

TOASTMASTER[®]



Setting Goals and Finding Purpose

Connecting the dots
between the
short-term and
the long-term.

ALSO INSIDE:

**Ways to Keep Your
Audience Engaged**

**Table Topics: Tips for the
Speaker and the Master**

Ready to boost your sense of purpose in 2022?



Tip: Try connecting and contributing to others more.



Find more ideas for good goal-setting in this *Toastmaster* **article**.

Publisher
Daniel Rex

Magazine Supervisor & Editor
Laura Amann

Senior Editor, Executive & Editorial Content
Paul Sterman

Senior Editor
Stephanie Darling

Assistant Editor
Laura Mishkind

Digital Content Editor
Shannon Dewey

Graphic Design
Susan Campbell

2021-2022 OFFICERS

International President
Margaret Page, DTM

International President-Elect
Matt Kinsey, DTM

First Vice President
Morag Mathieson, DTM

Second Vice President
Radhi Spear, DTM

Immediate Past President
Richard E. Peck, DTM

Chief Executive Officer
Daniel Rex

2021-2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Louisa Davis, DTM Region 1	Roy Ganga, DTM Region 8
Karen Lucas, DTM Region 2	Jeff Sobel, DTM Region 9
Michael J. Holian, DTM Region 3	Elizabeth Nostedt, DTM Region 10
Harold Osmundson, DTM Region 4	Ali Shahbaz Ali Shah, DTM Region 11
Monnica B. Rose, DTM Region 5	Lesley Storkey, DTM Region 12
Melissa McGavick, DTM Region 6	Gauri Seshadri, DTM Region 13
Elmer Hill, DTM Region 7	Dorothy Isa Du, DTM Region 14

TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL®

9127 S. Jamaica St. #400, Englewood, CO, USA 80112
+1 720-439-5050
www.toastmasters.org

CONTACTING WORLD HEADQUARTERS

For information on joining or building a club, visit: www.toastmasters.org

Article submission: submissions@toastmasters.org

Letters to the Editor: letters@toastmasters.org

For general magazine questions: magazine@toastmasters.org

Toastmasters International Mission:

We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE
www.toastmasters.org

The *Toastmaster* magazine (ISSN 00408263) is published monthly by Toastmasters International, Inc., 9127 S. Jamaica St. #400, Englewood, Colorado, United States 80112.

Published to promote the ideas and goals of Toastmasters International, a nonprofit educational organization of clubs throughout the world dedicated to teaching skills in public speaking and leadership.

The official publication of Toastmasters International carries authorized notices and articles regarding the activities and interests of the organization, but responsibility is not assumed for the opinions of the authors of other articles. The *Toastmaster* magazine does not endorse or guarantee the products it advertises.

Copyright 2022 Toastmasters International, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited. Not responsible for unsolicited material.

Toastmasters International, the *Toastmaster* and the Toastmaster International Emblem are trademarks of Toastmasters International registered in the United States, Canada and many other countries. Marca registrada en Mexico.

The Ultimate Leadership Checklist

Leadership is a journey. You begin with a destination in mind, you plot the milestones on your trip—and if you get lost along the way, you course-correct. Of course, it helps to have a guide, which is why I adapted management professor Michael Useem’s tried-and-true checklist for leaders to reflect a Toastmaster’s perspective. This is my go-to checklist when I’m leading a team and have charted a path to a goal. It’s my safety net to ensure I have everything I need for the journey.



- Articulate a vision.** What vision do you hold for your club, Area, Division, or District? What do you want to accomplish during your tenure? You’ll need to set a tangible goal—one that can be accomplished in the prescribed timeframe and communicated to those you lead.
- Think and act strategically.** Craft a plan with a realistic strategy for achieving your tangible targets. Help others see the benefits of the vision and strategy, including how it will impact their own lives and the lives of other members.
- Take charge.** Embrace a bias for action. Take responsibility for what you have been formally delegated to do.
- Build a diverse team.** Put together an able roster of those collectively capable of achieving results.
- Communicate persuasively.** Be simple, direct, and clear.
- Motivate and recognize.** Understand each person’s goals and strengths. Then build on their diverse motives to draw the best from each.
- Honor the room.** Build leadership in others. Frequently express your confidence, gratitude, and support to those you lead. Encourage and develop strong thinkers and doers by helping them stretch and build their skills.
- Embrace the front lines.** Create an environment where teamwork comes naturally, where everyone feels safe to express an opinion, and where people are willing to share challenges and as-yet-unseen opportunities.
- Convey your character.** Hold yourself to the highest standards of integrity. Show respect for others, always. Give with a spirit of service. Commit yourself to excellence.
- Surround yourself with mentors who stretch you.** Tap into the wisdom of those who have come before who nurture you and encourage you to raise the bar. Be prepared to take final responsibility for the outcome.
- Place common interest first.** Guard against letting your ego, personal vision, self-interest, or familiar processes determine your actions.

As you grow and expand your own leadership skills, you might discover opportunities to customize this checklist for yourself. Please do! The goal is to be consistent and ensure that you tackle every leadership challenge thoughtfully and well.

Margaret Page, DTM
International President

Features



14 PRESENTATION SKILLS: 8 Tips for Engaging Your Audience

Break through the “invisible wall” with questions, stories, and more.

By Cathey Armillas, DTM

20 PERSONAL GROWTH: Connecting the Dots From Goals to Purpose

Don't spend so much time setting goals that you forget your larger purpose.

By Dave Zielinski

Columns

3 VIEWPOINT: The Ultimate Leadership Checklist

*By Margaret Page, DTM
International President*

8 MY TURN: From Silenced to Storyteller

By Jaleh Siyan, DTM

9 TOOLBOX: The True Goal

By Bill Brown, DTM

28 FUNNY YOU SHOULD SAY THAT: Anybody Out There?

By John Cadley

Articles

10 CLUB EXPERIENCE: The Leader Ladder

Why the Club Executive Committee is a valuable training ground for aspiring leaders.

By Gitel Hesselberg

11 CLUB OFFICERS: Club President: The Team Leader

The President helps members and fellow officers achieve results.

By Peggy Beach, DTM

12 TOASTMASTERS NEWS: Advocating for the World's Entrepreneurs

The newest Accredited Speaker is an ardent business leader, and much more.

By Stephanie Darling

13 TOASTMASTERS NEWS: Toastmasters International's Accredited Speaker Program

Two letters represent decades of excellence in the public speaking profession.

By Stephanie Darling



18 TECHNOLOGY: Toastmasters Take Virtual to a New Reality

How some members are using virtual reality technology to improve communication skills.

By Ryan Levesque

24 COMMUNICATION: Design a Newsletter With Members in Mind

Tips and tools for creating an eye-catching club newsletter.

By Shannon Dewey

26 CLUB EXPERIENCE: The Two Sides of Table Topics

Both speakers and Topicsmasters benefit from this signature club exercise.

By Greg Lewis, DTM

Departments

5 TOASTMASTERS NEWS: News / Resources / Reminders

6 SEEN AND HEARD: Snapshot

7 Traveling Toastmaster

News

Magazine Feedback Form

Do you have something to say about a particular *Toastmaster* magazine article or issue? Or maybe you enjoyed a



podcast or video in an online article. We want to hear from you! [Fill out this form](#) and let us know what you think. This feedback feature is also at the bottom of each article in the online edition.

Corporate Email Signature



Looking for a simple way to promote your club to coworkers and colleagues? You can now share the news of Toastmasters in your corporate signature! Instructions and artwork are available for download from the [Resource Library](#).

International Candidates at District Events

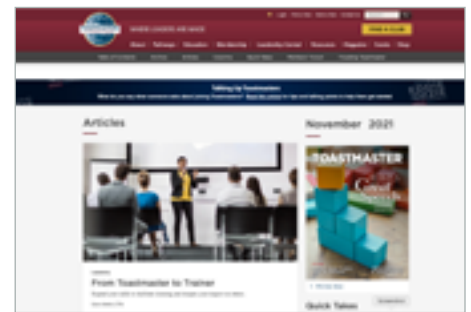
Is an International Officer or Director candidate visiting your District or making a presentation at one of your District events? Please review [Policy 9.1: International Campaigns and Elections](#) for guidelines and restrictions. If you have any questions, feel free to contact candidates@toastmasters.org.



Resources

Toastmaster Online Magazine

In the [January online edition](#), listen to a podcast interview and watch a video with new Accredited Speaker Forrest Tuff, DTM; discover a go-to checklist for leading a team from International President Margaret Page, DTM; and find samples of club newsletters for inspiration.



Spread the Speechcraft Digital Experience

Did you know you can hold a Speechcraft event that will boost your participants' confidence and improve their communication, public speaking, and leadership skills—all within the safe Toastmasters environment? In addition, members who become coordinators can earn Distinguished Toastmaster credit. Watch [this video](#) to learn more.

Policy Violations Quick Reference Guide

If you need help understanding the next steps when a policy violation occurs, review this [Policy Violations Quick Reference Guide](#). The guide covers the most common questions with regard to the club-, District-, and international-level violations.

Reminders

2021–2022 Speech Contests

As a reminder for the 2021–2022 speech contest cycle, each District Executive Committee (DEC) chose a contest format of either in-person or online. The format selected by the DEC applies to all Area-, Division-, and District-level contests. For more information, [view the FAQ](#). If your District is conducting speech contests online, review the [Online Speech Contest Best Practices](#) document to learn more about the requirements for online speech contests and discover what you can do to help your District and contestants prepare.



Mid-year Training

Throughout the month of January, Toastmasters International will conduct an online training program for 2021–2022 District Directors, Program Quality Directors, and Club Growth Directors. District leaders will develop core leadership skills, share best practices, and network with others from around the globe. Want to expand your skills to facilitate learning and deepen your impact on others? Find out how in this [Toastmaster article](#)

Snapshot



Huadu Expression Toastmasters in Guangzhou, Guangdong, China, celebrate the 2021 autumn season and positive changes ahead.



KeyForce Club of Tokyo, Japan, hosts a summer gala via Zoom. The annual event honored the club's founder, Ann Sado Honjo, and members celebrated with an Olympics theme.

