

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | JUNE 2022

# TOASTMASTER®

## What's Your Communication Style?

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Self-Confidence**

**Shining a Light  
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## A New and Vital Journey

One thing that stood out to me during my tenure as International President in 2020-2021 was how incredibly diverse we are, and yet how incredibly similar. Toastmasters has more than 300,000 members, with clubs in 149 countries. Despite such large numbers, you can go to a Toastmasters club anywhere in the world and recognize the agenda and meeting roles. Yet it is each club's uniqueness that provides for a greater appreciation of the world around us.

In the wake of Margaret Page's resignation last month, I am serving as your Acting International President until President-Elect Matt Kinsey takes the helm at our International Convention in August. We recognize that Toastmasters, particularly those of us in international-level leadership, has much work to do. We will be taking a long look at our cultural awareness, and undergoing bias and sensitivity education and training.

I've learned that mistakes, challenges, and problems often lead to surprising conversations and possibilities, as well as growth and opportunity. I am hoping that the coming weeks, months, and years lead to a greater understanding of both our unique views and undeniable similarities.



Mistakes, challenges, and problems often lead to surprising conversations and possibilities, as well as growth and opportunity.

I want to have these tough conversations about diversity and belonging. Our organization, our culture, and our world are better and stronger when we hear each other and understand each other.

And we have a unique opportunity to do that. While many people join Toastmasters to grow their public speaking skills, it is often the enhanced listening skills that people comment on. Clubs offer an amazing opportunity to hear from people of different backgrounds, ages, genders, races, and experiences. This mix broadens our awareness, while the common structure and sense of purpose unite us.

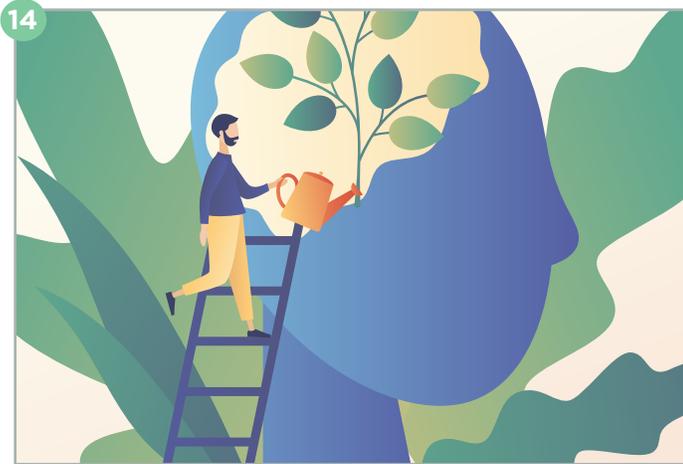
In 2020, I had the immense privilege of visiting at least one club in every country where Toastmasters has a presence. We have access now via online meetings to go to clubs anywhere in the world and listen to people of all backgrounds talk about their experiences. I witnessed members around the world engaged and learning, and I saw our clubs come together in challenging times. I encourage you to reach out to clubs around the world, join a meeting as a visitor, and learn more about our global community.

I hope you will trust our Board of Directors as we move forward. Everyone in Toastmasters deserves to feel respected and heard, and it's a commitment we take very seriously.

It's been said many times that what makes Toastmasters so special is our global community. Together we are stronger. That's never been more true than now. Reach out to each other, make new friends, and grow your community. It's the time for deeper conversations and more connection.

**Richard E. Peck, DTM**  
Acting International President

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## News

### Navigator News

The Navigator has been translated into eight additional languages! With this update, the online version of The Navigator is now available in all languages officially supported by Toastmasters: Arabic, English, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Simplified Chinese, Spanish, Tamil, and Traditional Chinese.



### Club Elections

While many clubs have already selected all their officers by now, others may still need to fill one or more positions. Consider stepping up! Club officers perform a vital function for the Toastmasters organization, making the club experience more engaging and worthwhile. Serving as an officer is gratifying and helps you grow—as Bill Brown, DTM, writes in his Toastmasters Toolbox article this month, on page 9.

### Grant Awarded to Study Toastmasters and Autism

Although findings are as many as two years away, professors at the University of California Riverside and California State University Fullerton have received a \$40,000 grant to investigate the value of Toastmasters to individuals on the autism spectrum. The grant was awarded by the Orange County (California) Asperger's Support Group. Longtime Toastmaster Judi Uttal, DTM, a member of The Contrarians club in Irvine, California, and a 10-year leader of a [Gavel Club](#) for autistic young people, is involved in the grant program.

## Resources

### Education Materials Now in New Languages

New translations of Toastmasters material, many in languages that have never been available before, are coming online through the District Translation Program. [Read more](#) about the opportunities this new program has to offer and how Districts can participate.

### Guide to Successful Online Meetings

It can be a challenge to hold the attention of an online audience! Share this [simple-to-follow guide](#) with prospective members and current members alike. The guide covers how to plan and deliver an online meeting that fulfills your goals and meets the needs of attendees.

### Magazine Articles in Base Camp

Remember that you can supplement your [Pathways learning experience](#) with specific *Toastmaster* magazine articles. Articles applicable to projects in each of the first three Pathways levels are available in Base Camp. Look for the supplemental reading on the Tutorials and Resources page. The extra content covers topics such as evaluation tips, speechwriting strategies, and connecting with audiences through storytelling. Stay tuned for more articles in Base Camp in the future!

## Reminders

### How to Submit an Article or Idea

The *Toastmaster* magazine accepts unsolicited article queries and story ideas. Before you submit, please review the [Writer Guidelines](#). For general article submissions, please complete the [article submission form](#) and send via email to [submissions@toastmasters.org](mailto:submissions@toastmasters.org).

If you have an idea or topic that would make a good story, but you're not interested in writing it, please fill out and submit [this form](#).

### DCP Push

There are just a few weeks remaining in the 2021–2022 program year—take those final strides for [Distinguished Club Program](#) (DCP) success. Try to achieve as many of the program's [10 goals](#) as possible. The push to produce a high-quality club will carry over to the new program year and your club will be even stronger!

### 2022 International Convention

Remember to register for this year's convention! The organization's first-ever hybrid convention—featuring the option to experience the event in person (in Nashville, Tennessee) or online—will take place August 17–20. Visit the [convention page](#) for frequent updates.



## Letters to the Editor

The February 2022 edition of the *Toastmaster* magazine is such a delightful read. The array of topics is a reader's paradise. The one article that stood out for me is "Stay in Love With Your Club." It was sheer nostalgia to read the first sentence. The article took me down memory lane to 13 years ago, when I began as a novice Toastmaster. I joined impulsively because I was so keen to learn what Toastmasters was all about after seeing the transformational changes it inspired in my hubby.

As time traversed, I learned, I grew, I fumbled, I rose again, I met awesome members—some of them are friends for life. I saw members reach out to me when I was in my low moments and saw them lift me up and help me continue the journey.

After such an incredible journey, with members who stood with me and each other, I wouldn't call it my club. For me it is my Toastmasters family. These past two years have been very challenging for my corporate club. Yet we, as a family, have persevered and gloried in our achievements.

**Shalini Menezes, DTM**

*Emirates Group Toastmasters • Dubai, United Arab Emirates*

["Toastmasters and Rotary: Stronger Together" was a] great article. [I'm a] longtime Rotarian and joined Toastmasters a few years ago. I found

great benefit to both organizations in working together. My home Rotary club helped found the new Downriver Toastmasters club and we alternate meetings each week, with Rotary on the first and third Thursdays and Toastmasters on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month. Both clubs are gaining members from the partnership and collaboration.

**Stephen Ahles**

*Downriver Toastmasters • Southgate, Michigan*

["Managing and Resolving Conflict" in the April issue] is a worthwhile article. Many of the points resonated with me, especially as I train on conflict resolution. Indeed, if we can see conflict in a positive light, view things from the other person's perspective, and try to get to the conflict early, a lot of conflict that occurs would be avoided. Thank you.

**Julie Bockarie**

*Prince Emmanuel SDA Toastmasters • Bowie, Maryland*

The article "7 Tips to Attend a Bilingual Toastmasters Meeting" [in the April 2022 issue] brought back memories of my daily border crossing to the United States to learn to speak English in high school. Although I endured jesting from some classmates, for fifty years now I have spoken fondly of Richard, [a friend] who let me struggle to speak English. In our



fourth year, when I found out that he was fluent in Spanish, Richard said, "You came to learn English. I would not hinder your efforts."

