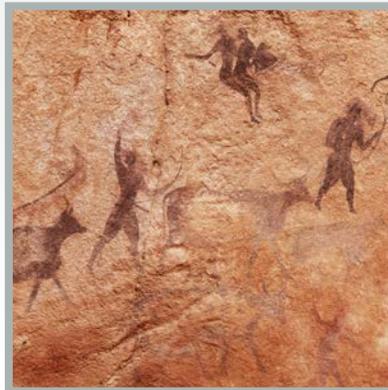
From cave paintings to overhead projectors to PowerPoint software, the ever-evolving selection of delivery mediums and new technologies speakers use to help support, amplify, and drive home their messages to an audience date back to the dawn of humankind.

Today, that presentation technology landscape is more diverse and sophisticated than ever, fueled in part by the COVID-19 pandemic that forced speakers around the globe—including those in Toastmasters' clubs—to understand how to move from in-person to online presentations. Simply look around and you'll see speakers delivering presentations live via social media channels, uploading pre-recorded presentations to YouTube or TikTok, hosting interactive webinars, or distributing their messages through podcasts.

In-person speeches are beginning to return; however, these next-generation virtual delivery tools are here to stay. That means Toastmasters will increasingly need to adapt speech content design and delivery approaches for online presentations.

As with any supporting tool or technology, how you choose to use mediums like Zoom, YouTube, social media, or podcasts can either prove beneficial or detrimental to your message.

What follows is a list of expert tips on how you can avoid pitfalls in virtual presentations by



modifying your presentation technique, use of supporting visuals, body language and vocal quality, audience participation strategies, and more.

Presenting Effectively Within a Camera Frame

Patti Sanchez, chief strategy officer for presentation skills training company Duarte Inc. and author of the book *Presenting Virtually: Communicate and Connect With Online Audiences*, says as you move from having a three-dimensional presence in in-person speeches to a two-dimensional presence online you need to make adjustments to keep audience interest and engagement.

“To captivate online audiences you have to use what they see through the camera lens much more intentionally,” Sanchez says. “Think of your online presentation in the same way a movie director thinks of a film.”

Technology has changed what we think of as a stage, and there are some techniques that work for online presentations that wouldn't have the same impact on a big stage. For example, Alexandre Matte, second-place winner in Toastmasters International's 2022 World Championship of Public Speaking®, presented his [winning speech online](#). Matte paired his expressive vocal variety with emphasis on his facial expressions, hand gestures, and movement within the frame throughout his speech.

Another example is when webinar presenters might be off camera for a period while they provide narration to slides shown on a computer screen.

“Your voice has to do more work in that scenario than when it's not buoyed by body language that you might use when walking around



“To captivate online audiences you have to use what they see through the camera lens much more intentionally.”

—PATTI SANCHEZ

a stage in an in-person speech,” says Ken Molay, president of the company Webinar Success. “That means you have to change your pitch and pacing as well as put more energy into your voice.”

Understanding the Shorter Attention Spans of Online Audiences

Experts say online presentations generally need to be shorter than in-person versions to match the shorter attention spans and higher propensity for distraction of virtual audiences. Studies show that people have been conditioned by fast-moving videos or live presentations and have come to expect shorter content. In addition, attention spans have fallen due to the sheer volume of information made available, and people are focused on select topics for small periods of time before moving on to the next thing.

Research conducted by Duarte, the presentations skills consulting firm that Sanchez works for, found the “sweet spot” length of virtual presentations is dependent on the level of audience interaction involved. For pre-recorded linear presentations with no audience interaction, the ideal

time span is 30 minutes or less, and for more interactive presentations, like webinars, it’s about 45 to 60 minutes, the Duarte research found.

For more collaborative online sessions, like training workshops—which can include audience breaks—90 minutes is considered acceptable by participants, according to the study.

“An online audience also has less patience for slow-moving things,” Molay says. “You want a faster pace, which requires creating a very well-thought-out, well-rehearsed presentation where you know exactly where you’re going from one point to the next. When people can easily leave your presentation with the push of a button or click of a mouse when they’re not satisfied, you need to ensure you’re keeping them engaged and interested.”