Traveling Toastmaster



Chamath Fernando, a member of the Bar Association of Sri Lanka Toastmasters Club in Colombo, Sri Lanka, reviews the clues gathered in a mock-murder mystery meeting. The club called on Toastmasters training and investigative skills to solve the faux felony. In a shocking twist, the culprits turned out to be two of their very own club members. The suspects were “arrested” and brought to justice by the end of the meeting.



RONDA HETTERSON and **CHARLES PUMPUNI**, both of Springfield, Virginia, visit the Komfo Anokye Sword Site in Kumasi, Ghana. Legend states that the sword has been wedged in stone for more than 300 years and cannot be moved—a symbol of the unity and strength of the Ashanti people.



Members of Fond Du Lac Toastmasters Club 498 of Fond Du Lac, Wisconsin, are inspired by fellow member Connie Betz. She proved to them that the only limitation is attitude when she shifted to attending virtual meetings despite not being tech-savvy. Now 80 years old, Betz proudly displays her Pathways Certificate of Completion for working through her first level.



SONALI SUBASINGHE of Tholangamuwa, Sabaragamuwa, Sri Lanka, dresses up to serve as Toastmaster of the Day for her club's kitchen-themed meeting.

From Silenced to Storyteller

How I rediscovered my voice through Toastmasters.

By Jaleh Siyan, DTM

Growing up in Iran in the 1970s meant there were no opportunities for children and teenagers to speak publicly. However, as a child, I was privileged to find that opportunity in the Baha'i faith, where I developed my confidence as a speaker. As I reached the age where I should have been preparing to begin my university studies, I was faced with the realization that people of my faith were prevented from pursuing higher education. We were not considered a religion, but a subversive political sect. My choice was to leave my homeland.

I was 22 when my sister and I left our home country. We moved to Brazil because there was a large, dynamic Baha'i community there. The Baha'i community of Brazil offers some strong programs involving social economic activities and capacity building, and I had wanted to be engaged in these activities since my teenage years.

Moving to Brazil meant learning a new language—Portuguese. It was quite challenging. I grew up speaking Persian and because the two languages are so different, I had to learn to speak all over again. Once again, my voice felt silenced, although I learned enough of the language to be able to graduate from university, travel, and begin building a career.

I moved to the United States in 2004 after acquiring some English-speaking skills through university and at my job. I could communicate as a software developer working in information technology, but I knew my grammar wasn't as good as it could be. In 2012, as I was leaving work one evening, I saw a flyer promoting a Toastmasters meeting. Without hesitation I attended and knew I had found a platform to help me get back to my old practice of public speaking! The grammarian's feedback was especially helpful for me to improve my English-speaking skills. By participating fully in all that Toastmasters offers, I have also developed leadership and networking skills.

While my job does not provide many opportunities for using my Toastmasters skills,

I do get to use them where my passion and heart lie: my volunteer work in the community. Toastmasters has taught me communication and leadership skills I can implement in many different areas, such as junior youth and teen programs, holy day celebrations, women's programs, and other community outreach programs. For six years, until COVID hit, I organized monthly meetings and the annual celebration of International Women's Day (March 8) at the Baha'i Center in Clearwater, Florida.

As I gave more speeches, I discovered my love of storytelling. I began working on my vocal variety skills, which added to the effectiveness of my stories and helped me to focus my passion.

I hope to soon begin working with teenagers to help them create their own stories. I've learned that nothing helps develop confidence and self-esteem like telling your own story.

Thanks to the confidence I have gained through speaking at my club and the valuable feedback from my evaluations, I have even begun performing monologues and dialogues from different plays in my community. I have then incorporated some of those techniques into my storytelling. And recently I performed in a one-woman play!

When I began Toastmasters, I was working in the traditional program, and I am now



Toastmasters has taught me communication and leadership skills I can implement in my community.

pursuing Pathways. I am continually finding opportunities to develop workshops and learn new practices. Through the years, I have served as Area Director, Club President, Vice President Membership, and Secretary, and in 2020, I received my DTM. I believe that if I can successfully perform these roles within Toastmasters, there is no reason I cannot run my own business of bringing my dreams to reality. **T**

Jaleh Siyan, DTM, is a member of Clearwater Community Toastmasters in Clearwater, Florida.

The True Goal

Focusing on member objectives leads to overall commitment and growth.

By Bill Brown, DTM

It's as predictable as the equinox. Every six months, Toastmasters dues are due. In effect, this is a report card for each club, even more than the Distinguished Club Report, for it measures the member's commitment level.

I recently received a call from a member of one of my former clubs asking for my advice. He was concerned. His club is a perennial President's Distinguished Club. But membership had fallen off, including the loss of many longtime members. In fact, attendance was such that they didn't have enough attendees to cover all of the meeting roles. Yet, his biggest concern was that they would not be distinguished. I suggested a different focus.

First, if you don't have enough members to cover the roles, double up. My club is a small club. We never have enough attendees to cover

the roles. Some may continue to attend because they like being a part of the club family, but a time may come when life dictates that they focus their attention elsewhere.

It is important that our focus is on making sure that every member is achieving their personal goals. And that means you need to



make changes in their lives. Their schedules may have changed; their commitments may have changed; they may have made directional changes in their lives, including moving away. It may not be possible for them to continue to attend. Sometimes life gets in the way of club membership.

Another factor is that the change from manuals to the Pathways learning experience has been a challenge for many longtime members. You get used to one way and then it is no longer available. We can learn the new way, but do we want to make the effort? As a club, we need to make sure that all members understand the Pathways and Base Camp basics. One characteristic of the new system is that you can get to a particular section a number of ways. That is great, but it can also be confusing and complicated. Teach us one way. Some of us like simple.

Focus on member success, not DCP success. The one feeds the other.

the roles. That is normal for many clubs. Do what you have to do.

I was more interested in his concern about losing distinguished status. The Distinguished Club Program, or DCP, is a major focus in Toastmasters. It is a system that guides clubs to address the issues that contribute to a healthy club. It encourages officer training. It promotes progress in Pathways. And it rewards recruiting new members. The DCP is a roadmap to the destination of a healthy, vibrant club. It is not, however, the ultimate destination.

All too often the sole focus is on progress toward the DCP. The problem is people don't join Toastmasters to help a club achieve a Distinguished Club award. They join to achieve their own objectives. And they will remain a member as long as their personal objectives are being met. When they have met their goals,

understand those goals to make sure that this is happening.

If you focus on helping each member succeed, the club will succeed in the DCP. Focus on member success, not DCP success. The one feeds the other.

As a former member of the shrinking club mentioned earlier, I can understand the member's concern that some of the longtime members are not returning. Some are original members and serve as the brain trust of the club. I am sorry to see them leave.

The question is: Why are clubs like this struggling? Why would mainstays of a club leave?

We old-timers tend to hang around until something happens to trigger a decision, something that suggests that it is time for a change. The pandemic has triggered that decision for many. COVID-19 has caused many people to

Some members may leave because they are not excited about the online format. That is why I strongly suggest that, if you haven't already, get back to meeting in person as soon as possible. Hopefully that alleviates the problem. But online meetings may have weakened the commitment of some of your members. In-person connections are stronger than virtual connections. Work to strengthen those connections.

What if all your members are fully committed? Fantastic! Still, focus on making sure that their personal goals are met. That is why they joined Toastmasters in the first place. And that is why they will continue to be happy, committed, and supportive members for a long time to come.

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

The Leader Ladder

Why the Club Executive Committee is a valuable training ground for aspiring leaders.

By Gitel Hesselberg

One of the most valuable aspects of being a club officer is the opportunity to serve on the Club Executive Committee (CEC). Participating as a group member is an excellent way to develop a broad range of leadership expertise. Opportunities to learn and lead abound for this member-elected officer team, who steer the club's business operations and foster quality education programs and energetic club activities each year.

The CEC is chaired by the Club President and includes the Vice President Education (VPE), Vice President Membership (VPM), Vice President Public Relations (VPPR), Secretary, Treasurer, Sergeant at Arms, and the Immediate Past President (IPP). The IPP provides support and advice as needed to the new leadership team.

If you're looking for hands-on training, the CEC offers many opportunities, current and former club officers say. Manuela Parisi Brage, former VPPR of Vila Olim-

pia English Toastmasters in São Paulo, Brazil, prizes the skills—and the new friends—she gained during two extensive Toastmasters Leadership Institutes, training events for club officers. She directly credits her CEC training for helping her attain positions in her professional field of communications and public relations.

Celia Lim, DTM, found she wanted to follow in the footsteps of her CEC after observing their dedication to cultivating happy, goal-oriented members. She has been an officer almost continually since she joined Toastmasters in 2014 and is now Immediate Past President of Emmaus Catholic Toastmasters Club in Singapore. Lim says some of her leadership lessons came from studying what the Club President did and internalizing those qualities.

What advice do current and former CEC members have for aspiring club leaders? Lim notes that potential candidates should “know the Toastmasters structure well,” and suggests the Club Secretary or Sergeant at Arms as good offices to hold first.

George Brown, former VPE of Cranston Communicators in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, says one of the most important things you can do is read the [Club Leadership Handbook](#). You can also log in to Leadership Central and watch club officer tutorials that detail the responsibilities of each position. Understanding each role, and how they fit together, helps to build a strong, cooperative leadership team, the handbook explains.

Naturally, it's also a good idea to talk to former or current officers if you're thinking of running for a club officer position. Not only do you gain fresh perspective and get to know these leaders better, you can see and assess what skills they have and think about what talents and value you could bring to the CEC team. Club leadership committees will be meeting soon to choose an officer slate for the coming year. Should you run for club office? That's something only you can decide. However—like any Toastmasters experience—the more you put into it, the more you get out of it. **T**

Gitel Hesselberg is a member of four Toastmasters clubs and serves on the CECs of Haifa Toastmasters, Jerusalem Toastmasters, and Modi'in Toastmasters, all in Israel. In her non-Toastmasters time, she teaches English.

The CEC at the Helm

The CEC oversees all aspects of club business, from helping set the tone for a healthy club culture to handling the practical jobs associated with operations management. These annual duties are spelled out in the CEC section of the *Club Leadership Handbook*.

