

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | DECEMBER 2023

TOASTMASTER®



*Get Inspired
Over the Holidays*

ALSO INSIDE:

**Recharge on Your
Holiday Break**

**Handling Unexpected
Stage Blips**

TOASTMASTERS
INTERNATIONAL

Happy Holiday Talk!

Catch up with webinars On Demand, where inspiring communication topics range from humor workshops to honing holiday talk/small talk.



Watch recordings at:

toastmasters.org/WebinarsOnDemand

Publisher

Daniel Rex

Managing Editor

Laura Amann

Senior Editor, Executive & Editorial Content

Paul Sterman

Associate Editor

Laura Mishkind

Digital Strategy and Engagement Editor

Shannon Dewey

Editorial Coordinator

Mackenzie Eldred

Graphic Designer

Susan Campbell

2023-2024 OFFICERS

International President

Morag Mathieson, DTM

International President-Elect

Radhi Spear, DTM

First Vice President

Aletta Roach, DTM

Second Vice President

Stefano McGhee, DTM

Immediate Past International President

Matt Kinsey, DTM

Chief Executive Officer

Daniel Rex

2023-2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sondra Nunez, DTM

Region 1

Jesse Oakley III, DTM

Region 2

Violetta Rios, DTM

Region 3

Kimberly Lynne Myers, DTM

Region 4

Farzana Chohan, DTM

Region 5

Dawn Frail, DTM

Region 6

Dana Richard, DTM

Region 7

Anwesha Banerjee, DTM

Region 8

Kimberly Dueck, DTM

Region 9

Jean Gamester, DTM

Region 10

Frank Tsuru, DTM

Region 11

Benjamin James

McCormick, DTM

Region 12

Pawas Chandra, DTM

Region 13

Helen He, DTM

Region 14

TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL®

9127 S. Jamaica St. #400, Englewood, CO, USA 80112

+1 720-439-5050

toastmasters.org

CONTACTING WORLD HEADQUARTERS

For information on joining or building a club, visit:

toastmasters.org/membership

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

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 2023 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.



Acknowledging Those Who Have Made a Difference

At almost every District 59 conference gala I have attended, an elderly gentleman with a walking cane has taken to the dance floor, and is immediately joined by others who share his joy.

Peter Kenton, of Paris, now in his 90s, dances with the same enthusiasm he brings to most things in life, including his involvement in Toastmasters. He was part of the team who created the Continental Council of European Toastmasters in 1979 that eventually led to the creation of District 59 in 2003. He started the first bilingual Toastmasters club in Europe, has stepped up to club and District leadership whenever needed, and has made himself available to guide and mentor others.

He has always been particularly supportive of members who wanted to grow Toastmasters in their country and frequently participated in events and offered guidance. He recently offered his support and involvement to a Youth Leadership Program in Paris.

His significant contributions over many years were recognized by our organization this year when he received a Presidential Citation. When I think of people who have inspired me in Toastmasters, Peter is certainly one of those who spring to mind. He is a hero of my story.

As we approach the end of 2023, I've been reflecting and acknowledging people who have had an impact on me: whether they've supported me or challenged my thinking. I've also reflected on my own achievements.

- What were my goals for the year in Toastmasters, at work, and for pleasure, such as travel goals with family and friends?
- How far did I get in achieving them?
- Where did I find the greatest moments of enjoyment and of frustration?
- Who helped me in my progress and how will I show my appreciation?
- How can I pay forward the support I received to others that they may benefit?

Reflections help us acknowledge the progress we're making, the steps we still need to take, and the people who inspire and support us along the way.

What about you, will you make time for reflection before we reach 2024?

Think about who has made a difference for you, your club, your District, or Toastmasters International, and would appreciate hearing how they helped you.

The Presidential Citation Peter received is a high honor, presented to members who have shown continual support and dedication to the organization. Peter couldn't receive the award in person, and so, to show their appreciation for all he has done, some friends from District 59 organized a special event to celebrate him and his contributions.

Watching Peter over the years has boosted my spirit and fueled my momentum. How can we be the person who inspires others, a hero in their story?"

Morag Mathieson, DTM

2023-2024 International President

Features



14 Making the Most of Your Holiday Break

PERSONAL GROWTH:

Recharge—with intention—on your vacation.

By Megan Preston Meyer

20 Kindred Spirits

TOASTMASTERS NEWS:

How the Rotary/Toastmasters alliance fosters mutually meaningful experiences.