Modifying Visuals for the Virtual World

Remember that your audience will be viewing your slides and other visuals through a variety of different screen sizes—and increasingly through mobile devices like phones. Molay says slides projected online should always feature larger font sizes as well as use high contrast colors between foreground and background. This is also true for in-person presenters who need to ensure participants in the back of the room can still view the slides.

Roger Courville, an expert in virtual presentations who trains speakers in online communications and is author of the book *The Virtual Presenter’s Playbook*, uses an exercise when training new virtual presenters that asks them to pick out any program on TV, watch it for 10 minutes, and then count the number of camera “cuts,” which are a change of scene or camera angle.

“I did this myself with a documentary that was 17 minutes long and counted 301 camera cuts,” Courville says. “The point is when we present online, the audience’s point of reference is movies or other TV shows, which always keep things changing and moving. Most of your presenting screen will be taken up by slides so you need to change them more often than you think to keep the audience’s interest.”

Cutting Back on Online Pauses

While pausing can be a potent technique during in-person speeches, its use can be interpreted differently in virtual speaking scenarios, experts say.

“Using pauses can be effective when the audience is in the same room and feels a physical connection to you,” Molay says. “But a remote audience doesn’t feel that same connection. In those situations, your voice helps maintain the psychological feel of ‘we’re all here together.’ So when you do pause in mediums like podcasts where the audience can’t see you it can take people off guard. It’s wise to give them some warning.”

For example, when leading a webinar you might say you’re going to pause to take a drink of water and then project an interesting quote for

participants to read on screen. “Let the audience know you’re coming back to them when you pause online,” Molay says.

In addition to perfecting the pause, learning how to use your voice more effectively is paramount when using a vehicle like podcasting to deliver your message. Sanchez says vocal variety is key to keeping audiences engaged in podcasts. “You want to raise your pitch to make an important point, speed up to create urgency, or slow down to really land an idea,” she says.

Courville also says you shouldn’t overlook the “proximity effect” when it comes to audio quality.

“One of the keys to your voice sounding warm and engaging is proximity of the sound source—your voice—to the microphone,” Courville says. “When you see a great radio broadcaster they don’t have their microphone hidden out of the way, they have it tight to their mouths. But I see many virtual presenters who want to move their microphones out of the frame because they don’t like the way it looks or how it feels when it’s closer to them.”

Pre-Recorded Speeches

Speeches that will be recorded for on-demand viewing on outlets like YouTube or a company website require a different approach, experts say.

Molay recommends speaking to the individual rather than to the group in recorded presentations. “In live speech settings we get used to saying, ‘I’d like to welcome *all of you* today,’” he says. “But in many recorded presentations you’re essentially talking to one person sitting in front of a screen who has no feeling of being part of a crowd.”

Use the singular instead of the plural in these situations, Molay says. “Talk to the audience as individuals by saying things like, ‘It’s great to have *you* here with me today,’” he says.

Because audience attention spans are shorter when viewing pre-recorded video, Courville suggests “chunking” or splitting longer videos up into shorter, bite-size segments if possible. The same advice could apply to live video recordings. By breaking up a larger topic into a series of shorter videos, you will build anticipation and keep your audience interested.

“If you have 10 key points to make in an hour, ask yourself whether that needs to be an hour-long video or whether you could split it up into 10 six-minute videos,” Courville says.

Dave Zielinski is a freelance journalist in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and a frequent contributor to the *Toastmaster*.

How to Level the Playing Field When Speaking to Hybrid Audiences

Both in Toastmasters club meetings and in their work lives, speakers often find themselves presenting to “hybrid” audiences that feature some participants attending in person and others logging onto the presentation from home offices or other areas.

Patti Sanchez, a presentation skills trainer and chief strategy officer for Duarte Inc., says speakers need to adopt a different mindset in such hybrid scenarios.

“The way I think about it is if one person is remote then everyone is remote,” Sanchez says. “What often happens is the opposite. When you have an in-person audience your default tends to be playing primarily to that room and you treat the online audience as secondary. I suggest you flip the way you think about it, because there’s nothing worse in a hybrid scenario than being a remote attendee and feeling forgotten.”

That should translate into working harder to put remote attendees on equal footing with their in-the-room colleagues with strategies that keep them engaged and included in sessions, as well as use the kind of presentation technology that ensures they can see and hear speakers as easily as those in the physical room.