**Ramón Saldaña**

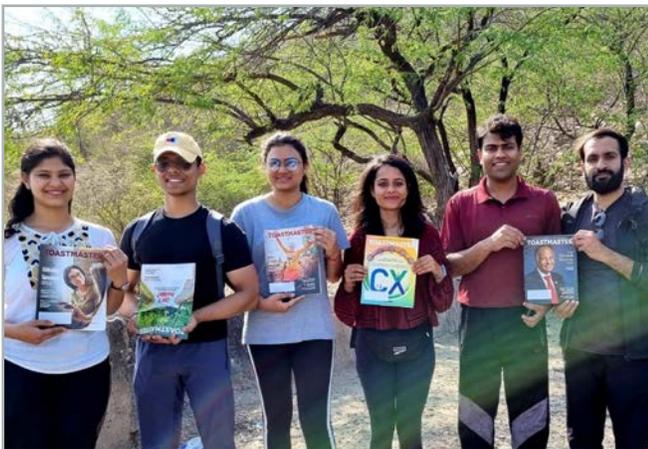
*Panhandle Pro Club • Amarillo, Texas*

I really enjoyed ["The Power of Poetry" in the March 2022 *Toastmaster*!] We don't have a Poetmaster or Wordmaster role in our club, but I do love creative writing. With World Poetry Day on March 21—mentioned in the article—it motivated me to sign up as Toastmaster for our March 23 meeting and make our theme "World Poetry Day." Maybe I'll even host a poetry workshop for my club too. Thanks for all the ideas.

**Rachel Parsons**

*Cutting Edge Speakers • Edgewood, New York*

## Traveling Toastmaster



**RAJASTHAN TOASTMASTERS CLUB** of Jaipur, Rajasthan, India, organized a hiking trip with members from different clubs in the area for a fun-filled day.



**SAB TOASTMASTERS CLUB** members stay current with their digital *Toastmaster* magazines while gathering for an in-person club meeting in Muscat, Oman.

## Snapshot



Members of Toastmasters At The Square Club of Marietta, Georgia, say hello to hybrid meetings! More members are now attending in person than online, but the club is pleased to continue the hybrid format to include all members.



## Quotes

### Inspiring Words

These thought-provoking quotations speak to the value of self-confidence.

Everyone wants to be confident in themselves. It's something we all work toward, and becoming a better communicator and leader can be a big part of that objective. A confident person takes risks, stands up for themselves, and perseveres to achieve their goals.

Below are some words of wisdom about the gift of confidence. And for more on the topic, read the article "Rebuild Your Self-Confidence and Self-Esteem" in this issue.

"It is not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves."

—Sir Edmund Hillary, New Zealand mountaineer, explorer, and philanthropist

"With realization of one's own potential and self-confidence in one's ability, one can build a better world."

—the Dalai Lama, Tibetan spiritual leader



"One important key to success is self-confidence. An important key to self-confidence is preparation."

—Arthur Ashe, American tennis champion

"Have confidence that if you have done a little thing well, you can do a bigger thing well too."

—David Storey, English playwright and novelist

"The greatest mistake you can make in life is continually fearing that you'll make one."

—Elbert Hubbard, American writer, artist, and philosopher

"As soon as you trust yourself, you will know how to live."

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, German author and scientist

"Once we believe in ourselves, we can risk curiosity, wonder, spontaneous delight, or any experience that reveals the human spirit."

—E.E. Cummings, American poet

"To love oneself is the beginning of a lifelong romance."

—Oscar Wilde, Irish poet and playwright

# The Most Important Speech

Overcoming my fear of public speaking helped me tell my father's story.

By Robert A. Nevarez

My father, Prudencio Carrera Nevarez, was born in Durango, Mexico. There was no electricity, running water, or phones. People there existed on whatever they grew and raised. My dad told fond stories of his childhood; however, as a young person, he wanted more for his life and for the family he hoped to one day have.

When my father immigrated to America in the early 1950s, he worked traditional jobs reserved for first-generation immigrants, such as dishwasher and farm laborer. Despite not speaking English, Dad had an engaging personality that helped him develop relationships.

He eventually landed a job at a cannery and did entry-level work. After a few years, he was promoted to a management position, even though he now spoke broken English, at best.

My dad cheered me on to achieve professional success, but when it came to his own ambitions, he would panic at the thought of speaking publicly. He confided to me how he dreaded speaking and avoided meetings whenever possible. As somebody so bold and courageous in other aspects of his life, he was angered by this inner struggle.

"Lo peor en la vida es el miedo," he would tell me in Spanish. Translated: "The worst thing in life is fear." He warned me not to fall into the same trap.

My father's example of honesty and integrity led me to a career with the Fresno (California) Police Department. I was promoted to a management position and soon learned that management roles also required public speaking. Whether addressing a large community gathering or doing a television interview, I experienced sweaty hands, shortness of breath, dry mouth, and a limited vocabulary.

Like my father, I could avoid situations that required public speaking. I could find a job without a requirement to speak publicly. Or I could find a way to overcome this fear.

I found out about Toastmasters. Out of a desperation to not be bound by the same shackles



Robert Nevarez (left) and his father, Prudencio Carrera Nevarez

that weighed down my father, I immediately joined. Through Toastmasters I learned to experience fear and understand it would not hurt me. With commitment and repeated practice, I got to the point where the anxiety of public speaking faded and I learned to enjoy the experience. My improved skills and comfort level would be vital when I later became a police chief.

As the top cop in Delano, California, I was frequently called on to speak publicly at town hall meetings, block parties, and sometimes heated city council sessions. The greatest challenge came when addressing families who had lost loved ones to gang violence. I needed to communicate heartfelt empathy on behalf of the police. Appreciative widows and mothers assured me my words had found their way.

In December 2012, my father turned a strong and healthy 80 years old. Early the following year, however, he contracted fungal meningitis and ended up in the hospital for several weeks. Chances of any type of recovery soon dimmed. My sister and I took turns spending time next to him. One late evening, as I fell asleep in his hospital room, the nurse rushed in. She checked his pulse and told me the words I dreaded hearing: "Your father has passed."

I was surprised at the natural desire I had to share my dad's story at his funeral, in front of a large group of friends and family. There were brief, annoying thoughts that I would do a poor job or forget a line. But I quickly replaced this internal voice with the encouraging truth that I could do this. *After all, I am a Toastmaster.*

I arrived at the funeral an hour early, walked around the facility, rehearsed behind the lectern, and visualized getting comfortable; all techniques I had learned and honed through Toastmasters.

At the conclusion of my eulogy, I stepped away knowing I had provided those in attendance with a vivid and fitting tribute to my father's incredible journey.

Through Toastmasters, I was able to develop skills to overcome the fear of public speaking. As a result, I am now able to use my voice to share the life of a man who lives on as my personal inspiration and an inspiration to future generations.

**Robert A. Nevarez** is a Past Division Governor and Past Club President of the Fresno City Toastmasters in Fresno, California, and a current member of the Henderson Toasters in southern Nevada. He is the retired chief of police of Delano, California.

# Stepping Up

Club officer roles are a great opportunity for growth.

By Bill Brown, DTM

It's the end of the Toastmasters program year. Time for each member to stretch to finish up a level in Pathways. Time for each club to maximize its achievements in the Distinguished Club Program. And time to submit your club's new officer list.

Some clubs have already selected officers. But others may still be looking to fulfill one or more slots. Perhaps someone has talked to you about stepping up and taking one of those positions. If you have never been a club officer, you might be hesitant to take the plunge, especially if you are a relatively new Toastmaster. The reality is, this might be a great opportunity for you, no matter your experience level.

Let's take a look at some of the benefits of being a club officer.

First of all, it is an opportunity to serve the club. I have been a Toastmaster for 16 years and held almost every officer position. However, I did reach a point where I needed a break. But when I moved to a town in Wyoming and joined a small club, I discovered one member had been Vice President Education for many years and needed a change. In a small club, there aren't many options for officers and being a detail-oriented person, I was well suited to assume the role. I needed to step up for the benefit of the club. Although I was reluctant to take the position, I am enjoying it with this club and have had an impact in moving the club forward. It also gives me a connection with each member that I would otherwise not have had.

Taking on the role with this club also gave me a fresh challenge. It gave me an opportunity to sink my teeth into a new project. And I am improving my leadership skills in the process.

There is also much that goes on behind the scenes in a Toastmasters club. Serving on the Club Executive Committee, composed of all the club officers, gives you insight into what hap-

pens in the club, as well as at the Area, Division, and District levels.

An additional benefit is the opportunity to expand your network. In the remote area of Wyoming where I moved to, the nearest club is 120 miles away. Serving as an officer has given me a sense of connection with more people in my District.



There is a lot that goes on behind the scenes in a Toastmasters club.

Hopefully, I have piqued your interest. If that's the case, which positions should you consider? Here are my brief explanations of the roles.

The [Sergeant at Arms](#) helps with meeting setup, logistics, and etiquette rules. The role is very important, but isn't too time consuming.

Another position you might consider is Secretary. You take minutes of the meetings, maintain and update club records, and order club supplies as needed.