The team's most important work begins at the start of the new program year when they meet to set a budget, appoint committees, and develop strategies to achieve all or as many of the Distinguished Club Program (DCP) goals as possible through a robust [Club Success Plan](#). Achieving DCP goals is the hallmark of high-performance clubs, and the CEC helps drive that process.

While the CEC proposes the items outlined above, all initiatives must be approved by the whole club, so it's important that everyone contributes and collaborates for success. The club handbook notes that members are “welcome and encouraged” to attend and observe CEC meetings.

Decision-making, goal-setting, strategic planning, mentoring colleagues for success, finance, organization, and reporting are all jobs undertaken by the CEC, and represent some of the most sought-after leadership skills today.

Whether you are adept at these skills or want to attain and polish them, the CEC offers a good training ground.

Club President: The **TEAM** Leader

The President helps members and fellow officers achieve results.

By Peggy Beach, DTM

Resources to Help

To learn more about the role of Club President, check the following resources:

- ♦ [President Overview](#)
- ♦ [Club Leadership Handbook](#)

Other resources helpful to all club officers:

- ♦ [Club Officer Tools](#)
- ♦ [Distinguished Club Program and Club Success Plan](#)
- ♦ [Moments of Truth](#)

Every year, Toastmasters clubs elect their leaders. The most visible officer, the one with the highest profile, is the Club President.

The President sets the tone for the club. They build the relationships and establish the network that allow members to reach their individual goals and the club to reach its Distinguished Club Program goals.

The acronym TEAM sums up the role of the Club President.

T stands for *training and resources*. Club officers are trained twice a year. While some of the training may seem repetitive, each session includes updated information club officers need from District leaders. Toastmasters International has many resources a Club President can use, including the [Club Leadership Handbook](#), the [Club Constitution for Clubs of Toastmasters International](#), and the [Distinguished Club Program and Club Success Plan](#) manual.

e stands for lead by *example*. Mary Ann Davila, DTM, Area 34 Director and member of the Momentum Toastmasters in San Juan, Puerto Rico, encourages Club Presidents to work on their educational goals. “If you are asking members to work on Pathways,” she says, “then you should work on Pathways too.” Davila says that Presidents should share their vision with the club at the beginning as well as throughout the Toastmasters year.

Mark Reynolds, DTM, member of Limestone Coast and Devils Advocate clubs in Australia, agrees with Davila that the President must lead by example. “The President should not only communicate well but should look at the overall club to see that officers are communicating effectively with other officers and members,” he says. Reynolds also says that Club Presidents should routinely let members know they are appreciated.

A stands for *ask questions*. Su Brooks, DTM, a member of Talk of Monmouth in Tinton Falls, New Jersey, says that Club Presidents need to listen to members to find out their needs. “This is crucial when creating a Club Success Plan,” she notes. Club Presidents can also ask questions of Area, Division, District, and international leaders. Brooks recommends

building relationships with other Club Presidents. This is an excellent way to find answers to the challenges a club faces, she says.

m stands for *meetings*. Reynolds says he encourages Club Presidents to meet with the Club Executive Committee at least once a month to ensure that each club officer is on the same page with club issues. The committee can also keep the President up to date on any challenges that require a diplomatic solution. Also, Club Presidents represent their club at Area, District, and international meetings.

What are the benefits of being a Club President? Brooks says that she felt she stretched her managerial skills. “I especially learned a lot about delegating tasks,” she says. Reynolds and Davila point out the joy of working with amazing teams and recognizing the success of club members.

“It is important to be humble,” says Reynolds. “Your term will end quickly.”

Go Team!

The Club President is the ultimate team player. In this role, your efforts are in service of others’ goals. You can make your club stronger, inspire your club members with your encouragement and support, and empower them to learn and improve.

As the *Toastmasters Club Leadership Handbook* states, “Leaders achieve results for their clubs by giving priority attention to the needs of their members and fellow club officers. Consider yourself a steward of your club’s resources—human, financial, and physical.”

When your club holds its next officer elections, why not volunteer yourself for the role of President? If selected, you’ll learn a great deal about leadership in your journey. **T**

Editor’s Note: *This is the first in a series of recurring articles covering club officer roles.*

Peggy Beach, DTM, is a freelance writer and instructor in Raleigh, North Carolina. She is a member of Hi Rise Toastmasters in Raleigh and Top Triangle Toastmasters in Morrisville, North Carolina. She is a Past Club President as well as a Past District 37 Governor. You can reach her at writereitorpeggybeach@gmail.com.

Advocating for the World's Entrepreneurs

The newest Accredited Speaker is an ardent business leader, and much more.

By Stephanie Darling

Forrest Tuff, DTM, AS, has yet to parachute from a plane or win an Emmy Award—two items he notes are on his bucket list. But he's achieved plenty of other accomplishments over the years as an entrepreneur, filmmaker, author, coach, talk show host, community advocate, father, former basketball star, and now, as Toastmasters' newest Accredited Speaker (AS).

Tuff is the 89th Toastmaster to achieve the prestigious designation since the program began in 1981. His presentation, "Brand Strategy for Small Business," given at the 2021 Toastmasters International Virtual Convention, is punctuated with an energetic voice, engaging gestures, and encouraging words. His passion for the small-business sector, which drives much of the world's economy, is evident.

Tuff is the owner of One Vision Productions, an Atlanta, Georgia-based multimedia and branding agency that counts small firms, government entities, and Fortune 100 companies among its clients. Since 2015, One Vision has been recognized as one of Atlanta's "Best and Brightest Companies to Work For" by the National Association of Business Resources.

Tuff says he pursued the AS designation because it has real merit in the workforce.

"Toastmasters has worldwide brand recognition and a reputation for excellence. The AS designation is like a badge of honor that provides organizations the confidence to know they've hired the right subject matter expert. And I want to assure my clients they've made the right choice with me," he explains.

For years, Tuff enjoyed success in behind-the-scenes roles as a business consultant, but when he started to receive public speaking requests, he realized he "was not up to the task." That's when he remembered hearing his mother talk about Toastmasters when he was a teen. As a speech student and orator in her own right, she had long championed Toastmasters. His mother was right. North Gwinnett Advanced Toastmasters Club in Duluth, Georgia, helped him soar professionally and personally, Tuff notes.

"I walked into this President's Distinguished Club and was accepted immediately. I was the only African American, but it didn't matter. It feels so good to be part of an organization where everyone wants you to be the best version of yourself. That really struck me and why, to this day, I enjoy being a Toastmaster," he says.


"It's something like a code of Toastmasters," he adds. "Everyone is treated fairly and respectfully. Once you come to meetings, you understand this culture."

Tuff says his skills were well-tested in the rigorous AS program. It's a challenge many contenders don't reach on the first try, and he was no exception. He made his first attempt in 2020 and, like his speaking peers, had to adapt to the suddenly alien practice of engaging an audience—through the eye of a small camera in an empty room. He began pursuing the accreditation before COVID-19 drove the process online.

"I didn't know how to do a virtual presentation, but I don't believe in passing up opportunities, so I said yes," he notes, upon learning about the format change. "I wasn't comfortable at first—but I learned, and I got through it." His 2021 presentation was backed by intense personal practice, along with skills he honed as a talk show host during the early days of COVID-19. He also credits advice from other AS designees and expert evaluations he received from the North Gwinnett club.

Tuff says the AS journey is different for every speaker and advises aspiring AS candidates to request a mentor and join an advanced club, as he did. The objective advice of others was a strong complement to his own personal style and expertise, he notes.

Optimism and unshakable goals are also key ingredients, Tuff adds.

"Be sure to V.E.T. your goals," he says. "You must have *vision* (belief in yourself), *expertise* (know your craft), and *tenacity*." 

Editor's Note: [Watch](#) Tuff's interview with Toastmasters International First Vice President Morag Mathieson, DTM. [Read more](#) about Tuff and visit his [website](#).

Stephanie Darling is senior editor for the Toastmaster magazine.



Forrest Tuff, DTM, AS



Toastmasters International's Accredited Speaker Program

Two letters represent decades of excellence in the public speaking profession.

By Stephanie Darling

In the 40 years since its launch, the Toastmasters Accredited Speaker (AS) Program has created a cadre of exceptional professional speakers. These individuals are experts among experts—combining superior speaking skills with in-depth knowledge of a topic, making them sought-after presenters in their respective professional fields.

Current designees are experts in widely diverse subject areas, including industrial workplace safety, entrepreneurship, neuroscience and mental health, negotiation, finance, executive leadership, diversity, disability, change management, productivity, education, work-life balance, and much more.

The rigorous AS process is reserved for Toastmasters who are already paid professional speakers and are seeking the competitive advantage of a respected designation to distinguish themselves in the highly competitive public speaking arena.

Program requirements are challenging. Applicants must be members in good standing, have earned a qualifying education award, and made at least 25 non-Toastmasters presentations over three years. There are additional criteria, including a high-quality video presentation, to round out Level 1 of the process. Candidates moving to Level 2

helps you as the speaker define your professional brand and think about how you want to present yourself to both the Toastmasters community and the public sphere.”

While only a small fraction of Toastmasters members ever pursue the AS designation, many of its benefits mirror those essential to the Toastmasters experience in general.

“Even before you earn the AS you learn the power and beauty of the Toastmasters community,” Artale says. “Whether it is clubs and Districts allowing you to practice your signature talks or past designees who are always willing to offer advice to those applying for the designation, you learn that Toastmasters provides countless methods of support.

“It also reminds you that you’re part of something much bigger than yourself. The designation carries with it the ability to help other Toastmasters in their speaking journey (whether they are trying to earn the AS or not), and creates voices for improving Toastmasters as a whole,” Artale says.

Perhaps surprisingly, the AS speakers are positive about program changes brought by COVID-19. Instead of sidelining the program’s visibility or deterring candidates, it’s unveiled new possibilities.

The program helps candidates sharpen important strengths beyond simply speaking as subject matter experts.

Learn More About the AS Program

Read the [AS Handbook](#).

Listen to a [Toastmasters Podcast](#) featuring AS designees.

Learn how to [apply](#).

give a live presentation at the Toastmasters International Convention each August. Successful Level 2 presenters earn the AS designation; those who don’t qualify are given the opportunity to apply again the following year.