“In these scenarios you have two different audiences that are having two entirely different psychosocial experiences,” says virtual presenting expert Roger Courville. “You need to try to design two different experiences and have them meet somewhere in the middle.”

One tactic Sanchez uses to create more “visual equity” is by asking in-person attendees to join their remote counterparts in logging onto presentations virtually through their laptops or other devices.

“The idea is to enable everyone listening to the presenter to see the same thing,” she says. “I also create moments of interaction with both in-person and remote attendees, but I do cater more to the online group.”

Ken Molay, president of the company Webinar Success who trains speakers in online presenting skills, recommends using an assistant in hybrid speeches who has the exclusive job of interacting with the remote audience.

“The assistant should be the proxy for the remote audience, looking at contributions or questions they send in via the technology, summarizing results of online polls, and staying in tune with what the online audience is experiencing and asking,” Molay says. “The assistant should constantly remind you as the primary speaker to keep the remote audience top of mind.”

—Dave Zielinski



Toastmasters in Practice

The benefits of your training abound in day-to-day life.

By Caren S. Neile, Ph.D.

When I worked at a restaurant years ago, one of the waiters was always making inappropriate remarks. I never knew what to say, so I tried to ignore him. Then one day, the man said something obnoxious, as usual. This time, I unleashed a blast of anger. Afterward, everyone in the room looked at me. Why had I suddenly acted so crazy?

Because I wasn't a Toastmaster! Had I worked through Pathways projects such as "Leading in Difficult Situations" or "Understanding Emotional Intelligence," I would have known exactly how to respond before the situation got out of hand.

A long-ago bestseller entitled *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* reminded readers of the simple behaviors and values that are useful in any situation. The same goes for what we learn in Toastmasters. We learn principles and skills that benefit us in all kinds of settings.

Most of us know how useful Toastmasters training is for succeeding at work. But skills that veteran members may take for granted because we practice them on a regular basis—whether during a standard club meeting, a speech contest, or while working through the Pathways education program—will see us through most any communication challenge we encounter.

Here is a sampling:

Back to school: The "Researching and Presenting" project, a Level 3 elective in all 11 paths in Pathways, will help you ace your academic research and oral assignments with ease.

Car shopping: It doesn't matter if it's a new or used car, you want to get the best deal. "Negotiate the Best Outcome," in Level 3 of the Dynamic Leadership path, can help you accomplish this delicate balance.

Civic engagement: Do you want your voice to be heard? Cristina Mungilla was a member of TCU Toastmasters Club in Fort Worth, Texas, for just about a year when she attended the Alzheimer's Association National Conference in Washington,

D.C. During that event, Mungilla volunteered to give an impromptu speech, practiced speaking to one of her state's elected representatives in front of 100 strangers, and then actually spoke with the representative.

"When I came home," she says, "it dawned on me for the first time how influential having a voice could be. My first manual speech at Toastmasters was about that very topic: the power of a voice." Pathways projects such as the "Ice Breaker" (a Level 1 project in every path) and "Understanding Your Communication Style" (a Level 2 project in some paths) certainly come in handy here. It also didn't hurt that Mungilla was her club's Vice President Public Relations at the time.

Coaching, Conflicts, and Canines

Coaching: Some people coach youth baseball or football teams. Others may be teaching a friend or relative a new skill, such as learning a second language or playing a musical instrument. Projects in the Effective Coaching path, such as "Understanding Your Leadership Style" and "Improvement Through Positive Coaching," will help you tailor your coaching approach and give you ideas on how to help people do their best.

Disagreements with neighbors: They happen to everyone. The dog next door is getting too cozy on your lawn, or the



Illustration by Bart Browne



Illustration by Bart Browne

party down the block is running late and loud. “Understanding Conflict Resolution,” a Level 3 project in the Persuasive Influence path, will help you make your points with clarity and ease tensions. Also valuable are “Resolving Conflict” and “Communication and Conflict,” two Toastmasters brochures available in the Toastmasters Online Store.