If you like financial details, you might want to consider Treasurer, who essentially acts as the

club's accountant. You manage the club's bank account and submit membership dues payments to Toastmasters World Headquarters.

If websites and social media are your thing, [Vice President Public Relations](#) might be a natural fit for you. It is your job to promote and publicize the club.

My first position was [Vice President Membership](#), which focuses on member recruitment and retention. This is a great role, especially if you like to talk to people.

The two remaining offices, Vice President Education and [Club President](#), are a little more involved. If you have a larger club, normally the roles are taken by more experienced members. However, if you want to hone your leadership and organizational skills, and your club needs you to step in, you could pick up what you need to know relatively quickly. Among other things, the Vice President Education helps members with their progress in Pathways, and the President inspires members and fellow officers to achieve results.

No matter what role you take on, your District will have training sessions to bring you up to speed. There you will meet people who, in addition to your fellow officers, you can call on for help throughout your term.

Serving as a club officer, and becoming part of your Club Executive Committee, is an excellent way to grow your leadership skills. I am glad that I joined the Executive Committee of my new club and plan on continuing when my current term is up. I recommend that you consider serving as well, especially if your club needs you. You will be glad that you did.

**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.billbrownsspeechcoach.com](http://www.billbrownsspeechcoach.com).

# Fighting Spirit

Kickboxing  
champion aims  
high in the  
sports and  
speaking arenas.

By Paul Sterman

When Becky Roper found out her daughter, Jessica, had taken up kickboxing, she was less than thrilled. The sport features lots of ... well, kicking and boxing. “My first reaction was, Oh boy, I don’t like the sound of that.”

She winced at the thought of her daughter getting hit. “You always want to protect your children.” Fortunately, Jessica does a pretty good job of that herself. So good, in fact, that she is an English kickboxing champion, crowned by the World Ring Sports Association.

Roper worked hard to achieve her athletic success, noting that she lost five matches in a row before her first victory. A member of the Sussex (England) Online Speakers, she sees similarities between kickboxing triumphs and public speaking success. Both are about skill development and learning from others, along with practice and perseverance.

“I always say: Dedication, determination, and discipline,” says Roper, who lives in the coastal town of Hastings, about 50 miles from London.

She compares the rush of nerves and adrenaline before stepping into the ring to the feelings you get stepping up to give a speech. With one notable difference. “Speaking is much more enjoyable than being punched in the face.”

## Becoming a Champ

Roper took up kickboxing when she was 19, encouraged by her boyfriend. The combat sport appealed to her. “I had very low self-esteem and I was quite anxious,” she says. She embraced the challenge, but it was a struggle. “I was the only girl in the [kickboxing] club, and it was really tough in the beginning,” she recalls. “I couldn’t even do one press-up.”

In conversation, the 29-year-old is polite and patient. In the ring, she is a picture of controlled aggression, launching high kicks at opponents—alternating between the body and head—and throwing punches in her purple boxing gloves. Despite the bruising nature of the sport, she takes pains to explain that kickboxing is not some kind of wild slugfest. Training and technique (much of it rooted in the martial arts) are key, a referee oversees the rule-bound matches, and you must take strategic steps to win. Roper says she and her opponent always embrace once the match ends, a sign of mutual respect.



*Jessica Roper is an English kickboxing champion who teaches kickboxing and fitness classes for men and women. Her mother, Becky (in background), has attended the classes for the past five years.*

When she struggled mightily starting out in the sport, she thought about quitting. But she pushed herself to keep going and grew to appreciate the routines of training, of working with coaches, of building relationships within the boxing and martial arts communities. Roper has a second-degree black belt in kickboxing and is working toward one in Brazilian jiu-jitsu as well. She improved her skills so much that in 2019, she won the English kickboxing championship in two different weight categories. She hasn’t yet been challenged for the titles. (As with other sports, the coronavirus pandemic forced the suspension of kickboxing matches.)

Roper, whose two green championship belts sit atop her bookshelf, says her kickboxing journey has transformed her confidence as well as her physical and emotional well-being.

## Kicking Up Her Self-Esteem

Roper joined Toastmasters to develop the skills to become a motivational speaker. She wants to share her message about empowering one’s self through exercise.

She also wants to get more women involved in kickboxing, a male-dominated sport. “More opportunities are opening up but the more of us who are out there speaking about it—and this is where the [public] speaking comes in—and promoting it ... and saying, ‘Come on, ladies, step up to these opportunities’—the more of us who do it, the more opportunities there will be.”

Roper also aims to inspire through her teaching and coaching, another area where she benefits from improved



Roper delivers a high kick in a 2017 match.

Photo: Jon Snapaway Rothwell

communication and leadership skills. She coaches kickboxers and teaches classes for men and women of all levels. When the pandemic descended, she started an online platform she calls “Fighting Fit Together.”

Though she demonstrates kickboxing techniques in the classes, the sessions also have a broader purpose. Roper says she stresses the fun and exhilaration of movement, and the connection between physical fitness and mental health.

One of her regular participants is Amy Jones, her Toastmasters mentor and a fellow member of the Sussex Online Speakers.

“Jessica is a great teacher because she listens,” says Jones. “She explains things clearly, from different angles, and is passionate about

## Family Connection

Roper’s story is also a mother-daughter story. When Jessica was growing up, Becky was addicted to heroin and alcohol. But her mom battled and eventually overcame her addictions. At 52, she took up kickboxing. She began training with her daughter and has attended her classes for the past five years. “Kickboxing has helped me mentally and physically,” she says. “Plus, it’s good quality time with my daughter.”

Becky now has a blue belt in Brazilian jiu-jitsu and hopes to have a black belt before she turns 60. Jessica couldn’t be more proud. The first speech she ever gave was at a local International Women’s Day event in March 2020, where she spoke about her mom’s courage and

“I was the only girl in the [kickboxing] club, and it was really tough in the beginning. I couldn’t even do one press-up.”

—JESSICA ROPER

her [kickboxing] community being about more than just ‘losing weight,’ instead empowering us to feel fighting fit!”

Roper also works in a program called “Sports in Schools.” She gives presentations at primary schools, talking about her athletic journey and urging kids to try a sport of their own.

“I absolutely love being able to share my story,” she says. “And the children’s faces—you see them light up with enthusiasm.”

fortitude, and then brought her up onstage to demonstrate some kickboxing moves.

She delivered a similar message when she gave her Ice Breaker in March 2021. The title of her speech: “Can Your Mum Kick You in the Head, and Would She?”

“I feel that her story is more important than my story in a way,” Jessica says of her mom, “because she’s turning her life around in her 50s.”

Given the addictions she struggled with when Jessica was young, Becky says she feels very fortunate that the two have a close relationship. “She really has supported and helped me,” she says of her daughter.

## The Next Round

Besides her teaching and her training, Roper is involved with another communication-related venture: She hosts an hour of local radio each week. In the pre-recorded program, called *The Champion’s Corner*, she talks about health, well-being, and community, also mixing in music and occasional interviews.

In the Sussex Online Speakers club, Roper is forging ahead with Pathways projects and says she’s working hard to become a better speaker, hoping to make motivational speaking a career one day. Her enthusiasm is a big asset to the club, says Jones.

“Jessica has helped us develop and foster a strong club culture by being encouraging of other members, and sharing about her experiences via her own social media platforms, or recording videos for the club to share on its socials,” she says. “She is a great ambassador for Toastmasters.”

As an athlete, Roper says Toastmasters also appeals to her competitive nature. She loves speech contests. Just months after she became a member, in her first Toastmasters contest experience, she placed second at the Area level in both the Table Topics® and Humorous speech contests.

The kickboxing champ says she wants to climb the contest ladder to the top.

“I want to become a public speaking champion,” she says with a smile.

**Editor’s Note:** Watch [this video](#) to see Jessica Roper in action, and watch another to learn about her journey to [becoming a champion](#). Also, listen to her podcast, [The Champion’s Corner](#).

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

# Official Notice of Vote

Vote for the  
Board of  
Directors  
Candidates.

## Your International Officer and Director Candidates for the 2022-2023 Board of Directors

At the 2022 Annual Business Meeting in August, you will have the opportunity to vote for the International Officer and Director candidates of your choice.

The International Leadership Committee nominated International Officer candidates for the positions of International President-Elect, First Vice President, and Second Vice President. International Director

candidates were nominated for Regions 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, and 14. The Committee's nominations are presented in accordance with the [Bylaws of Toastmasters International, Article VIII](#).

Visit the Toastmasters International website to [view the qualifications](#) of each officer and director nominee.