The program is hard work, but worth it, designees say. “AS speakers are the professional voice and ambassadors for Toastmasters International. It’s an honor to hold the designation,” notes Rochelle Rice, DTM, AS, CSP, co-chair of the 2021-2022 AS Program Council.

Paul Artale, DTM, AS, Ph.D., notes the program helps candidates sharpen important strengths beyond simply speaking as subject matter experts. It’s also instrumental in drawing out the applicant’s mindset for the business of public speaking.

“I think the program helps many aspiring candidates focus on their speaking business,” he explains. “The process

“In my opinion, COVID-19 challenged the AS program to adapt to an evolved speaking environment. Overall, I believe the program is better suited to assess professional speakers,” says Forrest Tuff, DTM, AS, the program’s newest designee.

Rice believes the program’s new flexibility, partially induced by the pandemic, actually benefits today’s professional speakers and the clients who want to hire them. “The program has demonstrated the agility to help today’s speakers thrive and adapt to an ever-changing world,” she says. “These individuals are more prepared than ever to deliver high-level professional presentations that clients are looking for.”

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

8 Tips for Engaging Your Audience

By Cathey Armillas, DTM

Break through the “invisible wall” with questions, stories, and more.

It was during a motorcycle licensing class that I witnessed one of the most engaged audiences I have ever seen in my life.

Now, I've seen a *lot* of engaged audiences. I've watched speakers get standing ovations from a 3,000-plus crowd at a TEDx Talk. I've seen trainers get a room full of people to do things they would never do on their own: like singing in front of a group of strangers or participating in improv games.

What made this audience absolutely, 100% engaged was something so simple it blew my mind.

Jeff (our instructor) broke down what I call the “invisible wall.” It's a wall that exists between every speaker and their audience. It's there because your audience is sitting behind it and cannot truly see you or hear you unless you break down that wall for them. It's the art of getting to “them.”

When you start in Toastmasters, your focus is on YOU: how you best speak to your audience. As you become a more experienced speaker, you learn to shift the focus onto THEM—your audience—and what they need from you.

To move from an experienced speaker to an engaging speaker, you need to understand that *how* you're connecting is just as important as *what*

you're saying. And you can do that by breaking down the wall between speaker and audience.

The Invisible Wall

Jeff had 2½ days to get through a lot of material. We had to know the laws, safety practices, and how to physically ride a motorcycle to get our license.

Rather than giving us a traditional classroom lecture explaining everything, Jeff employed a rapid question technique, which resulted in the class fully participating in the learning. He would randomly call on us:

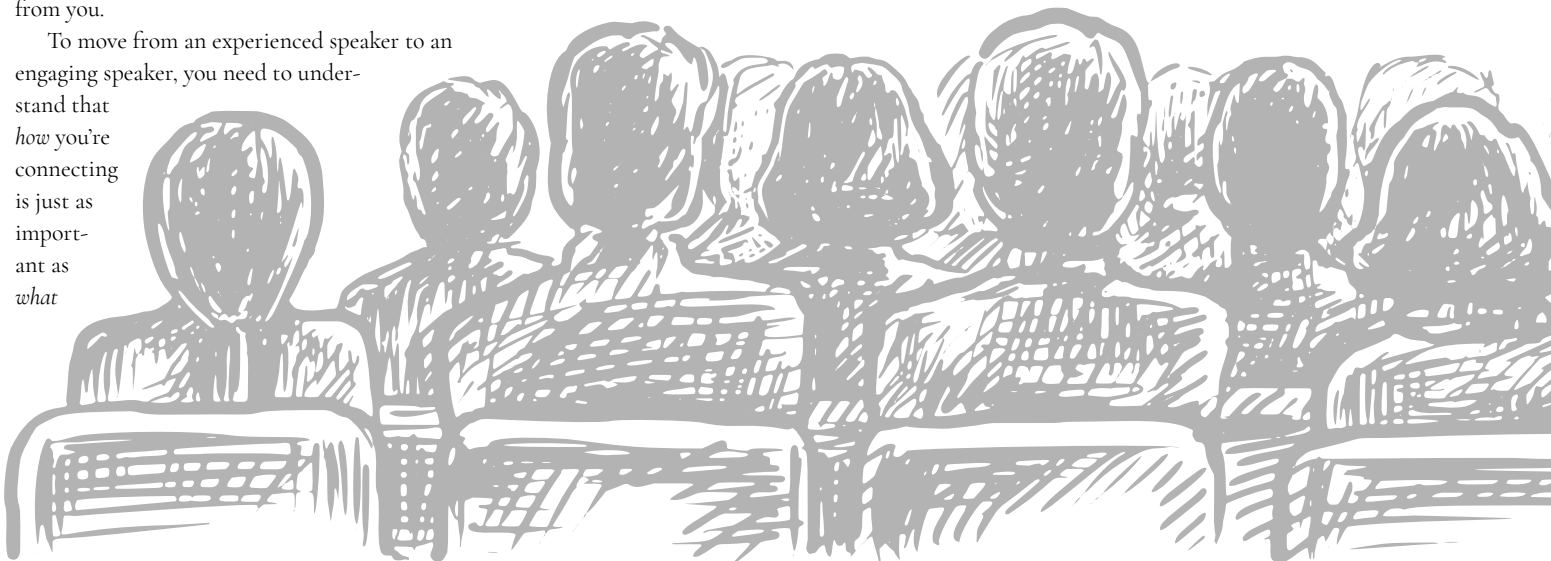
Jeff: “Cathey, where on the road is the greatest potential for multi-vehicle crashes?”

Cathey (searching to see what page we're on): “At intersections?”
(The class chuckles.)

Jeff: “Exactly. Jon, what is lane splitting and is it legal in Oregon?”

Jon (following along with the curriculum): “It's the practice of sharing a lane with another vehicle, and no, it's not legal in Oregon.”

Jeff: “That's right. Stephen, how do you signal a right-hand turn to other vehicles in the event of your blinker not functioning?”





Laura Salerno Owens

Stephen (at full attention because he now understands that he can be called upon at any moment): “You raise your left arm up with your palm open.”
 Jeff: “Ha! You totally got it!” (The class cheers!)

What Jeff managed to do was to shift a room of about 50 of us, many of whom were on our phones, to sit up at full attention and follow along as he led us in a beautiful display of breaking down the invisible wall. He didn’t read the material or show us word-heavy slides; instead, he got us actively engaged with the material. The entire energy in the room shifted, we were all surprised to find ourselves having a great time, and almost every single one of us passed the very difficult written test.

Many speakers, including professionals and experts, rely on engaging their audience as part of their success. Inspired by my experience with Jeff, I reached out to eight professionals to gather their best tips on engaging their audiences.

1 Tell great stories.

Laura Salerno Owens • trial lawyer

As a trial lawyer, I have to be persuasive, and sometimes I have to connect with people I’ve never met so they find my client’s position credible. It’s imperative that I build a relationship with my audience to establish trust. What establishes trust? Authenticity, simplicity, and creativity. All elements of a great story. I always try to set the stage with a story before diving into the data. Humans remember stories—it was the first way we learned, and I find an insightful story can persuade people from any walk of life.

2 Ask powerful questions.

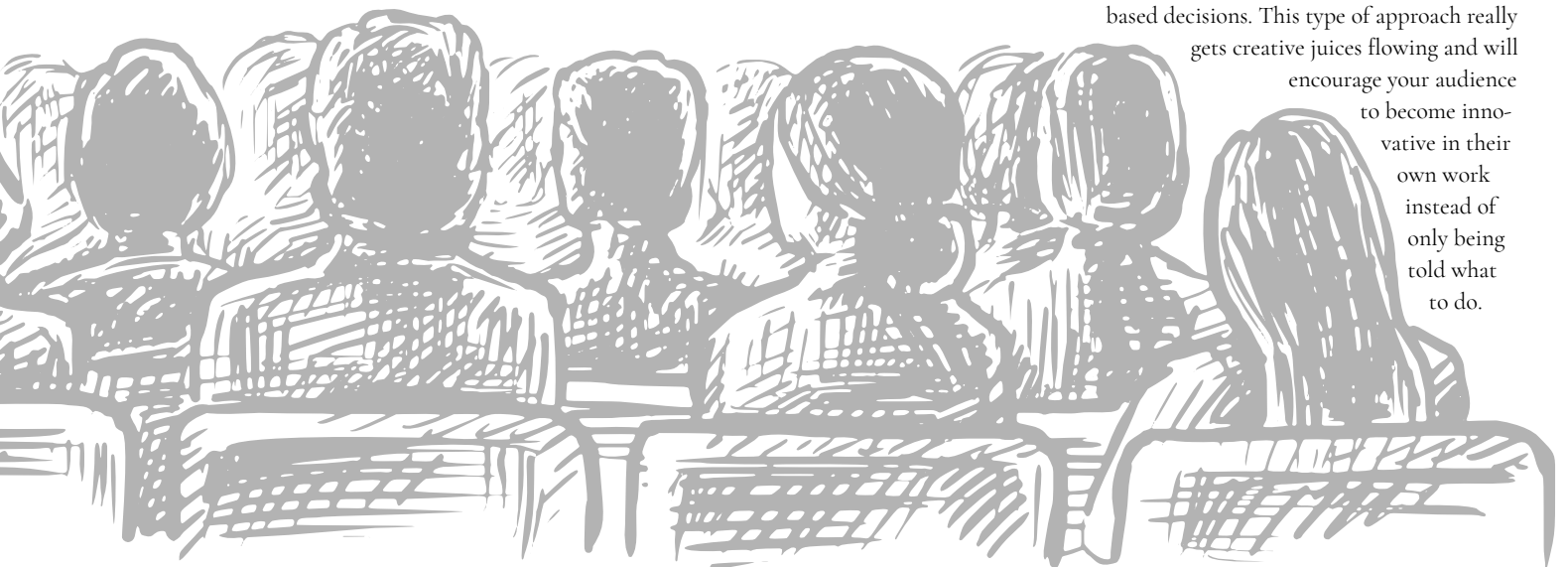
Omekongo Dibinga • professor of intercultural communication

I often encounter students who are more knowledgeable than me on several issues they are passionate about. Rather than pretend to be a know-it-all, I ask questions to get them thinking. Rather than telling them what to think, I invite them to analyze how they think. I might ask questions like “Does it still make sense to use terms like ‘people of color’ when white is a color too and the term jumbles groups together that don’t have that much in common?” I give the students no answer but simply provide food for thought and invite them to make their own thought-

based decisions. This type of approach really gets creative juices flowing and will encourage your audience to become innovative in their own work instead of only being told what to do.