By Stephanie Darling

Columns

3 VIEWPOINT: Acknowledging Those Who Have Made a Difference

By Morag Mathieson, DTM
International President

8 MY TURN: A Toastmasters Education

By Philip Wilkerson

9 TOASTMASTER TOOLBOX: Saying Goodbye Isn't Easy

By Bill Brown, DTM

26 FUNNY YOU SHOULD SAY THAT: See Ya

By John Cadley

Articles

6 CLUB PROFILE: Using Social Media to Attract Guests

Denmark club designed posts to intrigue “the curious and the terrified.”

By Stephanie Darling

7 TOASTMASTERS NEWS: In Memory of Chris Ford

2007–2008 International President remembered as a strong, savvy leader with a sense of humor.

By Paul Serman

10 COMMUNICATION: A Season to Toast

A quick guide to getting your words out right.

By Eddie Rice

12 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: 5 Tips to Land a Job or Internship

New to the workforce? Learn what interviewers are looking for.

By Eva Finn

17 PERSONAL GROWTH: Running and Speechmaking Share Common Ground

When the road ahead seems daunting, take it one step at a time.

By Christine Clapp, DTM



18 COMMUNICATION: Expect the Unexpected

Anything can happen when you're presenting; learn to focus on solutions.

By Jim Cathcart

24 CLUB EXPERIENCE: Ukrainian Members Stay Strong

In a war-torn country, members turn to Toastmasters for solace and strength.

By Ruth Nasrullah

Departments

5 SEEN AND HEARD: Snapshot / Traveling Toastmaster

Snapshot



Members of **UDAIPUR TOASTMASTERS CLUB** in Udaipur, Rajasthan, India, celebrate their 250th meeting by hiking up the Karni Mata trail near Udaipur.



Traveling Toastmaster



VESNA IVKOVIC of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, enjoys the magazine while on holiday in Plitvice Lakes National Park in Croatia.



TIMOTHY SCARBROUGH of West Frankfort, Illinois, holds the *Toastmaster* while visiting the Scarborough Castle in Scarborough, England.

Using Social Media to Attract Guests

Denmark club designed posts to intrigue “the curious and the terrified.”

By Stephanie Darling

Vibrant visuals, warm personal stories, and the instant connectivity of social media turned out to be a wildly winning combination for the Frederiksberg Toastmasters club, which recently conducted an all-online membership drive that grew the club by 35 members in less than one program year.

The club, based in Copenhagen, Denmark, now has 55 members and is the largest club in the country. Musna Jensen, who was Club President and Vice President Public Relations during the drive, credits its success to the vigorous, consistent use of Facebook and LinkedIn.

“Both platforms are heavily used in the Nordics,” Jensen explains. “They gave us tremendous visibility, credibility, and ways to showcase our club, along with a way to instantly connect with people who wanted to know more about Toastmasters.”

For the campaign, the club amped up the content of its Facebook and LinkedIn pages and invited the world in for a look at its lively club culture. Eye-catching photos showed members in their element enthusiastically interacting. New

on their visit,” Jensen says. “I also answered a lot of questions in direct message. Both strategies drove a higher number of guests.” LinkedIn drew the most response, as many respondents were young professionals, looking to advance their careers with confident speaking skills.

As club leaders prepared their marketing strategies, they discussed why people who didn’t know Toastmasters would want to join.

“We found a lot of people want to improve speaking skills but don’t know where to start or are just too intimidated. And they weren’t clear on how Toastmasters could help,” Jensen says.

“We knew we had to make the club very relatable to spike the interest of the curious and the terrified,” she adds. “Our first job was to educate and elevate.”

Even Jensen was surprised at social media’s power to do just that through posts, reposts, conversations, tagging, and other community sharing. “Trust is a big factor in Denmark and coming to our sites and seeing someone they know, and hearing our members’ stories made us very relatable,” she notes.

The club’s appeal, both online and subsequently in real-life meetings, led many visitors to sign up on the spot.

“A lot of the conversions happened at meetings,” Jensen said. “Guests felt the quality of it all exceeded their expectations—and felt our members gave them a sense of belonging.

“Also, a lot of people’s initial doubts about how exclusive the organization was, or how advanced someone needed to be to join, were quelled when they could see different speakers with varying levels of communication skills take the stage in a single meeting—and all got the same level of support from the audience.”

With new members settling in and starting to set their individual goals, the club is now focusing on a vigorous onboarding program. It lasts six months and sets specific milestones for the mentor/mentee to reach along the way. Jensen wants to be sure there’s never a disconnect from what people see online and the actual club experience.

Following the success of the recent membership drive, the club had to cap its membership due to limited capacity. There’s a waiting list to join.