Dog training: Yes, you read it right! Dogs respond best to strong, purposeful voices in a lower register. “Understanding Vocal Variety,” a Level 3 elective project in all 11 paths, is a great asset for getting your message across to people—but it will also help you speak like an alpha dog in no time.

Delivering a Eulogy

Family responsibilities: In 2013, Toastmaster Chuck Field’s mother passed away. He and his sisters planned a memorial service for her.

“While we were able to hire her favorite local band,” says the Distinguished Toastmaster from Talking Gators Toastmasters club in Gainesville, Florida, “we felt we had to manage the speaking portion of the event ourselves. We worked as a team to develop stories for a speech. But when it came to determining who would tell those stories and act as a master of ceremonies, my sisters turned to me and said “Well—you’re the Toastmaster.”

Field recalls that he was “more than nervous,” not only because it was his first public appearance, but also because of his emotional ties. He wasn’t sure how he’d hold up.

“If it hadn’t been for my Toastmasters experience,” he says, “I’m not sure I would have had the confidence to face my nervousness and deliver such a personal and meaningful speech.” That confidence to perform one of life’s most important—but difficult—duties came to Field through club meeting activities like serving as Toastmaster of the

Day and participating in Table Topics®, as well as working through the advanced education manuals (before the launch of Pathways). Projects relevant to delivering a eulogy include the “Deliver Social Speeches” and “Connect with Storytelling” projects, both Level 3 electives in all paths.

Relating to Others

Online and offline relationships: “I used to be a rather mercurial person who reacted to issues with sarcasm,” says Mayur Venkatesh, DTM, a member of the Coimbatore Toastmasters Club in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India, since 2015. “This was especially true when participating in online WhatsApp groups.

“Over the years of being a Toastmaster and having taken on the role of evaluator, I began to think about how others perceive my words and intentions. This has helped me evolve into a diplomatic person who puts across his thoughts in an effective way.”

“Understanding Emotional Intelligence” is a project that can also provide insights in this area, helping people focus on self-awareness and social skills. It’s a Level 3 project in the Motivational Strategies path.

Getting the word out: Got a great idea or cause you want to promote?

Check out the [Let The World Know](#) publicity and promotion handbook.

Writing a job performance report: Need to evaluate an employee? Think of the skills you use to evaluate a speaker in a club meeting: Be specific, be sensitive, and be constructive in your criticism.

Wait, There’s More!

Reading to children: Whether you are volunteering at a local library, babysitting, or raising little ones of your own, “Introduction to Vocal Variety and Body Language” (Level 1 project in all paths) and “Connect with Storytelling” (Level 3 elective in all paths) will give you great pointers, such as ways to express dialogue and different people’s voices in stories.

Scoutmaster: Toastmasters leadership roles, whether in club meetings or in a club or District officer role, prepare members for a variety of circumstances with people of all ages.

Sports training: The kind of discipline, motivation, focus, and plain hard work you develop as a successful Toastmaster, whether through participating in meetings or completing Pathways projects, will help you persevere with improving your tennis game or training to run a marathon.

Time management: Timing is a perennial issue for us in so many areas of our lives. Being the meeting timer—as well as ensuring your speeches fit the allotted time period—is great training. In addition, “Managing Time” is a Level 2 project in the Leadership Development path.

Wedding toasts: If you’re asked to give a wedding toast, don’t be nervous. Toastmasters will give you the tools! Aside from the benefit of regularly standing up and giving speeches, you can glean tips from the “Deliver Social Speeches” and “Connect with Your Audience” projects, both Level 3 electives in all 11 paths.

As for me, now I use my Toastmasters training pretty much all day, every day. How do you think I wrangled the assignment to write this article?

Caren Schnur Neile, Ph.D., has written for this magazine for 20 years and has presented at three Toastmasters International conventions, including a session on storytelling at the August 2022 convention. Learn more at [carenneile.com](#).

Are You Presenting or Performing?

Tips to focus on your point, not your persona.

By Joel Schwartzberg

An actor performs a monologue. A speaker delivers or presents a speech.

Do you want to be a great public speaker? Probably—who doesn't? But that aspiration becomes problematic if you make it your primary goal.

Here's the issue: When you focus on how people perceive you (for example, as a fantastic speaker), you steer your mindset toward **performing** ("here's how I want to be seen"), when it should be focused on **presenting** ("here's what I want people to know").