## International Officer Candidates



INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT-ELECT  
**Morag Mathieson, DTM**



FIRST VICE PRESIDENT  
**Radhi Spear, DTM**



SECOND VICE PRESIDENT  
**Stefano McGhee, DTM**



SECOND VICE PRESIDENT  
**Aletta Rochat, DTM**

## International Director Candidates

### Region 2

Robert A. Cravalho, DTM  
Jesse Oakley III, DTM

### Region 4

Kimberly Lynne Myers, DTM  
Mary E. Swanson, DTM

### Region 6

Dawn Frail, DTM  
Jing Humphreys, DTM  
Jenilee Taylor, DTM

### Region 8

Anwasha Banerjee, DTM  
Brenda Maynard, DTM

### Region 10

Florian Bay, DTM  
Piotr Chimko, DTM  
Jean Gamester, DTM

### Region 12

Benjamin James McCormick, DTM

### Region 14

Dora Guo, DTM  
Helen He, DTM

It is the right and duty of all Member Clubs to participate in the vote, either through their representatives at the Annual Business Meeting or by proxy. Delegates may make additional nominations from the floor for International Officer and Director candidates.

# California-Based Club Crafts Connection

Laowai JiangZhongwen Toastmasters club aims to keep Chinese language skills and culture alive.

By Laura Mishkind

It's not unusual for members to join a club to practice their English-speaking skills, but at California-based Laowai JiangZhongwen Toastmasters, English speakers join to practice their Mandarin. "We are a group of people who love Chinese language, love Chinese culture, and enjoy improving our skills and gaining knowledge," says Angela Efros, Club President and charter member.

The club's name translates to "Chinese-Speaking 'Laowai.'" The word "laowai" means foreigner, a term often used for expatriates living in China. Club members are primarily people who lived in China for work or school and learned Chinese through those experiences. Efros, who learned Mandarin while working in China, says, "We are all used to being called a 'laowai.'"

Mandarin can be used when referring to a particular group of languages, but more commonly it is known as the official and standard language of mainland China. Of the Chinese dialects, Mandarin is spoken most worldwide, and is often simply called Chinese. Nearly 70% of Chinese speakers across the world speak Mandarin, which makes it an ideal dialect for Laowai JiangZhongwen Toastmasters.



Though officially chartered in July 2021 as an online club based in Monterey Park, California, the group first met more than four years ago as an association for Chinese-speaking professionals. Efros started the group as an opportunity to practice her Mandarin and network with others who had an interest in Chinese culture. She and her fellow members decided to charter a club because they felt Toastmasters offered a more comprehensive platform to hone their speaking and presentation skills.

"I think it gives us a great road map," says Efros, a Toastmaster since 2019. "I had our association formed for several years, and we would meet often, but without any specific guide, we would always default to chatting in English—not exactly accomplishing our goals of practicing Chinese.

Guided by the Toastmasters meeting structure, members follow through with giving speeches, evaluations, and Table Topics® in Mandarin. "For me, the pressure to speak forces me to practice writing a speech, practice the pronunciation, and memorize the words," Efros explains. "It's amazing language practice."

Efros speaks Mandarin regularly in her work as a recruiter, but not all the members do, so the club has become an important place for them to maintain language skills and an appreciation for their culture. Many members are advanced Chinese speakers, and club meetings are conducted entirely in Mandarin.

"Speaking another language gives you a unique window into that culture and a way to communicate with a whole new group of people," says Efros. "I can't express the positive impact speaking Mandarin has had on my life."

The online club welcomes members from all over the world. Many live in California, but members also hail from other areas of the U.S., as well as China and Colombia.

Some members are motivated to perfect their Mandarin because they want to improve their professional

use of the language for work presentations or serving as meeting leads, according to Efros. However, most are aiming to not forget the language.

Language practice and retention are key elements of meeting activities, which is why the club welcomes new Mandarin speakers to join, alongside fluent speakers. "We are definitely open to some Chinese beginners visiting the club to see if it would be beneficial for their language practice," Efros says.

But it's not just language practice for these laowais—it's a consistent connection to a culture.

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



## Your Self-Confidence and Self-Esteem

By building your confidence as well as your competence, you build executive presence.

By Jody Michael

As an executive coach, I often have clients come to me because they feel they need executive presence and want to exude confidence to their teams. But oftentimes, they don't understand what confidence is. Confidence has nothing to do with what is happening in your outer life. It's always generated from within. It transcends *what we do* and *what we know*.

We all have those internal conversations that sometimes include self-sabotaging thoughts that erode our confidence—that internal dialogue can mark the difference between success in life and never fully reaching your potential.

## Lean In and Tackle It

When I was very young in my career, the president of my company called a meeting to let our team know about a new, and very challenging, opportunity. He went around the room based on seniority and offered each person the opportunity to lead this new division. I was shocked to hear every single one of them turn it down. Meanwhile, I'm thinking to myself, *I know this is complex, but I can do this!*

When the president finally got to me, the last person hired, I said yes, and everyone started laughing, wondering how the newbie will manage this momentous task. He passed me a thick, heavy book and

self-esteem, can be molded by our parents, family, friends, physical or intellectual abilities, education, and jobs.

We come to define ourselves the way others define us. Thus, if others treat us with kindness, as if we are special and unique people, then we will eventually define ourselves in this way. On the other hand, if we find ourselves treated as if we are a bother to have around, then we will also come to see ourselves in this way.

Some people confuse healthy, positive self-esteem with audacity or arrogance, a false sense of superiority over other people. True self-esteem, however, means that we do not have to assert ourselves at the expense of

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When you have confidence, you'll create more opportunities in your life because you are willing to jump right in and take a risk.

told me to study it. So I dived in and became an expert on the topic. The trajectory of my career changed dramatically that day as a result of me saying yes and leaning in.

I couldn't do that without confidence in myself—confidence that I could quickly learn the subject matter and do a good job, even when I had no prior evidence or experience for that to be true. When you have confidence, you'll create more opportunities in your life because you are willing to jump right in and take a risk. Every time you succeed, you build a new layer of confidence. By building your confidence as well as your competence, you build executive presence.

## Self-Confidence Versus Self-Esteem

Self-confidence and self-esteem do not always go hand in hand. The magazine *Psychology Today* defines self-confidence as “trusting in one's ability or aptitude to engage successfully or at least adequately with the world.” Someone who is self-confident rises to new challenges, seizes opportunities, deals with difficult situations, and takes responsibility if and when things go wrong.

However, you can be highly confident and have low self-esteem, which is an emotional appraisal of our own worth. Self-esteem is defined as “the matrix through which we think, feel, and act, and reflects and determines our relation to ourselves, to others, and to the world.” Self-esteem is a subjective evaluation of one's own worth; therefore, there is no proof, evidence, or objective way to measure it.

## Self-Image

The thoughts we have about ourselves contribute to our self-image. These thoughts, whether they are good or bad, are the building blocks of our self-esteem. Our self-image, and gradually our

other people. Indeed, it is those with negative self-esteem who resort to the tactic of exaggerating their own worth, usually by putting others down. Those with positive self-esteem can acknowledge their own worth and validate the positive qualities of others.

## Techniques For Creating Positive Self-Esteem

### 1 Work on your private thoughts.

How we feel about ourselves privately influences how we interpret our own actions, the decisions we make, the goals we set for ourselves, and how we relate to other people. Negative internal feelings usually lead to lower expectations and achievements, while positive definitions usually result in higher aspirations.

Consider some of the following ways in which these private, internal thoughts can be modified.

- **Examine your unrealistic expectations.** Negative self-esteem is driven by thoughts couched in “shoulds,” “oughts,” and “musts.” These words imply that we should be something other than what we are. A more positive approach is to replace these words with “wants.” Instead of saying self-punitively, “I should be a better friend,” it may be helpful to change the thought to: “I want to be a better friend.”
- **Accept the fact that history cannot be changed.** We often punish ourselves endlessly for certain regrettable actions we have taken in the past—and this feeds our negative self-esteem. But we all make mistakes, and we can learn from them. In fact, we, as fallible humans, must make mistakes in life—and perhaps we should be thankful that we have made them, for how else would we learn the route to a happier life? History cannot be undone, but we can focus on the present and future, drawing on our power to create the life we choose for ourselves.



- **Reflect on the good experiences in your life.** Instead of dwelling on our flaws, it is more helpful to think about what is good in our lives. Think about your successes rather than your failures. We all have life experiences that make us feel good. Define yourself in terms of these positive experiences.
- **Set positive goals for the future.** Examine your personal needs, desires, assets, and abilities—and think of how you can use them to

Instead of dwelling on our flaws, it is more helpful to think about what is good in our lives. Think about your successes rather than your failures.

achieve the life you want. Make your goals realistic and achievable, and work toward them, step by step, enjoying the successes and overcoming the occasional stumbles. Draw on the positive within yourself—with an awareness of how the old negative tendencies may show themselves. Setting positive goals draws on, and reinforces, your positive self-esteem and reminds you of the power you have to set your own course.