Omekongo Dibinga





Rebecca Armstrong

3 Tap into empathy.

Rebecca Armstrong • advertising executive

A critical and often overlooked factor for audience engagement, in my opinion, is empathy. That applies whether you're delivering marketing recommendations to a small audience of business executives in a conference room or explaining how to cure cancer to an auditorium full of the world's leading doctors and scientists. You might think your subject matter is inherently interesting but what really matters to them? Build your presentation around their needs. Think about what keeps them up at night and imagine what state of mind they might be in as they listen to you. What challenges are they facing? What do they need to make themselves successful? Are they in your audience out of interest or because a meeting invite showed up on their calendar? Have they just had lunch? Is it late Friday afternoon after a hectic week? Step into the shoes of those people with the aim of understanding their perspectives. Matter to them.

4 Build their trust.

Redray Frazier • musician

No matter how nervous I might be, I try not to show it. I want the audience to know that the stage is my home. That said, if I am nervous (which still happens), I will tell the audience and give them the reasons why. By sharing that information, a trust is being built. That always seems like a good place to start.



Redray Frazier

5 Use contrast and variety.

Kristy Siefkin • television newscaster

TV news broadcasters have to keep viewers engaged without any way to “read” our live audience members at home. There are no confused faces, crossed arms, or big smiles to let us know if our content resonates. So, we turn to contrast and variety. Think of an American Thanksgiving buffet: If you only serve a big bowl of creamy mashed potatoes, your guests leave pretty quickly. If you steadily add a small dish of zesty cranberry dip, then crunchy herb stuffing, then sweet pumpkin pie bites, guests keep circling the buffet. The same principle applies to engaging viewers on-air. We “serve” viewers a buffet of brief stories, contrasting a serious, investigative piece, delivered with intensity, with a fun human-interest story, sprinkled with banter. Just like the Thanksgiving buffet, offering bite-size stories that tap into different tastes and emotions will keep most of your guests coming back for another helping.

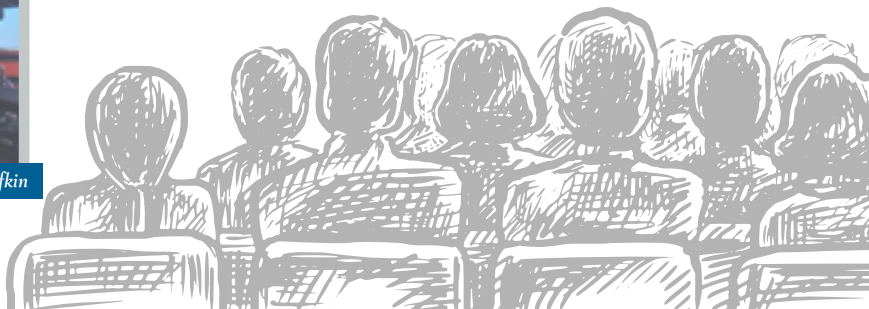


Kristy Siefkin

6 Make the personal, universal.

Isabel Allen • yoga instructor

The best way I've found to connect with students is to make the personal, universal. Or to make the universal, personal. I try to offer my own humanity as a route to engagement. I might share a silly story about rushing and stubbing my toe as a reminder that we could all stand to slow down and be more mindful on our yoga mats and in our lives. Or to flip it and



make the universal personal, I would begin by reflecting that we live in a culture that is busy, competitive, and fast-paced. Often, we miss out on the details of life because we are rushing. Throughout class I work my way back to the anecdote or story I shared as a way to engage students with something relatable. While hopefully not everyone in class stubbed their toe earlier that day, they all know what it's like to be rushing around and can relate to the experience of running late. The entry point to engagement is our shared humanity.

7 Embrace mistakes.

Gary Hirsch • improv comedian

Mistakes happen. No matter how much you plan, something unexpected and unpredictable is bound to occur. On the improv stage this fact creates magic. Imagine that Jill comes out on stage and right before she delivers her line, she trips on her shoelaces and stumbles (unexpected, unplanned). The audience holds their breath to see what will happen. Will she fall, lose her composure, apologize, start the scene again? No, she will simply see this as an offer and use it. For instance, she ties them, they trip her. Or she discovers that she is slowly losing all ability to do simple things. Or a giant snail has left a slime trail in her living room. It doesn't matter what she does with the mistake as long as she uses it. For an audience it is exhilarating and massively engaging to see a calm and confident improviser take something unexpected and turn it into something useful. For an improviser there are no mistakes, only opportunities. Any communicator can practice this with any audience.

8 Be real. Let them be real.

Lou Radja • DEI consultant

In my role of training and consulting in diversity, equity, and inclusion, I always start with being real. I share a vulnerable story about my life and things that I do and don't like about the situations we are working through. I then invite my audience to do the same. I encourage them to be honest about how they feel in a judgment-free zone. Because authenticity is the currency of a real engagement from an audience. They can smell inauthentic communication and they know when they are being spoken at. There's no script for being real. You have to genuinely, authentically be real with your audience because when you are, people listen to you with their heart.

These experts use their tips to break down the invisible wall and engage their audiences. Just like Jeff, they understand that this is the secret to success, being audience-centric instead of speaker-centric. **T**

Cathey Armillas, DTM, is a three-time Distinguished Toastmaster and a member of TV Toastmasters and Toastmasters for Speaking Professionals, both in Portland, Oregon. She is an international speaker, marketing expert, TED coach, and author of *How to Rock a TED Talk*. For more information, visit www.CatheyArmillas.com.



Isabel Allen



Gary Hirsch



Lou Radja (right)



Toastmasters Take Virtual to a New Reality

How some members are using virtual reality technology to improve communication skills.

By Ryan Levesque, DTM

It's common to hear Toastmasters use the word "virtual" to describe Zoom events and meetings. However, a growing type of virtual gathering takes *virtual* to the next level—virtual reality or VR.

Some pioneering Toastmasters are using this digital realm to improve their speaking and communication skills in new and imaginative settings for meetings and presentations.

Even Toastmasters International President Margaret Page, DTM, is excited about the varied opportunities virtual reality presents. "I love learning about innovation and how it will affect business, life, and of course, Toastmasters," says Page.

What Is Virtual Reality?

Virtual reality is an immersive digital experience. A headset obscures your physical environment and transports you to a new world. Pixels arranged into angles, shapes, lights, and shadows conspire to trick the senses, giving you the experience of "being" somewhere else. You can look or move in any direction and experience the world in 360 degrees.



VR frequently uses spatial audio, meaning the volume dynamically changes. Walk toward an avatar speaking, and their voice gets louder. Turn your head or walk away and it gets softer. Handheld controllers deliver tactile sensations through vibration. Accessories like haptic suits—wearable devices that vibrate and pulsate—add to the visceral impact of music and gameplay.

So how does communication play into all this?

As gear becomes increasingly affordable, more individuals and companies are discovering VR. A host of apps like AltspaceVR, Spatial, Engage, Glue, Arthur, Immersed, and Horizon Workrooms allow groups to meet in a common virtual environment and collaborate inside that world with screen sharing, virtual whiteboards, and sticky notes. Users can import presentation slides, files, and videos to share with other users. Some platforms allow non-VR users to join from a computer or tablet, allowing them 2D access while displaying their video feed to the participants in the VR world.

Perhaps the biggest limitation in VR today involves the minimal facial expressions of avatars. Apps often compensate for this through emojis. Meanwhile, companies are developing headsets with cameras to detect the user's facial expressions and eye movements and display them on the avatar in real-time.

How Can Toastmasters Use VR?

Some VR apps are specifically designed to help hone public speaking and other communication skills. For example, Ovation and VirtualSpeech allow users to deliver speeches in various environments before a simulated audience. These apps incorporate artificial intelligence to evaluate the speaker's performance and provide instant feedback.

Perhaps an even more exciting use for Toastmasters involves opportunities to practice presentations in front of a "live" audience of other VR users.

Whether practicing alone or among others in virtual reality, you benefit. Psychologist Cheryl Mathews has researched and studied public speaking anxiety disorder and social anxiety for over 30 years. She explains



that skills practiced in VR can translate to improvement in real life. “Your brain cannot tell the difference between a real experience and a virtual reality experience. So when you practice an anxious situation using virtual reality, your brain thinks you are practicing in real life,” says Mathews.

Discovering a New World

Melanie Stark is a member of Speaking Machine and Laugh-A-Lot Toastmasters clubs, both in Elk Grove, California. During quarantine, she purchased a VR headset expecting it would be a fun way to entertain her family with video games. She discovered so much more.

“A whole new world opened up when I discovered social VR,” she says, referring to apps like AltspaceVR that allow users to interact with each other. “After weeks of isolation, AltspaceVR gave me a safe, contactless opportunity to be with people in a whole new way. It’s a unique experience every time, and I’ve met some amazing people from various countries.”

For those who are highly nervous interacting with others in person, social VR could be an effective way to build up a comfort level that can then transfer over to in-person settings.

Stark, who has hosted events in AltspaceVR to talk about Toastmasters, even introduced International President Page to VR.

“Virtual reality provides new educational and training opportunities not available in the

real world,” says Page. “For example, students can study geometry in VR, bringing to life abstract concepts as they interact with shapes, angles, lines, rays, and so on. Or imagine giving a virtual ‘hands-on,’ sting-free presentation to teach beekeeping. The possibilities are limitless.”

In AltspaceVR, users create a customized cartoonish avatar comprising a head, torso, and free-floating hands. They can choose from a variety of clothing, hairstyles, eye and mouth shapes, skin color, and more. Some users choose to create avatars that look like themselves, while others may choose a fresh look. Stark’s avatar has bright pink skin. “Because I could!” she explains with enthusiasm.