Remember, the speaker's goal is to sell their point, so the focus should always be on the impact of the ideas you deliver, not the impression you make as a person.

Below are four crucial mindsets to keep yourself on the presenting side of the present/perform equation and why those mindsets best serve your actual goals as a public speaker.

1 Stand and Deliver

When you consider a speaker's true purpose, the role is more like that of a delivery person than an actor. Just look at how we phrase the two roles differently: An actor *performs* a monologue. A speaker *delivers* or *presents* a speech. Effective public speaking isn't about who you are. It's about what you do.

Consider how this plays out in other professions:

- Should a plumber focus on being "the best plumber" or fixing pipes?
- Should a ship captain aspire to being "an awesome captain" or taking passengers safely from dock to dock?
- Should an executive work toward being seen as a "great leader" or effectively leading the team?

In each case, there's a difference between perception and profession, and the more practical objectives are clear: We want a plumber who fixes pipes, a captain who safely navigates the ship, a leader who effectively leads, and a speaker who *delivers meaningful points*.

2 No Need to Compare

Another pitfall of a performance mindset is the tendency to compare your performance to other performers. But the truth is, no one is better qualified to deliver your presentation than you are. You conceived it, studied it, wrote it, built it, practiced it, improved it, and presented it. That's what makes you *more qualified* than even noted speakers like the late Apple computers founder Steve Jobs, former U.S. first lady Michelle Obama, the CEO of your company, or a Toastmasters World Champion of Public Speaking.

When you focus on elevating your public speaking abilities—not emulating your public speaking idols—you leverage what makes you and your speech unique and put yourself in the best position to succeed.

3 Shun the Spotlight

Public speaking anxiety is not really a fear of public speaking. It's a fear of public humiliation: *What if I screw up and people think worse of me?* That's a frightening thought, but one that misses the point because, again, it focuses on perception and performance.

Actual performers—actors, singers, comics, models, and dancers—may reasonably feel more pressure because the spotlight is on them and how talented, funny, attractive, or creative they are. But what is gained when the public speaker is remembered, but not their point? Not much, unless your goal is simply to get more public speaking gigs. However, what is gained when the points are remembered, but the speaker less so? Just about everything.

4 Skip the Script

Years ago, the stereotype of a public speaker was a person who read a speech word for word from a dozen or so index cards. But reading aloud is, in essence, performing—whether it's prose or a proposal. I encourage my clients to avoid writing and reading from scripts because the performance of reading can weaken your authenticity, your spontaneity, your credibility, and your ability to emote as you're speaking.

Instead, [construct smart notes](#) that enable you to articulate, prove, and champion your ideas "live" with sincere conviction, whether it's a major address or a 90-second Table Topic®.

To be fair, many aspects of effective performance carry over into the world of effective presentation, including volume, eye contact, pausing, gesturing, and vocal variety. But the most important thing about a presentation is its point. Your job is to present it, not merely perform it.

Joel Schwartzberg is the senior director of strategic and executive communications for a U.S. national nonprofit; a presentation coach; and author of *How to Engage and Inspire Your Team* and *Get to the Point! Sharpen Your Message and Make Your Words Matter*. Follow him on Twitter [@TheJoelTruth](#).

The Club Secretary: Organizer Extraordinaire

From maintaining records to keeping other officers on track, the Secretary is the glue that holds the club together.

By **Kate McClare, DTM**

When Jeannette Sweeney, DTM, first began considering a leadership role in Toastmasters, Club Secretary was not her first choice. Or her second. “But I gradually grew into the role, and now it’s one of my three favorites,” says Sweeney, who is Secretary of St. Petersburg Toastmasters Club in St. Petersburg, Florida. (She has also served as President and Vice President Public Relations.) “I feel like this is a very important role. You bring everyone together and keep everyone organized.”

The Secretary keeps minutes at club meetings, but they also do much more, notes Marlene Wolf Smith, DTM, of Sailfish Toastmasters in Boynton Beach, Florida. They order supplies, maintain officer lists and member rosters, and serve as a Base Camp manager.