Stephanie Darling is a former senior editor of and frequent contributor to the *Toastmaster* magazine.



Frederiksberg Toastmasters in a hyggeligt brunch celebration of Toastmasters International’s 98th anniversary. (* Danish for coziness or conviviality)*
Photo by Musna Jensen

videos featured young members inviting guests to join their journey. Each week, Jensen posted intriguing meeting details and made sure all online inquiries were answered in a quick, welcoming manner.

One of her main goals was to “demystify” Toastmasters for potential guests. Many were drawn to the messages but had little to no idea what the organization offered.

“When I invited guests online, I tried to give them as many details upfront regarding what they should expect

In Memory of Chris Ford

2007–2008
International
President
remembered as
a strong, savvy
leader with a
sense of humor.

By Paul Sterman

Chris Ford, DTM, a widely admired leader and mentor who served as Toastmasters International President in 2007–2008, passed away September 13 at his home in Manotick, Ontario, Canada, after bravely battling ALS the past two years.

Ford, a Toastmaster for 45 years, had a long and distinguished military career. He served for 35 years in the Canadian Forces, specifically in the Canadian Military Engineers, and retired as a Brigadier-General. He said many times that his Toastmasters training benefited him as a military leader.

Ford, 74 when he died, was also an expert in conflict resolution. After his retirement from the military, he served as Director General of Alternative Dispute Resolution for Canada's Department of National Defence. He once taught a class to Toastmasters officers called "Conflict Is Inevitable—Combat Is Optional."

Ford was a tireless advocate for Toastmasters, at all levels of the organization. Fellow members of the Manotick Club—which he helped found 27 years ago—praised his generous spirit and devotion to the club. In a post on its Facebook page, member Cindy Little called him "one of the best mentors anybody could have."

"Chris was a mentor to many people in Toastmasters, and I benefited from his wisdom for 12 years at the Manotick Club," she wrote, adding that "he was one of the coolest and kindest gentlemen I've ever met."

He belonged to several different Toastmasters clubs in Canada over the years, including two at the time of his death: Manotick, and the Avancé Synergie Toastmasters Club, a French-English bilingual club that meets online. Ford first joined Toastmasters in 1978 when he was stationed at a military base in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Fellow international leaders lauded his many contributions to the organization.

"Chris was brilliant, a skilled strategist, wise, bold, and courageous," says Gary Schmidt, DTM, International President 2009–2010, who served on the Board of Directors with Ford for four years. "He was also compassionate, cared

deeply about people and the members of Toastmasters, and had a wonderful sense of humor."

"Every International President has challenging times and so did Chris during his term as President," adds Schmidt, a longtime member from Oregon. "During it all, he led with decisiveness and grace."

Johnny Uy, DTM, who directly preceded Ford as International President, echoed those sentiments. Uy, of Cebu City, the Philippines, also worked with Ford on the Board for four years. Though the Canadian was "a no-nonsense leader," his sense of humor brightened up many Board sessions, Uy remembers.

"We could be discussing a truly stressful matter," he says, "and Chris would suddenly say something that would lighten the mood and make us smile."

Ford had many interests and was a physical fitness devotee who liked to ski, skate, and jog. He once completed a marathon to raise funds for diabetes research. He was also a drummer in a military band.

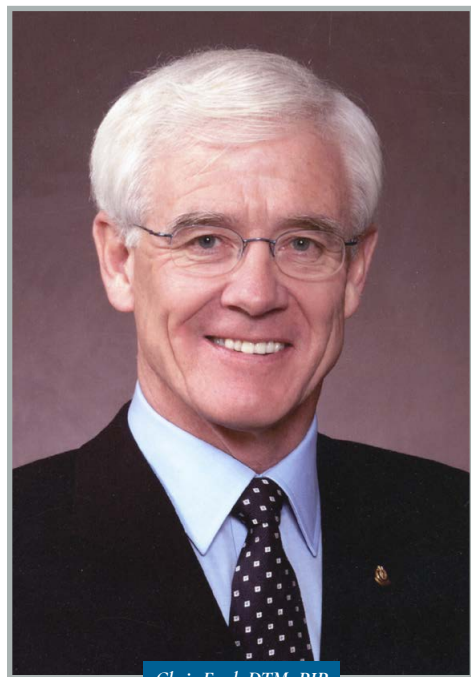
Ford spoke often about the topic of leadership. He believed there was no more important quality for a leader than integrity. In an interview with Tim Keck, DTM, International President 1999–2000, for a Toastmasters oral history project, he said you can't waver when it comes to ethical decisions.