## 2 Diagnose the cues which lead to negative self-esteem.

We all tend to respond to triggers in ways that lower or raise our self-esteem. Identifying the experiences that influence our self-esteem can take work and a genuine commitment to improving the quality of our lives.

For example, if negative thoughts occur when you spend time alone, you may be dealing with abandonment issues. If negativity is triggered when you are criticized, you may have issues surrounding rejection. If you have negative thoughts in the presence of a person who tends to dominate and control, the theme may have to do with authority, judgment, and evalua-

tion. When we understand these underlying themes, we can view them objectively and get closure on them so that they no longer have the power to influence our self-esteem.

## 3 Take care of yourself and your appearance.

Appreciate your own individuality, your own combination of strengths and weaknesses that make you a special person. Engaging in an exercise program (even simply walking 20 minutes a day) is a good way not only to care for your body but also to make others aware that you value yourself.

Feeling good about yourself, presenting yourself to the world in a positive way, and getting positive feedback from other people are essential components of developing positive self-esteem.

## 4 Examine your relationships with other people.

Improving your self-esteem involves engaging in productive and enhancing relationships with others. There comes a time to examine destructive relationships—and this may be difficult since we are drawn toward relationships that reinforce our old ways of seeing ourselves.

Destructive relationships reinforce old negative self-esteem patterns. If it isn't possible to feel a sense of esteem in the relationship, it may be time to end it and move on to other, more productive friendships.

## 5 Learn to meet your own needs.

Negative self-esteem leads to doubts about your own ability to take care of life's problems and challenges. This is why people with negative self-esteem may be



so demanding of others—at a certain level they may want others to take care of their problems for them. People with negative self-esteem may idealize others and, alternately, denigrate them. If others help you, you idealize them. If they don't help, you don't want to waste your time with them. These “all or nothing” themes appear frequently in the thoughts of those with negative self-esteem.

A mature adult life requires integrity. While others may assist you here and there, ultimately you are responsible for meeting your own needs. Acquiring positive self-esteem and self-confidence is essential to this task.

**Editor's note:** The full version of this article was originally published on Jody Michael's [blog](#).

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## 5 Strategies to Rebuild Your Self-Esteem

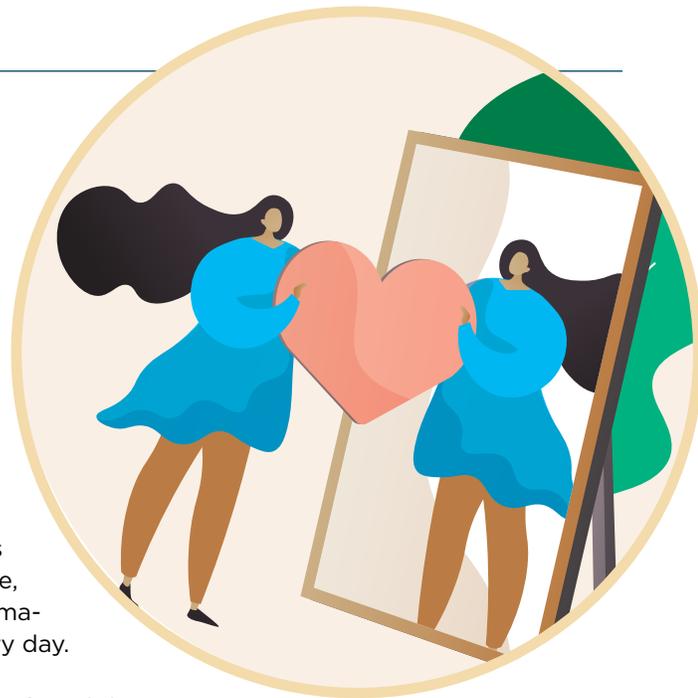
**1 Learn something new** — Take up yoga, learn to speak Mandarin, try your hand at acrylic painting. Too often, we let ourselves get caught in the “I can't” trap, assuming we're too old, busy, or simply incapable when it comes to participating in a new activity or learning a new skill. There is no cut-off age for learning and in today's pandemic online world, there's no limit to what you can learn.

**2 Adopt a mantra** — A positive affirmation can sometimes serve as a reminder of your self-worth. In Kathryn Stockett's book *The Help*, Aibileen Clark repeatedly tells her young charge, “You is kind. You is smart. You is important.” Find a quote, affirmation, or mantra, print it out, and place it where you'll see it every day.

**3 Show compassion and self-respect** — Would you ever treat a friend the way you sometimes act toward yourself? From the negative self-talk to the broken promises to eat healthier, spend less, exercise more, and so on, we can be downright cruel to ourselves in a way we wouldn't dream of treating others. One strategy is to be more compassionate in the way you talk to yourself. Be kind when you look in the mirror; pay yourself a compliment and refrain from being so harsh in your judgments. Respect the promises you make to yourself with the same importance as any others.

**4 Forgive yourself** — Everybody—without exception—makes mistakes. It's where you go from there that matters. Do you wallow in self-pity, berating yourself for your failures, or do you dust yourself off and move forward? Research has shown that healthy self-forgiveness involves the right amount of remorse, which helps you learn from your mistakes and fuel positive change.

**5 Journal your accomplishments** — Have you ever heard the saying, “Do something right, no one remembers; do something wrong, no one forgets”? We are often our own worst enemies when it comes to keeping score. By articulating your accomplishments and recording them on paper, you force yourself to increase your awareness on the positive side of the equation.





Amanda Mac Gray

# Bring Your Online Meetings to *Life*

Best practices  
for virtual hosts.

By Amanda Mac Gray

**B**y now, you've probably experienced Zoom fatigue. When you think about hopping on another online Toastmasters meeting, you sigh, longing for the time when everyone was in the same room. That's just what Zoom fatigue is—becoming worn out from constant video calls.

With Zoom fatigue becoming increasingly common, it's time to start exploring new ways to make video calls more fun, appealing, and worth attending. When you are the host of a video meeting (or webinar), the responsibility lands on you to keep things moving, just as if you were the in-person emcee or Toastmaster of the Day. There are many elements that can be transferred from an in-person meeting that are worth noting, but there are also some unique variations that make a big impact on the virtual experience.

What does it mean to be the host of a virtual event? As the emcee, your core responsibility is to keep the event on

time and moving forward. You are the glue that keeps the whole event together. You are the consistent presence that opens the event, pops up throughout, and brings the proceedings to a close.

Here are the best practices for virtual hosts that I have found after 18 years as an on-camera expert, actress, model, and spokesmodel:

- **Meet with the presenter(s) before the event to find out what they will be covering.** This allows you to help answer any audience questions as they come up and to know the timeline.

- **Compile all the documents and links the audience may want into one place.** This makes it easy to drop anything into the chat quickly. Include the presenter's website, email address, social media handles, and any handouts.

■ **Begin the event, welcome guests, and let the audience know your role.** I always tell my audience that I will be typing key ideas in the chat and will be the one they can direct their questions to. It is helpful to collect questions to ask the presenter periodically.

■ **Introduce the speaker with a short and sweet, but fun, 30- to 60-second prepared intro** that gives the audience a taste of what's to

## Adding Improvements

If you are prepared as the host, your event will automatically be more beneficial for those who attend. But what if you want to improve the virtual engagement even more? How can you change meetings from drab to fab?

Increasing engagement is all about transferring energy and inspiring the audience to participate. How do you do that? The key is to change things up every few minutes to keep the

### Increasing engagement is all about transferring energy and inspiring the audience to participate.

come and why the speaker is worth listening to. Less is more on the intro, especially in the virtual environment. Laundry lists of credentials can get boring, and people tend to tune out. Think highlights.

■ **Keep up with the chat and utilize it to type up the key points and quotes from the speaker.** Audiences love this, and it's a great benefit for the speaker after the event to know what they said that resonated.

■ **Be the mediator for any Q&A in the program.** This helps the presenter and changes the pace by adding another person into the mix. That keeps the session interesting. When just one person is doing everything there can be a disconnect for the audience. If multiple people are involved, the audience feels more involved. Plus it helps the presenter avoid feeling overwhelmed.

■ **Prepare closing remarks that correspond to the information presented,** but again, short and sweet. Think of this like putting a big, beautiful bow on the whole event!

The host is the bridge from the audience to the presenter. Stay present the whole time as an active participant and keep your camera on to react to the presenter and provide moral support.

pace moving. If you think about media content today, there is always something different to look at every few seconds. How can you change the monotony?

Let's look at some of my favorite ways to boost a virtual presentation:

■ **Music:** Use it to open and close the event, on breaks, or in breakout rooms. Maybe get a dance party going! Make sure you are not using anything that could have a copyright infringement. YouTube is a great resource to find music. I always credit the creator verbally and drop the link in the chat.