Bringing VR to the Club

Katashi Ishihara is Vice President Education for Storytelling Toastmasters in Tokyo, Japan, and an engineer and business/life coach. He bought his first VR headset last year and introduced the technology to his District through an experiential workshop at its annual conference. About half the members of his club now have VR headsets, and occasionally host VR meetings on Spatial. Unlike the cartoonish avatars of AltspaceVR, Spatial generates avatars with

Beyond career development, he cites another compelling reason to try VR. “When the pandemic hit, not everyone embraced Zoom. Unfortunately, those who did not missed an amazing opportunity to connect not only with their club members, but with members from around the world. VR offers new opportunities to connect with people across geographic boundaries, in striking environments.”

Virtual Networking

New York City entrepreneur and web designer Roberto DaCosta bought a VR headset to fulfill a childhood dream of entering the worlds of the video games he played growing up. Convinced of VR’s future growth, he started a VR-based business, CONINVR (short for Connections In VR).

Through CONINVR, DaCosta hosts VR Networking, a free weekly VR-based business networking group that meets in AltspaceVR. He also puts on a free monthly virtual trade show for businesses. He says participants walk away from these events with new business, referrals, and valuable connections. “Success stories happen every week,” he says.

DaCosta also believes virtual networking provides a level of additional safety that helps

“We meet together in amazing environments the club could never afford to travel to or rent in real life.”

— KATASHI ISHIHARA

photo-realistic faces of the users. Non-VR users can take part with video through the desktop or mobile version of the app.

“We meet together in amazing environments the club could never afford to travel to or rent in real life. We’ll do Table Topics® around a campfire under the stars, and then can jump to an ultra-modern theater for speeches.”

The club recommends providing VR training outside the meeting, allowing the opportunity to test out the gear and controls. A Facebook group extends the VR-focused conversation, providing tips and suggestions, and offering support to newer users.

Ishihara predicts VR will explode in popularity within the next five years. Learning to communicate in VR now will provide a competitive advantage when it becomes as ubiquitous as Zoom.

people who are anxious or self-conscious gain experience expressing themselves.

While VR is expected to grow in popularity, it’s unlikely to replace in-person interactions. However, it can supplement them. Stark sums it up well. “While I love virtual reality, I wouldn’t say it’s better or worse than meeting in person or on Zoom. It’s just different.”

And the only way to fully appreciate the difference is to experience it for yourself. **T**

Ryan Levesque, DTM, is a member of Fall River Innovators in Fall River, Massachusetts, a writer and publishing expert who specializes in writing content for blockchain and cryptocurrency projects. He hosts the [Toastmasters Podcast](#). Find him on [LinkedIn](#) and at [WordsOnChain.com](#). Interested in joining Ryan to create a VR Toastmasters club? Visit [VRToastmasters.com!](#)



Connecting the Dots From Goals to Purpose

Don't spend so much time setting goals that you forget your larger purpose.

By Dave Zielinski

Purpose gives you a sense of fulfillment, infuses you with joy, and answers the age-old question of why you were born into this world. A sense of purpose also helps you withstand life's harshest trials and provides scientifically proven benefits to your mental and physical health.

But while some find purpose as easily as they draw their next breath, others struggle endlessly to find their life's calling. The good news is psychologists and life coaches say there are proven ways to help identify your own unique purpose and begin setting short- and long-term goals in pursuit of that mission. In doing so, you'll likely find more satisfaction, achieve greater well-being, become a better leader, and create a life that's more rewarding for you and all those you encounter along the journey.

Finding Purpose

Purpose is the organizing principle that informs and shapes the decisions in your life, guiding how you set goals, interact with others, and make choices in difficult circumstances. Purpose is an intentionality, such as

living to help others, being a caring and involved parent or friend, or creating new businesses that provide jobs or change the world.

But too often we focus only on achieving short-term goals that aren't connected to any overarching sense of purpose. The result is experiencing a temporary high but feeling an enduring "is this all there is?" emptiness and dissatisfaction in the aftermath of our achievements.

"Most human beings get lost in a sense of action and don't have a higher sense of purpose," says Marshall Goldsmith, executive coach and author of *What Got You Here Won't Get You There* and *Triggers*. "Many of the leaders I coach tend to be so focused on achieving goals they forget why they are achieving them in the first place. But purpose or aspiration doesn't have a finish line. Most of us don't spend enough time thinking about our larger purpose."

Experts say purpose should be highly personal and specific and something chosen only by you, not by family, friends, or colleagues who—often with good intentions—try to create your purpose and goals for you.

"People are always telling us who we should be," says Nick Craig, founder and president of the Core Leadership Institute, a global leadership development firm in Massachusetts, and author of *Leading from Purpose*. "At work we receive 360-degree assessments of our performance from peers, and in our personal lives we get constant advice from family and friends. While that feedback



**“The more that your
purpose and goal
achievement are aligned
the more satisfied
and happy you’ll be
with your life.”**

—MARSHALL GOLDSMITH

can have benefits, if we let it guide us too much, we begin to lose our own uniqueness and particular gifts, which is our purpose.”

Many of us try to “think” our way to finding purpose by writing down lists of jobs, experiences, or activities we think would give us more satisfaction or joy. But Shannon Kaiser, a Portland, Oregon-based international life coach, former Toastmaster, and author of *The Self-Love Experiment*, says it’s better to “do” your way into finding purpose.

Having the courage to throw yourself into a variety of different life experiences allows you to find out what resonates and begin to narrow down your true purpose, Kaiser says.

“We learn the way on the way,” says Kaiser. “Following your curiosity and having a wide variety of experiences leads you to your bigger picture. Some of those experiences will feel right and others won’t. But it’s only through trying and then reflecting that you’ll find out.”

Perhaps you’re a software developer who feels a yearning to be a teacher, an attorney who’s always wanted to spend more time volunteering to help others, or a longtime corporate leader who’s always wanted to start her own business. The only way to find out if the reality matches your vision is to begin taking small steps in pursuit of that dream.

“I call it inspired action,” Kaiser says. “It’s about learning to trust the unknown and be comfortable in that space. The more we do different things, the more clarity we get about what does and doesn’t inspire us and what gives us a feeling of fulfillment and joy.”

Kaiser also says it’s important to pursue your purpose from a place of excitement and inspiration rather than one of worry or fear.

“If you’re saying, ‘I need to quickly find my life purpose because I just left my corporate career and need money,’ that is a strained place from which to make important decisions. Try to make those kinds of decisions when you’re in a place where you feel inspired or joyful.”

The Value of Becoming Other-Focused

Experts say there can also be pitfalls in making our quest for purpose too much about ourselves. Dr. Tchiki Davis, founder of the Berkeley Well-Being Institute in Berkeley, California, an organization with the mission of making well-being an integral part of life, work, and society, says people often fall into the trap of thinking about purpose only as a self-focused pursuit.

“Often that manifests in language like ‘what are my goals?’ or ‘what do I want to do,’ but studies suggest that many of the things that give us the most purpose are about others. Purpose arises from contributing positively to others’ lives. As one example, we might really enjoy cook-

ing, but we likely feel more purpose when we cook for others,” Davis says. “Finding ways to connect and contribute are good ways to boost a sense of purpose.”

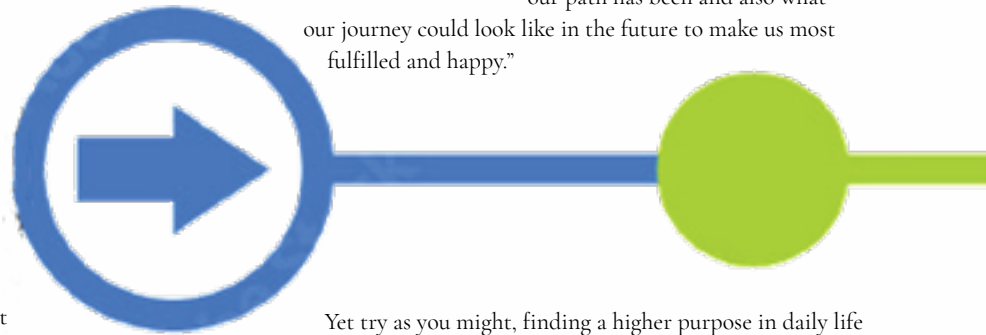
Craig, of Core Leadership Institute, says we all have stories from the “journeys of our lives” that we should examine if we’re struggling to identify a larger purpose going forward.

“There are stories of what we loved in our childhoods, stories of times we were tested and were able to survive or even thrive, stories of volunteer opportunities that were rewarding or of adventures we had that spoke to us,” he says. “In all of those there is a connective thread that has purpose sitting right underneath it. It helps us see what our path has been and also what

our journey could look like in the future to make us most fulfilled and happy.”

“The more we do different things, the more clarity we get about what does and doesn’t inspire us and what gives us a feeling of fulfillment and joy.”

—SHANNON KAISER



Yet try as you might, finding a higher purpose in daily life can still be challenging. Experts suggest answering these questions to help pin down your purpose:

- What drives or energizes you?
- What did you love doing as a child before the world told you who you should be or what things you should be doing?
- What were the most challenging times in your life and how did they change or shape you?
- What are you willing to sacrifice for?
- Who do you want to help, and what might that help look like in practice?
- What experiences have you had in any aspect of your life that gave you a lasting sense of satisfaction, joy, or accomplishment?

Sushma Perla, a life coach and emotional alignment specialist based in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, says people often get so caught up in finding purpose that they overlook the daily habits and practices required to live out a higher mission.

“We chase purpose, we want it, we think we need to have it, and sometimes we think we’re lacking it,” Perla says. “Here’s the thing. It’s your beliefs and values that drive every behavior, which, when aligned with your core, creates your life purpose and path. Life purpose isn’t something to be achieved; it’s something to be created.”

Tying Goals to Purpose

Psychologists and life coaches also say it's important to set specific short- and long-term goals tied to living out your bigger purpose.

"If you don't set goals to align with your broader purpose, you can end up just living in your head," says Goldsmith. "The more that your purpose and goal achievement are aligned the more satisfied and happy you'll be with your life."

Accredited Speaker Ross Mackay, DTM, a native of Scotland and President of the Towns of York Toastmasters Club in Aurora, Ontario, Canada, gives seminars on a concept he calls the "neuroscience" of goal

"Finding ways to connect and contribute are good ways to boost a sense of purpose."