A club literally cannot exist without a Secretary; it’s one of three officer roles, along with President and a Vice President, that are required for a valid club officer list. There’s a good reason for that, says Albert Khor Yee Shin,

Experienced Club Secretaries have a few tools that help them work efficiently, saving time and aggravation. Google Drive and Microsoft SharePoint are popular collaboration tools; Khor records meeting minutes in real time on a Microsoft Word document and then shares them on those two platforms within a few minutes of the club meeting ending.

All say that a template for meeting minutes is especially helpful for new Secretaries who might otherwise not have a sense of what information they need to capture. Toastmasters has such a [template](#) on its website. Smith uses the meeting agenda to record basic information, such as the Toastmaster of the Day and the prepared speakers, and then updates it with anything not planned before the meeting: District officials who visited, guest names and contact information, awards, Table Topics® participants, announcements. She uploads the minutes to her club’s FreeToastHost website in the Meeting Minutes section.

Without someone keeping track of decisions made by the club or its Executive Committee, uncertainty and confusion can result.

DTM, of Advanced #ArdentSpeakers Club and MISC Toastmasters in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. “If the Secretary does their job well, things actually get done,” he says.

That’s because the Secretary’s job is all about managing the documents that keep the club organized and operating efficiently: maintaining and distributing minutes of meetings, communicating with Toastmasters International World Headquarters staff, and following up on actions taken by the Club Executive Committee. Organizational skills and the ability to listen and report accurately are essential to the job.

Toastmasters who have performed the Secretary role say it’s an excellent place to start learning leadership and get a close-up view of how Toastmasters and the club work. “Secretary is a good first-time officer role since it doesn’t require much advance knowledge of the program but is a great learning position,” says George Marshall, DTM, a former Club Secretary for Speakers Forum Club in the San Francisco Bay Area in California.

Marshall and Sweeney also point out that the position is a convenient way of learning about Pathways since the Secretary is one of the backup Base Camp managers.

The role is not without challenges. It’s the Secretary’s job to keep tabs on action items from meetings, Khor says, and other officers don’t always update their information promptly. It can be time-consuming, Smith advises. The Secretary must attend every meeting or find a substitute, and there’s more work between meetings.

And there are challenges for a club that doesn’t elect the right person. Without someone keeping track of decisions made by the club or its Executive Committee, uncertainty and confusion can result. Failing to submit the officer list to World Headquarters on time, for example, can mean not achieving a point in the Toastmasters Distinguished Club Program. “A passive or unmotivated individual tends to do the minimal,” Marshall says, “while an enthusiastic Secretary will find ways to help the officer team, reminding them of upcoming dates and deadlines, keeping track of past events, and generally adding value.”

Kate McClare, DTM, is Vice President Public Relations for Miami Advanced Toastmasters in Miami, Florida. She is a professional writer and has been a Toastmaster since 2011.

Where to Find Help

- ◆ Your District training
- ◆ Other club officers
- ◆ Your predecessor in the role
- ◆ A one-page [summary](#) of the responsibilities
- ◆ The [Club Officer Tools](#) section of the Toastmasters website

Be a Songwriter!

The world is at 82 million songs and counting. How hard can it be? Not very.

By John Cadley

Regular readers of this column may know that in addition to writing humor, I also write songs. You may think that makes me a very talented fellow—a polymath, a Renaissance man. I am not. I can't do *any* math, much less a lot of it, and while I'm not exactly "young," my arrival on this planet postdates the Renaissance by several centuries.

What does that tell you? It tells you that if an average person like me can write songs, you can write songs. Your neighbor can write songs. Your tone-deaf Aunt Geraldine can write songs. There is only one requirement: Your verses must rhyme. Everybody thinks a song is just a poem put to music. It is not. If you read modern poetry you will know that rhymes are nowhere to be found. Neither is meaning, but ... we'll leave that alone.

This shouldn't scare you. You can rhyme any word, even the ones they say you can't, like "orange." You have *Bloreng*e (a hill in Wales) and *sporange* (a sac of spores). "*I peeled my orange on the top of old Bloreng / While the moss softly caressed each little sporange.*" Now, I'm not saying a piece of fruit and a little cell that grows in fungus make for a great song, but they rhyme, so it is a song. And it's still better than modern poetry.