■ **Chat box:** Ask questions for participants to answer in the chat. They can be open-ended or yes/no. Open the event or meeting by asking people where they are tuning in from: town, state, country, or even what part of their house—this always gets a laugh.

■ **Share screen:** Slides, videos, photos, and charts are all great visuals to include. However, also consider temporarily not sharing your slides for important points or demonstrations.

■ **Show and tell:** Showing props is a fun way to switch it up. It helps make the call feel more tangible as well. I was once in a meeting where the 2000 World Champion of Public Speaking,

Ed Tate, had people get up and go find things in their own home to show on camera, which got everyone engaged.

■ **Physically use your whole screen:** Stop sitting down and showing a long, dense PowerPoint. Stand up! Move around, ask the audience to physically do something with you, like clap or take a deep breath. Lean into the camera when you are telling a secret or lean back to show space. Practice by recording yourself and watching it back to see where you need to put your hands so they can be seen fully on camera.

■ **Game show:** There are lots of resources for virtual games and even programs that will allow you to create full game shows modeled after some favorites, though there can be an associated cost. Search online for “game show maker” to see what comes up. Can you use the whiteboard feature in Zoom to play hangman, tic-tac-toe, or even *Wheel of Fortune* (minus the wheel)? Or do you have a trivia game at your house that you can pull cards from and ask the questions? Get in the box to think outside of the box.

Think like a kid again and have some fun with your virtual events. The more energy you bring, the more fun your meeting attendees will have. And if you wrap up earlier than planned, why not let people out early? Less really can be more!

Keep these tips in mind for your next online meeting or event, and remember that your renewed energy can help others combat their Zoom fatigue, and helping others is always fulfilling.

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**Amanda Mae Gray** is the host of the *Yes You Mae* podcast and a member of *Toast of Cobb Toastmasters and Speakers Roundtable Advanced Club*, both in Georgia. She helps empower professionals to create their own confidence for video meetings and works as a virtual event host. Learn more at [www.amandamaegray.com](http://www.amandamaegray.com).

DIRECT

INITIATING

SUPPORTIVE

ANALYTICAL

# Direct, Initiating, Supportive, or Analytical?

Understanding communication styles is key to engaging in more effective conversations.

By Greg Glasgow

**A**s humans, engaging in communication is one of our most important activities. Successful communication has built empires, driven innovation, and made people fall in love, while unsuccessful communication has ruined relationships, sunk business deals, and stirred workplace conflict.

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There is no right or wrong style. These are not IQ tests or evaluations of capability; they simply describe equally valid behavioral styles.

There are many elements to communicating successfully, but one of the most important is recognizing that people respond in different ways to specific situations or when interacting with a certain person or group of people. Everyone has a built-in preferred behavioral style for processing and acting on information. Some people react quickly, seemingly by instinct; others prefer to think through every scenario before responding.

That's why, when engaging with others, we may be surprised by sudden disagreements or find ourselves mystified when others just don't seem to "get" what we're trying to say. That's probably because they *don't* get it. If you're gushing numbers about a project and your coworker prefers to hear background stories first, there's likely to be a disconnect.

Identifying your primary communication style—and understanding how it complements or differs from other styles—will take you a long way toward successful communication, whether you are speaking to a large group or engaging in a one-on-one conversation.

## A Short Style History

The concept of communication styles has been around for a long time. In 1928, the American psychologist William Moulton Marston published *Emotions of Normal People*, a book in which he described four primary behavioral styles: dominance, influence, steadiness, and compliance. From this book a world of different communication style families was born.

Another well-known model was created in the 1960s by industrial psychologists David Merrill and Roger Reid, who describe four "social" styles: analytical, driving, amiable, and expressive.

Pathways applies similar models in "Understanding Your Communication Style," a Level 2 project in five of the 11 paths. Members learn to recognize their own and others' behavioral styles, which are described as direct (results-oriented, focused); initiating (sociable, persuasive); supportive (patient, cooperative); and analytical (precise, disciplined).

No matter what descriptors are used, there is no right or wrong style. These are not IQ tests or evaluations of capability; they simply describe four equally valid behavioral styles that identify how people take in and respond to information.

## Styles in Action

People can switch or combine styles when it makes sense to do so, says Simon Bucknall, a speaker, executive coach, and member of Covent Garden Speakers in London, United Kingdom.

"When I first meet with a client, I'm absolutely in supportive mode," Bucknall says. "There's no point in me wading in and saying, 'Hey, I have these ideas for you.' How do I know what they need? It starts off with them asking me questions and talking about what they need."

Communication styles may evolve once trust is established. "Then people might say, 'What's your advice? What do you think I should do?' In that case, they're looking for something very direct," Bucknall notes.

Reading the descriptions of each style should give you a good indication of your preferred method. Yet it can be a real eye-opener when you're first introduced to this concept. For example, soon after I began working on this article, I realized why I sometimes get frustrated in my weekly team meetings. I am a direct communicator who wants to get to the point, decide,



and move on to the next topic. My boss is an analytical communicator who likes to take lots of notes and track our progress on a spreadsheet.

In my personal life, I am learning to mesh my direct style with that of family members who are initiating communicators and like to tell stories and share their feelings.

### How Styles Complement and Conflict

As important as it is to know yourself, it's equally important to think about how your style meshes with others'.

"It's about being sensitive to the other person's energy and matching that," Bucknall says. He also recommends evaluating the actual words someone uses when they speak. Language can be revealing.

When you hear words like "tools," "strategies," or a comment like, "tell me about this vendor," you're getting a peek into how that person tends to process details.

"We should be nurturing of all the styles, then fitting them to the context and the point we're trying to make," says Kristen Hamling, Ph.D., of Whanganui, New Zealand, a professional psychologist, facilitator, coach,

## What I Learned from a Pathways Project

By Christine A. Robinson, DTM

I've learned that coming to know your personal communication style is an ongoing adventure. To interact amicably with others, whose styles may differ a little or a lot from your own, requires self-awareness, adaptability, and a willingness to listen. Three key elements not only for communication but for life itself.

Knowing how to navigate varying styles between people with different perspectives and behaviors helps build a bridge for teams to cooperate and complete the work at hand.

I recently completed "Understanding Your Communication Style," a Level 2 project in the Presentation Mastery path. The work focuses on learning how to recognize all styles—yours and others'—using four categories:

direct, initiating, supportive, and analytical. Here are some things I learned:

Before proceeding in this project, you're required to take the "Discover Your Communication Style" questionnaire. In this brief self-assessment, you'll answer some thought-provoking questions regarding how others may see you and how you see yourself. After taking it, I came to know what I did not know.

I'm an introvert. I need time to analyze arising circumstances, then I tend to engage with support. I was sure analytical and supportive were my primary styles.

Much to my surprise, direct and initiating styles came in first and second! So much for the soft-spoken, wise owl I thought I was. Even an introvert can be direct and initiating!

Now I listen with greater acuity to those around me. *There is a direct speaker*, I say to myself. *There is an analyzer*. As each person starts to speak, I begin to hear where that person is coming from and can answer more effectively—even if the "answer" is to remain silent.

I'm now aware that supportive conversations may require more silence, instead of interjecting what I think. I learned to allow the speaker, friend, or confidante to find their own answers before supplying my thinking.

A week before giving my speech for this project, I used the questionnaire as Table Topicsmaster. Participants responded to questions in what they believed to be their preferred communication style. The entire audience volunteered, and each participant had a chance to verbalize to the group how they relate with the world.

This Pathways project is one that allows you to genuinely listen to where others are coming from, so that you can readily tune into their frequency. With this knowledge, you have the resources to successfully meet anyone at their level.



**Christine A. Robinson, DTM**, is a member of Pitch Perfect Toastmasters in San Rafael, California. She is a coach and the author of *Confidently Speaking: The Speaker's Guide to Standing Ovarations*. Learn more at [www.confidentlyspeaking.net](http://www.confidentlyspeaking.net).

and former Toastmaster. “Be led by the context first, then by what you’re trying to achieve. Both sides want to be heard.”

Astute communicators recognize rising conflicts and know when and how to defuse them, Hamling adds. “You have to lean into having a courageous conversation. If you think the other person might get defensive, then you want to think about what their style is, and how to alter your style, so those defenses don’t deploy as much,” she explains.

enthusiasm—but that muscle has grown over the years because of all the types of speaking he does. For example, when he speaks to high school students, he’s learned that passive or analytical communication styles aren’t as successful with young people who have lots of energy and typically short attention spans.

“If I start just writing stuff on the board and going through things in a dry, analytical way, they’re just going to start chucking stuff at me,” he says.

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“Communicating doesn’t have to be a competition or a conflict. Honesty is important, but so is communicating in a way that your message gets heard.”

—KRISTEN HAMLING, PH.D.