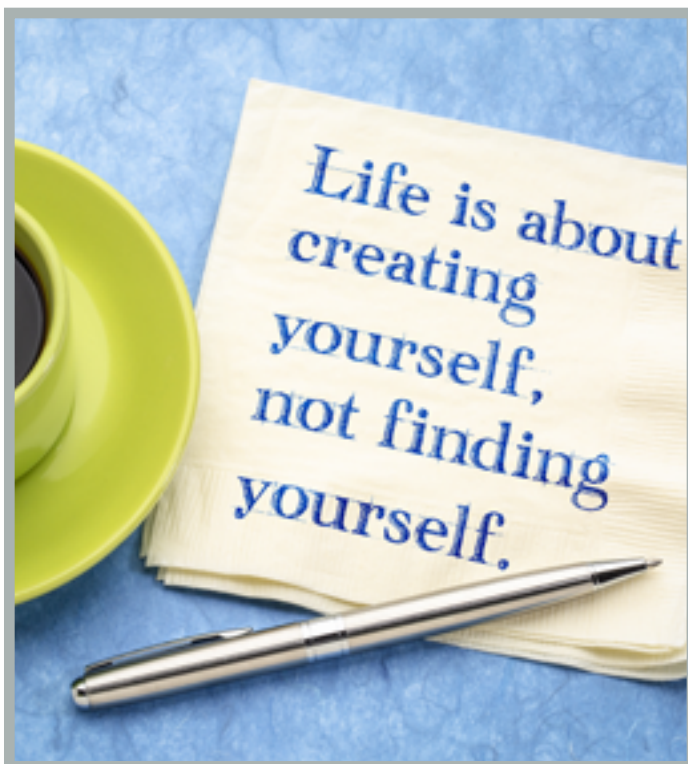
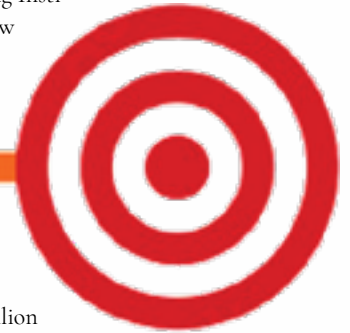
-DR. TCHIKI DAVIS

achievement. Mackay has worked with business leaders in 34 countries and says their secret to success often can be distilled to one common factor: They think deeply about their purpose and goals.

The process of setting and achieving goals happens at both the conscious and subconscious level of the human brain, Mackay says. "Once your short- or long-term goals enter your subconscious it's extremely difficult to get rid of them," he says. "It's like an autopilot in your brain that's hard to switch off. That comes from constantly thinking about your goals, planning, and working hard to achieve them and tying those goals to a larger purpose."

Craig uses a method at the Core Leadership Institute called "purpose-to-impact" that helps leaders live their purpose by tying that mission to a series of goals. The process starts with a statement of leadership purpose and then asks participants to create long-term goals—objectives that are three to five years out—as well as shorter-term goals of two years, one year, six months, three months, and a month into the future.

Davis, from the Berkeley Well-Being Institute, believes it's also helpful to ask how your goals will benefit others.



"For example, the goal of making a million dollars may not evoke that much purpose," she says.

"But making a million dollars so that you can buy your parents a house, donate to your favorite causes, or send your kids to college is likely to evoke more purpose."

Allowing for Change

Your purpose also can change with time as you age or encounter difficult circumstances like family or friends suffering from illnesses or misfortune that may galvanize you to help search for causes or cures.

What matters most, experts say, is that you continue to seek a higher calling and life's work. "If you believe your ultimate purpose is to continue to grow, learn, and live your life fully, you'll find different purposes as you age," Kaiser says.

For example, Mackay says his purpose in Toastmasters over the years is a case in point. "We start out in Toastmasters with the goal of learning to be better speakers, communicators, and leaders but eventually the purpose of many of us becomes helping other new members in our clubs in those same pursuits," Mackay says. "There is a shift that happens the longer you are a member and the more you become aware that the real purpose of Toastmasters is to help others and to make the world a better place." **T**

Dave Zielinski is a freelance writer and editor in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and a longtime contributor to the *Toastmaster*.

Design a Newsletter With Members in Mind

Tips and tools for creating an eye-catching club newsletter.

By Shannon Dewey

Resources to Use

[Toastmasters newsletter template](#)

[Branded logo and design elements](#)

[Professional images](#)

[Toastmasters Brand Manual](#)

[Toastmaster magazine](#)

[Media Center](#)

A club newsletter is a great way to keep members in the know, and more importantly, engaged. Along with Toastmasters organizational updates, your newsletter can spotlight club and member successes, help introduce newcomers, and act as an archive for your club's accomplishments year after year. A newsletter can also generate collaboration between members as they work together to create the content, as well as bring everyone closer as a community by making them feel informed and included.

Before you roll up your sleeves and start designing, you will need to determine who will be involved in the creation of your newsletter. Some clubs form a team that includes writers, proofreaders, and photographers—this could be an opportunity for members who are in the journalism/communication field to lend their expertise.

You will also want to obtain the buy-in from your members. Will they read a weekly or monthly newsletter? What is the best user experience for everyone—a PDF or templated email? And keep in mind there may be members with impairments or disabilities who will need the newsletter to be more accessible.

“We are a biweekly club, so we strive to ‘relive the memories’ from the last meeting by providing a recap and look forward to the next meeting by providing a brief teaser on the theme, Zoom link, feedback link, etc.,” says Janice Law, DTM, of Grosvenor Toastmasters Club in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. “We release our newsletter,

- First, explore other club newsletters. Some clubs have a one-page document with limited photos and hyperlinks, other clubs have a 15-page flipbook with the look of a magazine, and some send a templated email. Before you dig into designing, decide what kind of experience you want to provide your members and find out how much time they're willing to invest in the creation and consumption of a newsletter. (Find newsletter samples [here](#)).
- The Toastmasters Resource Library houses a simple [newsletter template](#), available in the branded colors of Loyal Blue and True Maroon, and in A4 and letter size. Once you have downloaded a template, you will create your newsletter within Microsoft Word—this is a basic template that can be filled in easily by your designated newsletter creator. If you're familiar with Word, you can add club and member photos to draw readers in. You can also use [Microsoft Publisher](#) to design a polished, professional layout without the hassle.
- If your team wants to design a more comprehensive newsletter with some flair, try using templates from [Canva](#). This platform is free to use, with a variety of equally free templates, elements, text designs, and more. You can even upload your own photos from your club, or [Toastmasters' branded images](#).

Once you've picked the perfect layout and filled it in, you can download a high-quality PDF to email,

You don't have to be a professional graphic designer to create an eye-catching newsletter.

The Grosvenor Toastmasters Telegram, on the off week when we don't hold a meeting.”

Once you've established your team and agree on the size, content, and delivery details, you're ready to start designing. You don't have to be a professional graphic designer to create an eye-catching newsletter. Here are a few steps to help you get started.

print, or upload to your website for your readers. A subscription is available if your club is inclined to spend a little money for additional templates and elements in Canva. There are also [tutorial videos](#) readily available for a quick overview.

- Let's say your club has high hopes for a beautiful, easily digestible publication that has the appearance of a



magazine. Look into [Issuu](#), an electronic publishing platform that generates your PDFs into embeddable flipbooks. Like Canva, Issuu offers a basic free level to get started, and then there are plans for purchase should you choose to have a more customized newsletter experience. For a similar interactive platform, some clubs use [PubHTML5](#).

If a member is particularly adept at delivering evaluations or handling meeting roles with ease, ask them to share their tips in an article.

- Maybe you have computer-savvy members and want to lead your readers to your club website. You can use an HTML or webpage template instead of creating a freestanding document. If you add the newsletter to your website, make sure members know where to look and that it's easily accessible. To the same degree, you can also create a no-frills newsletter within an email. Platforms like [Mailjet](#), [MailChimp](#), and [Constant Contact](#) have online marketing tools (usually for a small price). Remember that members' inboxes are inundated every day; make your email stand out with a noteworthy subject line, image, or video at the top.

The last thing you want to do is spend your time and energy creating a newsletter that no one reads. Review the sidebar for tips on creating content, meet with your Club President, and then determine what kind of newsletter is right for your members. Happy designing! **T**

Shannon Dewey is the digital content editor for *Toastmaster magazine*.

Creating Newsletter Content

Good newsletters can inspire and motivate members, create energy between meetings, and keep your club connected. Two Toastmasters offer these extra tips to help make your newsletter content stick.



- ◆ Your newsletter should be informative, entertaining, and a way to showcase club members. It's also a means to show guests and potential members the personality of your club.
- ◆ Give your newsletter a consistent look and delivery schedule so readers will recognize it on arrival. Pick a cadence—quarterly, twice a year, every other month—and stick to it.
- ◆ Draw on members' expertise and reach out personally to those who make a big impression. If a member is particularly adept at delivering evaluations or handling meeting roles with ease, ask them to share their tips in an article.
- ◆ Remind newer members and mentees that the newsletter is a valuable resource. For example, say: "Barbara, I noticed that you are going to be Table Topicsmaster for the first time. Why don't you look at last spring's newsletter? Bob wrote a great article describing this role."
- ◆ Think of your newsletter as a source for event coverage, photos, and club culture. Save and store each newsletter so that you can refer to them later and track your club's history.
- ◆ Open your newsletter with a pithy column from your Club President, a table of contents, and a calendar of events.
- ◆ Create catchy titles for photos and articles.
[Editor's Note: Here are [700 power words](#) to help you create a great headline.]
- ◆ Add a photo of the author of an article to help club members put a face to a name.
- ◆ Include consistent segments and rotate other features to give room to club contests, special events, etc.
- ◆ Avoid using stale information. Instead, use photos from club meetings, add new members' comments on special meetings or contests, or run inspiring quotes.

Alex Lawes, DTM, and Disna Weerasinghe, DTM, are members of *Cerner Toastmasters Club* in Malvern, Pennsylvania.

The Two Sides of Table Topics

Both speakers and Topicsmasters benefit from this signature club exercise.