You can write any kind of song you like. You can even write a national anthem, although that would require invading a country and making everybody memorize the words. Think about it.

Love Songs. Hands down the easiest and the quickest. There are millions of recorded love songs in the world ... and there are *not* millions of geniuses. You are free to use all the clichés you want, particularly in the area of cardiology. Your heart can skip a beat, it can be stolen, it can sing, it can break, it can fly ... it can even be left in San Francisco as long as you remember to go back and get it. One caveat: Love songs should



always be written within the first six months of a relationship, before you realize your angel with wings is also a human with baggage.

Blues Songs. Again, very simple. Just begin with "Woke up this mornin' ..." and then complain about your life. Everybody's good at that! But don't say you've been "locked up in the jailhouse" or you "got in a gambling fight" unless it's true. The blues has to be authentic. You can't

You can't live in a \$500,000 condo and sing, "Got no more home than a dog." People will laugh, and there's no laughing in the blues.

live in a \$500,000 condo and sing, "Got no more home than a dog." People will laugh, and there's no laughing in the blues. Just make it real. If running out of mayonnaise is the best you've got, go with it. People who love egg salad will know you got the blues and you got 'em bad.

Protest Songs. Just think of some obvious social wrong and sing about it. How easy is that? Lord knows, there's enough material—injustice, greed, corruption. Pick one or choose your own. I've just written one about TV game show contestants called "You Really Will Do Anything for Money, Won't You?"

Nature Songs. You see a beautiful sunset and you write about it. Presto! You've got a nature song. Describe the spectacular beauty of the vibrant colors on the horizon—the pinks, the oranges, the reds, the purples—without mentioning that they're mostly caused by smog.

Novelty Songs. Go wild. Just think of songs like "The Purple People Eater," "Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer," and "You Can't Roller Skate in a Buffalo Herd," and know that nothing is off-limits here. Take your craziest thoughts, your wildest fantasies, your most bizarre dreams, and write 'em down. Then go on *America's Got Talent* and sing "I Don't Know Whether to Jump Off a Cliff or Play Pickleball." You're going to Hollywood, baby!

Gospel Songs. Lots of latitude here. Just make sure you mention some form of deity and everybody goes to heaven at the end. To my knowledge there is no category for Depressing Gospel Songs.

Story Songs. Simply find a story and sing it. It doesn't have to be about outlaws or feats of derring-do. You could even write about the discovery of DNA. Boring? Forget about the science and sing about how the two guys who discovered the double helix couldn't stand each other. *That*, my friend, is songwriting gold! All you have to do is find a rhyme for deoxyribonucleic acid.

John Cadley is a former advertising copywriter and currently a musician working in upstate New York. Learn more at www.cadleys.com.

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Online Course

Take our online course to learn the strategies that will help make your book a best seller. For each strategy, a detailed audio and/or video explanation of the idea is included.



CLIENT SPOTLIGHT - BO BENNETT, DTM

You might know Bo as the creator of FreeToastHost, the host of the Toastmasters Podcast, or the Founder of eBookIt.com. Or perhaps you never heard of the guy. Either way, you will enjoy his latest book, *Some Really Personal, Yet Entertaining Stories From My Life That You Will Enjoy and May Even Find Inspiring*.

What is a "normal childhood?" Does it include almost being murdered by your sister with an ax? Speeding around town in the back of a station wagon because your mom is chasing an "alien spaceship"? Being busted by the police for intent to light a pond on fire? Tackling your mom to the ground and wrestling a knife out of her hand because she was trying to kill your dad? While my stories may be unique, readers will be able to relate to the broader themes that are part of a normal childhood such as sibling rivalry, eccentric parents, doing stupid things, and frequently preventing one's parents from literally murdering each other.

Although some of the subject matter is not something one would generally laugh at, you have my permission to laugh. Social rules don't apply here; my rules do. It works for me, and who knows, after reading the stories from my past, you might be inspired to see your own screwed up past in a more humorous light.

Some Really Personal, Yet Entertaining Stories From My Life That You Will Enjoy and May Even Find Inspiring by Bo Bennett is available in ebook, paperback, and audio, at 

We are happy to speak with you about your publishing needs.
Call us at 978-440-8364 or visit us at <http://www.eBookIt.com>.



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