It’s essential to remain civil and truthful, but you don’t have to completely surrender your points. “It’s important to remember that communicating doesn’t have to be a competition or a conflict. Of course, honesty is important, but so is communicating in a way that your message gets heard,” Hamling says.

## Flexing Your Style

It’s also important to maintain flexibility in your communication styles. Experts like Hamling advise thinking about the end goal of your conversation or communication, then practicing your skills in whichever style seems to best fit the situation. If you feel you’re having trouble connecting with someone or getting your point across, it’s probably time to try a different style.

Bucknall offers a tip for those interested in trying on different styles at work. Pay attention to how you communicate in other aspects of your life, and think about how you might be able to bring some of that into the workplace, he says.

“Whether it’s as a parent, a child, a brother, or a spouse, we show these different sides or styles all the time,” he says. “We behave differently with a spouse than we do with a taxi driver. There are all sorts of useful clues we can get from paying attention to how we behave in everyday life intuitively.”

Bucknall says his preferred communication style is initiating—lots of energy, lots of

“Communication styles tend to get strengthened or wither a little depending on the kind of role one has to play.”

## Remote Challenges

The challenges around meshing communication styles have grown more complicated in the work-from-home era, when face-to-face meetings have been replaced by emails, dashed-off Slack or Teams messages, or Zoom gatherings.

Remote communication by its nature favors direct and analytical communicators, so leaders may need to think about creative ways to support other styles of communication—perhaps adding some social time at the beginning of the meeting for initiating communicators, or asking follow-up questions of supportive communicators and making sure they feel heard.

Being thoughtful about your primary style and well-practiced in switching to another style when necessary are effective ways to strengthen relationships and build trust, Bucknall says.

“Rapport matters in meetings, and rapport is built on common ground,” he says. “That common ground can be content-related, it can be energy-related, it can be situational, but looking for commonality is absolutely key.”

**Editor’s Note:** [Watch](#) how Patricia Calixte, a member of Words on Wings (WOW) Club in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, demonstrates four styles—direct, initiating, supportive, and analytical—in her Pathways speech by acting out each persona.

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### Greg Glasgow

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# Diversity Comes Naturally

Why Toastmasters clubs attract members of all ages, races, and professions.

By Fiona Price

There is no stereotypical Toastmaster. Members come from 149 countries, and represent a wide variety of ages, genders, professions, cultures, and levels of education. People from all walks of life are interested in public speaking and leadership skills, which means Toastmasters is a microcosm of global diversity around the world.

When I joined Toastmasters in 2014, I quickly homed in on its diversity. As a cross-cultural communication specialist, my job is to help people engage with others who are very different from themselves. I support teachers who are working with international students, advise people who work with multicultural customers, and coach executives relocating to foreign countries.

What surprised me about Toastmasters was that I saw the same level of diversity at all levels: from clubs to Toastmasters leaders to speech contestants.

As an example, at the 2021 District 73 (southeastern Australia) conference, attendees were fairly equally divided between men and women (including a transgender woman), and people of many different backgrounds, ranging in age from their 20s to their 70s. The winner of the District 73 International Speech Contest was Indian-Australian Bharat Sangekar; I came in second, and am Malaysian Chinese/Anglo-Australian; and Vietnamese-Australian Thuy Hoang placed third.

Other organizations around the world have little diversity at the top. In Australia, only approximately 6% of chief executive officers are women and only one of the

30 federal ministers is of non-European background. In the United States, women represent only 8.2% of CEOs in the Fortune 500, and only 10% of U.S. senators are non-white. And the lack of diversity isn't limited to business and government: Both the Grammy Awards and the Academy Awards have had boycotts by artists for their lack of diversity.

Toastmasters doesn't run any diversity initiatives. Clubs are open to anyone aged 18 and over, and there are no policies, training, or quotas aimed at increasing the representation of less privileged groups. Yet at Toastmasters, membership breaks down into approximately 44% men and 55% women. Members represent a wide scope of occupations in all levels, from student and first-time job holders to upper management. They range in age from 18 to 100. In terms of education, roughly the same percentage of members have a doctorate degree or higher as have a high school education or less.

How has Toastmasters been so successful in creating such a diverse and robust organization? There are no diversity initiatives, but there is a common culture, a structured set of expectations, and a lack of formal hierarchy.

## The Toastmasters Culture

Toastmasters meetings follow a consistent structure, and there are clearly defined rituals, roles, and rules. According to Mark Fenech, a member of Toastmasters Malta in Zurriecq, Malta, this consistency is what makes

Toastmasters accessible to people from diverse backgrounds. “The shared, consistent structure makes it easy to take part in Toastmasters in any country,” he says.

At a Toastmasters meeting, support is built in. Guests learn how roles work by watching experienced members perform them at meetings. Elma Shaw of Kigali, Rwanda, is a Liberian author, publisher, and philanthropist. She is a member of Toastmasters Without Borders, an English-speaking online club that has members all over the world. Being able to watch and learn is especially helpful for people speaking English as an additional language. “People who aren’t native speakers of English are included and listened to,” she says. “They have role models who [also] aren’t native speakers of English.”

At least half of the members in Toastmasters Malta typically come from other countries, and while Fenech works in information technology, other members work in fields very different from his. The professional diversity in his club has taught him how much value there can be in a flexible, spontaneous approach. “Someone who’s more of a people person might run the meeting in a less structured manner, and leave space for impromptu discussions, [or] fill the gaps with interesting stuff,” he explains.

Much of Toastmasters’ inherent success with diversity lies with the fact that clubs bring people from diverse groups together under conditions that are favorable for reducing prejudice and increasing positive engagement in three key areas. These tie in with the Intergroup Contact Theory, which describes the conditions that reduce prejudice and increase positive engagement between people from different social groups.

### 1 People engage as equals.

Outside Toastmasters, members may differ widely in social status. Some could be in senior

positions at work, others may be retired, unemployed, or studying. Some could be native English-speaking locals, others may be neither. When they arrive at a meeting, however, everyone is on an equal footing and any member can play any role.

Shaw, the Rwandan member, has found this to be true. “There’s no hierarchy at all in Toastmasters,” she notes. She feels two key factors make this egalitarian environment possible. One is that meetings enable every person present to participate actively. “Lots of the tasks that involve people are small things, where people feel safe. Also, the stakes are low. Social risk only.” The other is the ongoing support provided to newcomers through mentoring, evaluations, and the education program.

### 2 Speeches offer insight into personal experiences.

It’s easy to fall back on stereotypes when you’ve never had close personal contact with someone from a particular social group. When you regularly hear someone give personal speeches,

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People from all walks of life are interested in public speaking and leadership skills, which means Toastmasters is a microcosm of global diversity around the world.

you learn that they are a complex and relatable human being, like you.

“Normally people talk [in their speeches] about whatever they do in their lives and this gives you insight,” observes Fenech, of Malta. “Sometimes ... you have a picture of [someone’s background] in your mind, and have decided who they are, but then they deliver a speech that surprises you.” This, he says, enables members to build stronger connections.

Shaw agrees. “People talk about people who’ve influenced them. Their failures, successes, dreams, and hopes. These are universal themes we all share. It’s a reminder of our shared humanity.”

### 3 Members of different groups work together toward shared goals.

People from different backgrounds tend to have different goals, priorities, and interests. At Toastmasters, however, diverse people are united by a common interest in communication and leadership. This creates a powerful platform for building community. As Shaw puts it, “At Toastmasters Without Borders, we have a shared purpose: improving our public speaking. The objective is to help each other ... and this shared purpose creates social glue.”

As someone who’s devoted her career to helping diverse people engage and realize their potential, I’m inspired by what I see at Toastmasters. Toastmasters demonstrates that under the right conditions, it’s very possible for organizations to give rise to leaders and high achievers who represent the full diversity of their community.

Not all of the practices that make this possible could be applied in other settings, of course.

Toastmasters is unique: a voluntary, nonprofit organization built around an interest common to a broad range of people.

Even so, the reasons for the diverse high-fliers at Toastmasters are worth a closer look. Introducing elements of the structured, egalitarian, cooperative style of engagement seen at Toastmasters might well help us build workplaces where everyone has a fair chance of reaching the top.

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# Meet the Vice President Education

This club officer is a master Pathways guide.

By Greg Lewis, DTM

The Vice President Education (VPE) holds the critical responsibility for ensuring club members get the most from their Toastmasters education journey. At the same time, it's a hands-on opportunity for this officer to build their own leadership and organizational skills.

## What Makes a Great VPE?

I believe the most successful VPEs share three traits: a desire to help others succeed, attention to detail, and a real passion for Toastmasters.