By Greg Lewis, DTM

For some reason, the idea of being picked to speak in front of a group with no time to prepare is terrifying. Can we as Toastmasters manage this fear and, dare I say it, master it through Table Topics®?

Clearly, we can. Table Topics has been a traditional club exercise for decades, and gives us the chance to practice spontaneous speaking skills at every meeting.

If you're new to Toastmasters, here's a quick overview of how it works: The Topicsmaster gathers a variety of subjects and then calls on meeting attendees to speak on the topic for one to two minutes. This exercise helps speakers learn to organize their thoughts quickly into a clear response. Essentially, Table Topics responses are "mini-speeches" and, like any bit of good oratory, should contain an opening, body, and closing.

Ultimately, the point of Table Topics is that both the Topicsmaster and the participant play an important role in ensuring everyone benefits and grows from each session.

Here's a look at how that happens for Toastmasters on both sides of the "table."

Tips for Participants

When asked why they fear impromptu speaking, many Toastmasters say it's because they're uncomfortable speaking on a topic they know nothing about. Bunmi Okuwa, with Niagara On The Lake Toastmasters in Ontario, Canada, found herself in this situation when she first tried Table Topics. "My greatest fear was that I'd have to make things up on the spot, which usually made me very nervous," she says.

Despite the initial fear factor, the most important confidence-builder by far is to simply practice as often as possible. As with formal speeches, we improve by doing. Every time we give a Table Topics response, our confidence grows. We learn to relax and take our time in responding.

One tactic to reduce stress is to reframe your response as a conversation, rather than a performance, suggests Matt Abrahams, a lecturer in organizational behavior at Stanford University's graduate business

school, and author of *Speaking Up Without Freaking Out*. "The idea of a 'performance' comes with a tremendous amount of pressure to deliver an Oscar-winning response. Instead, by thinking of our communication as a conversation, we can reduce stress and become more engaged. Because there's no one 'right way' to have a conversation, this lens helps speakers focus on the audience and their needs, thus reducing their own self-focused anxiety," he explains.

Tracey Rogers, Vice President Education for Windsor Speakers Club in Windsor, England, suggests a similar tactic. "Start with your opinion," she says. "This helps reduce stress as you already know your personal opinion on the topic, so you can start responding with confidence."

Toastmasters can also learn a great deal by observing how other members manage Table Topics responses.

"I pay attention to my mentor Charles; the ease and confidence with which he responds is a skill set that I look forward to attaining," says the Niagara club's Okuwa.

Tips for Topicsmasters

It's the job of the Topicsmaster to give as many attendees as possible the chance to speak and practice and to ensure the meeting stays on time during the activity. As with any meeting role, the more you prepare, the more successful you will be.

Before the meeting, get the agenda from the Vice President Education to see how much time has been allotted for the session. Subtract a few minutes for your opening and closing comments, and then divide the remaining time by three (two minutes for responses plus one minute for transitions between speakers). This gives you a good idea of how many participants can join the session.

Prepare enough questions for the group; include a few extras in case you have additional time. As Topicsmaster, you may ask for volunteers. Otherwise, call on participants who don't have a speaking role at the meeting. Next, choose those with minor roles, then guests. Last but not least—if time allows—call on members who have meeting roles or are delivering formal speeches that day.



Wait until a few participants have spoken before choosing a guest, so they have a chance to see how it is done. Always ask guests if they want to participate and if they decline, simply say, “That’s fine. Maybe next time,” and move to the next person. When a guest does agree to speak, be sure to review the rules and explain

topic you’re giving them. One way to do this is to relate the topic to the speaker’s experience. For example: “In many countries, people dress up in costumes for celebrations. Can you tell us about a time you wore a costume and why?”

The goal of Table Topics is to build speaker self-confidence. As the Topicsmaster, you want

early, to allow time for voting and to get the timer’s report.

Table Topics offer great opportunities for creativity. One club, for example, put a new “spin” on their online session by building a virtual wheel with numbers and corresponding topics. The Topicsmaster would spin the wheel for each participant, who then spoke on the topic where the wheel landed. It was a lot of fun and a great way to add some variety to the meeting.

So, who grows the most from Table Topics speeches—Topicsmasters or participants? For me, the answer is both. No matter which side of the table we are representing, we all improve our confidence with impromptu speaking and help our club have a successful meeting. **T**

Editor’s Note: Transform high anxiety into high engagement using some of these [Table Topics ideas](#).

Greg Lewis, DTM, is a retired business executive and a frequent contributor to the *Toastmaster magazine*.

“Start with your opinion. This helps reduce stress as you already know your personal opinion on the topic, so you can start responding with confidence.”

—TRACEY ROGERS

how the timing system works before giving them the topic. Some clubs give the topic/question first and then pick a participant. This is a great way to let every member think about a possible response, since they never know when or if they will be called upon.

Be aware of cultural or language differences. Make sure the speaker is able to understand the

to set up each speaker for success, so try to match the topic to the participant’s experience level. For guests and newer members, use a basic topic, such as: “Tell us about what you like to do on vacation.” The objective is to get the person to participate and feel good about doing so. Keep an eye on the time and be sure to end the Table Topics session a few minutes

Anybody Out There?

We've tried to contact extraterrestrials for centuries with no results. I think I know why.

By John Cadley

In my younger days I viewed the search for extraterrestrial life as a fool's errand. Now I sincerely hope there is intelligent life beyond our planet because, clearly, there's none here. Due to a marked increase in UFO sightings by military and commercial pilots—120 mysterious aerial events in the last 20 years—the U.S. government recently decided to take the issue seriously by commissioning a comprehensive investigation that concluded: “There’s no proof these things are alien. We just can’t explain them.” No real surprise there. The government could say the same thing about the U.S. tax code: “These laws may seem alien to human cognition but they’re not. They just defy explanation.”

If there really are other life forms out there, it would precipitate all kinds of questions, from the technological and biological to the religious and metaphysical. As Toastmasters, however, there is only one thing we would want to know: Are they good public speakers? Do they know the secret to the Perfect Speech, and are they coming here to share it with us? Is there an intergalactic speaking award they could compete for and put on their resume?

Or, on the other hand, do they not speak at all? Experts lean toward the belief that any exoplanetary beings capable of traveling light years to get here would have evolved beyond the spoken word to some form of telepathy; their minds would communicate directly. Could they do that with us? Could someone achieve the Distinguished Toastmaster award by simply staring at the audience for six minutes? All I know is my wife doesn't have to say a word for me to know I'm in trouble, so, yeah, it's possible.

Let's say there are aliens who can zip around the cosmos at the speed of light. And let's say out

of the 125 billion known galaxies in the universe, they decide to visit ours, the Milky Way, and out of the 100 billion planets in the Milky Way, they choose our little blue orb to explore, which they do by landing in a wheat field in France. Surprisingly, they look very much as we've imagined: little webbed hands and feet, snake-like skin, pointed ears, and glowing eyes. Lacking are mouth and nose. Apparently, they don't “eat” as we do, which is unfortunate since they've landed near Lille, France, which is famous for its *carbonade de boeuf*.



Deplaning, they set out to see the sights, eventually coming upon a community building where a nervous young woman is giving her Ice Breaker speech at the Lille Toastmasters club meeting. The Toastmaster of the meeting is a stickler for rules—so much so that he overlooks the aliens' appearance and tells them (1) interrupting an Ice Breaker is forbidden, and (2) tardiness is not appreciated. Receiving only a hum in reply and noticing their three eyes, he concludes these creatures must be newcomers, and not just to Toastmas-

ters. He quickly consults his Pathways project to see if Cross-Cultural Awareness covers this situation, and if not, would there be some advice on Cross-Species Awareness. Finding nothing, he decides the most he can do is ask his guests to make the Toastmaster's Promise that they will always be respectful, courteous, and friendly. The next thing he knows he's in a tiki bar in Papua New Guinea, with no idea how he got there.

If a Toastmaster can't get through to these creatures, who can? Nobody, apparently, and it's not for lack of trying. We've been trying to talk to whoever or whatever is out there for centuries, with everything from light beams and radio signals to mathematical equations and a rock 'n' roll record. (This is true.

Among the items on Voyager 1, launched in 1977, was a recording of Chuck Berry's “Johnny B. Goode.” Voyager 1 is now 14.1 billion miles from Earth and we have not as yet detected anybody singing “Go, Johnny, go!”)

This lack of response was particularly galling to the Italian physicist Enrico Fermi, who asked in the now famous Fermi paradox: *Why no sign of life when there is so much probability?!*

My guess is that the little green men *have* heard us and have simply chosen not to respond. We must remember Albert Einstein's observation that Earth is the insane asylum of the universe. If *he* knew it, they sure do. Hence, if we ever do get a reply it will be: “This message box is currently full. If this is a telemarketing call from Earth we are not interested. Have a nice day.” **T**

John Cadley is a former advertising copywriter, freelance writer, and musician living in Fayetteville, New York. Learn more at www.cadleys.com.

eBookIt!

Self-Publishing Solutions for the Independent Author & Small Press

- ✓ Ebook Creation/Conversion
- ✓ Print On Demand
- ✓ Audiobook Creation
- ✓ Author Websites
- ✓ Book Promotion

TOASTMASTERS! GET 10% OFF ANY SERVICE! USE PROMOTION CODE: 37062-6176247

\$149 Ebook Conversion & Distribution Special!

Limited-time offer!

Hello! Come See Our New Website at eBookIt.com!



We have been providing authors and small presses with publishing services since 2010. We offer ebook creation and distribution, book/author promotion, print on demand services, audiobook creation, author websites, and even online courses designed to help authors make their books a best seller.

We invite you to come by eBookIt.com and see not only our new website, but all the ways we can help you succeed with your self-publishing goals!



Audiobook Creation and Distribution

Is your book right for an audiobook? If so, it can mean a whole new market and a new revenue stream. We can handle all aspects of production for you.



Print On Demand

Let us take your ebook and convert it into a professionally designed print book. With our retail distribution, virtually any bookstore can purchase your print book. Double your market!



Author/Book Websites

One of the best ways to promote your book(s) and yourself as an author is through your own website. We have developed software specifically for authors and their needs.



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>.



www.toastmasters.org