VPEs develop an excellent understanding of Pathways and use this knowledge to guide fellow club members toward goals and achievements. Jonathan Silverberg, DTM, VPE of Village Toastmasters Club in Edenvale, South Africa, says, "As VPE, I really get to know all our club members." Knowing what members want to achieve, paired with his Pathways expertise, allows Silverberg to guide them effectively. The support "helps members maintain their enthusiasm, and has helped me improve my

While this may be the easiest option, it may also be the least effective. Experience shows you usually only get a few volunteers, which can create a negative atmosphere in the club.

One suggestion is for the VPE to use a simple Excel spreadsheet to track assigned roles well in advance of the meeting. Clubs can maintain this information on the member section of their website or the Toastmasters [easy-Speak](#) platform.

When I was VPE of Rose City Toastmasters, in Welland, Ontario, Canada, we published a roster of filled roles for the next month and emailed it with the current agenda to all members. Since we met weekly, this gave everyone a month to prepare for their role. At the end of each meeting, we reviewed the upcoming roster and made any adjustments right then. While somewhat time-consuming for the VPE, we found it led to far greater member participation.

Another helpful tip regarding meetings: Explain the club's expectations for meeting participation to each new

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As the VPE, you will help fellow Toastmasters thrive, and feel a tremendous sense of accomplishment yourself.

own leadership and communication skills," he notes.

Here's a look at the VPE's key responsibilities.

## Agendas and Meeting Roles

Overseeing the agenda and helping fill meeting roles are two of the VPE's most important responsibilities, because quality clubs thrive on robust programs and members who enthusiastically take meeting roles. So the VPE works hand in hand with the Toastmaster of the Day for each meeting to ensure the agenda is completed ahead of time and all meeting roles are filled.

There are a variety of ways to manage role assignments. Some clubs simply ask for volunteers at the end of each meeting for the next one (with the VPE following up with requests and reminders before the next meeting).

member. Couple this with gentle reminders to all members throughout the year and you will find much greater participation. Encourage more experienced members (and the Club Executive Committee) to set an example by regularly signing up for roles and speeches. At the same time, make sure the same people are not taking roles each meeting; urge those who rarely take roles to give it a try and not be intimidated.

## Base Camp Manager

In most clubs, the VPE is the Base Camp manager. In this role, your primary duties are to verify Pathways speech and level completions, track member progress, and ensure education award applications are submitted in Club Central once they have been approved in Base Camp. The



VPE accepts a significant responsibility for helping members progress through Pathways.

## Resources and Recognition

As the VPE, try the [Pathways Achievement Tracker](#), a handy visual tool to track member progress and inspire everyone who can see their accomplishments on the chart.

The VPE collaborates with the Club President to celebrate and acknowledge member successes. Set aside some time each meeting to publicly recognize achievements, from the first Ice Breaker to finishing a Pathways level. And don't limit yourself to strictly Toastmasters achievements. Celebrate job promotions or member speaking events outside the club. If appropriate, work with the Vice President Public Relations to post news of broad interest on social media. Remember, recognition builds self-esteem and self-confidence and inspires other members to strive for achievement as well!

## Mentor Manager

The VPE manages a robust [mentor program](#), which is vital to every club's success. New Toastmasters often feel overwhelmed at first and may doubt themselves as they see the more experienced members give speeches and execute meeting roles. As VPE, you ensure that all new

members are paired with a mentor and that more experienced members can be connected with a mentor when needed.

A good starting point is to meet with every new member as soon as possible and discover what they want to achieve by joining Toastmasters and why. This gives you a sense of the person's goals, interests, and personality, so you can pair them with a mentor who will be a good fit.

## Other Responsibilities

The VPE, along with the Club President and the Vice President Membership, represent the club at Area and District Council meetings.

The VPE is also responsible for managing club [speech contests](#) and assisting, as needed, with the Area speech contest(s). VPEs don't actually run the contests; instead, they draw a talented team together to do this. How involved you are as the VPE depends on your specific club, although at a minimum you should recruit the Club Contest Chair and Chief Judge.

Contests do present VPEs with another special role—the opportunity to motivate members to enter contests or take contest roles. Stretching ourselves is how we grow, and participating in speech contests in an excellent way for members to break out of their comfort zones.

## Self-Guidance

It's important not to neglect your own development; make sure you move forward on your own Pathways journey. It is easy to focus on other members and ensure they succeed while neglecting yourself. Just as you track the progress of others, be sure to track your own.

## Aspire to Be a VPE?

Now that you have a better understanding of this role, what should you do if you're thinking about taking this position in the future? Iwona Lider, President of The Gavellers Toastmaster Club in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, and a former VPE, suggests shadowing the current VPE before taking on the role. "And don't be afraid to suggest changes to improve the process. That can be the most interesting part of the role," Lider says.

The VPE role promises an exciting, challenging, and rewarding experience. You will help your fellow Toastmasters thrive, and feel a tremendous sense of accomplishment yourself as a leader, organizer, and Pathways expert.

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

# My Commencement Speech

Not that I've been invited to give one, but if I were ...

By John Cadley

Faculty, alumni, parents, relatives, honored guests of the dais, and the security guard who gave me a ticket for double parking. (*Uproarious laughter.*) It is my honor to be here today addressing the Class of 2022. I was supposed to be here two years ago until the pandemic sent us all home to discover that 95% of the world's business can be conducted in pajamas. (*More uproarious laughter.*) I actually forgot about this talk until the dean called and said, "We noticed you cashed that check we sent you in 2020. You owe us a commencement speech." So here I am. (*Wild applause.*)

My remarks today revolve around an oft-quoted saying: *May you live in interesting times.* Well, you guys really got an A-plus on that one. (*Whistles and whoops.*) In fact, if things get any more interesting, they're going to get downright aggravating, don't you think? (*Riotous laughter.*)

And yet you've made it. Online classes, mask wearing, quarantines, cotton swabs up the nose, vaccinations, and worst of all, social distancing. When I was in college social distancing meant you couldn't get a date. (*Deafening laughter.*) But you did it. Forget your grades. I think you young men and women should all graduate summa cum laude just for staying away from each other. (*Standing ovation.*) Not that all of you did. (*Whistles and catcalls.*)

Seriously, though ... I see you sitting here before me with all your dreams and plans for the future, and I think of what my favorite philosopher, the American heavyweight boxer Mike Tyson, said: "Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the mouth." (*Gasps from parents and faculty.*) Yes, I know—not exactly "Follow Your Bliss," so let me explain. You don't need me to give you hoary bromides about how to succeed in life. You know them. What you need to learn is how to handle failure and disappointment, because life *will* disappoint you. It already has. (*Audience leaning*



*forward in seats.*) You just worked and studied for four arduous years to earn your degree, spending thousands of dollars in tuition and overcoming the enormous obstacles of a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic in the bargain—while I, on the other hand, was handed an

Maybe you're a philosophy major, in love with Socrates and Plato, yet somehow you end up managing a Marriott Courtyard in Toledo, Ohio.

honorary degree virtually equal to yours 10 minutes ago just for standing up here and flapping my gums ... and getting paid for it! How's *that* for a punch in the mouth? (*Stern looks from students, dean smiles weakly.*)

I'm not saying this to discourage you. Your education is and always will be a pearl of great price. Just ask your parents. (*Grim nods from parents.*) I'm simply emphasizing life isn't fair. Accepting this is true wisdom. It will save you from disillusion when you find out

that dedication and diligence only pay off if they don't make you look smarter than your boss—which isn't hard to do, so be careful. It will spare you from the Where-Did-I-Go-Wrong guilt that comes when you do everything in your power to instill wholesome family values in your children, only to have one of them come home with a skull-and-crossbones tattoo asking for a motorcycle—and it's your daughter.

It will protect you from the even more dangerous What-Did-I-Do-Right syndrome, which is what your own parents are experiencing right now.

(*Quizzical looks.*) Normal as they may appear, at this very moment every one of them is in some stage of neurogenic shock at the realization that you're actually graduating. That's why they'll be taking pictures later—to verify that they weren't hallucinating.

Please understand—I'm not here to rain on your parade, or to steal your thunder, or to dampen your spirits, or to keep going on with trite weather analogies. I'm here to toughen you for the battle to come, to help you learn the lessons of defeat that will pave the way to victory. Maybe you're a philosophy major, in love with Socrates and Plato, yet somehow you end up managing a Marriott Courtyard in Toledo, Ohio. That's okay. At the annual corporate meeting you'll be the only one to hold a breakout session titled "Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* As It Applies to Off-Season Room Rates." And *that*, my friends, has PROMOTION written all over it.

So please, by all means—follow your rainbow, grab for the brass ring, go for the gold, reach for the stars, shoot for the moon. Just remember to wear a mouthguard. (*Explosive applause, ebullient cheers, cries of Cadley for President!*)

**John Cadley** is a former advertising copywriter and currently a musician working in upstate New York. Learn more at [www.cadleys.com](http://www.cadleys.com).

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## 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 

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