"It's a slippery slope, because you compromise integrity once, it becomes easier the next time, and the next time, and the next time," he told Keck. "And so I have always tried to conduct myself with the utmost of integrity. I hope I have succeeded."

Uy praised Ford's approach to dealing with obstacles, saying he tackled problems head-on, no matter how hard they were. That same spirit extended to Ford's battle with ALS. Friends said he remained positive and resolute in the face of the degenerative neurological disease.

Uy shared that Ford wrote an email to his fellow Past International Presidents—his last one to the group—shortly before the 2023 International Convention in The Bahamas. Explaining why he couldn't be there, he wrote that he was now "in the end stage of ALS." But he added that he was at peace, and, true to his character, wrote, "Please don't feel sorry for me."

"As he requested, I won't feel sorry for him," says Uy. "Instead, I offer a salute to him. I just know that up in that great Toastmasters club in the sky, Chris would be making sure Ralph Smedley is shipshape."



Chris Ford, DTM, PIP

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

A Toastmasters Education

My four years of membership has been equivalent to receiving a degree.

By Philip Wilkerson

When I think about my last four years, the first thing that comes to mind is college—not the traditional academic one, but my college of growth and transformation in Toastmasters. I joined Toastmasters in 2019, seven years after receiving my master's degree, with the simple goal of refining my public speaking skills. Unlike many others, I wasn't afraid of speaking in front of people; in fact, I got excited about it and tended to go off on rants and rambles. But I knew I needed structure and a way to harness my personality and extraversion into a polished skill if I wanted to achieve my dream of giving a TEDx Talk or a commencement speech.

Little did I know that my journey with Toastmasters would be so much more than just becoming a better public speaker. It was about becoming a leader, too. Only six months into my Toastmasters adventure with George Mason University (GMU) Toastmasters in Virginia, my mentor, Regina Faulkerson, DTM, approached me with an opportunity to pursue a role in club leadership.

Unsure of what to expect but eager to serve, I took on the role of Vice President Public Relations (VPPR). The following year, inspired by then-Club President Christie Michals, I became President of GMU Toastmasters.

Soon, the idea of becoming a Distinguished Toastmaster and an Accredited Speaker gradually seemed within reach. I pushed myself to deliver speeches consistently and sought out opportunities to speak at various events in my community, like local high schools and Rotary clubs. I registered as a public speaker on my employer's website and the District 29 website. I started to confidently stand up when people asked me to speak in meetings and at large gatherings. The encouraging words of my mentors further fueled me to continue finding opportunities to talk.



Philip Wilkerson

As I look back on these four transformative years with Toastmasters, I can't help but feel like I've earned an unofficial degree in public speaking and leadership.

As I stretched myself as a speaker, I also expanded my leadership journey. As a member of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity (the first Black collegiate fraternity, founded in 1906) and inspired by the legacy of great orators like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who was also a member, I felt the desire to create a space for fellow Alphas to practice public speaking. I love my home club, but I also wanted to create a legacy of chartering something new within Toastmasters and Alpha.

I reached out to fraternity brothers across the country, and together, we chartered a club that

focused on the goals of both organizations—developing leaders and honing public speaking skills. Alpha Toastmasters 1906 was chartered this past March as a virtual club, and we have nearly 40 brothers from all over the country.

Connecting with leaders like Immediate Past District 29 Director Rick Taylor opened up new opportunities for me, and I accepted the role of Area 24 Director, which further enhanced my leadership abilities, resulting in me receiving the 2022–2023 Area Director of the Year Award for District 29, as well as the Presidential Area Distinction Award. I am currently Area 21 Director and continue to enhance my leadership skills and learn more beyond the club level.

As I look back on these four transformative years with Toastmasters, I can't help but feel like I've earned an unofficial degree in public speaking and leadership. There were challenges along the way, but they only made me stronger. I've grown so much—from exuding confidence on stage to leading with precision and organization.

If I hadn't attended that first meeting in 2019, I wouldn't be where I am today. The Toastmasters community has embraced me, supported me, and nurtured my dreams and aspirations. As I eagerly anticipate the next four years of my journey, I know that whatever challenges lie ahead, I am equipped with the skills, passion, and unwavering enthusiasm to conquer them and continue this incredible adventure of growth and achievement.

Philip Wilkerson is an employer engagement consultant at GMU Career Services. He is a member of GMU Toastmasters and Alpha Toastmasters 1906, and Area 21 Director for District 29. He hosts the podcast [Positive Philter](#), which focuses on well-being and Toastmasters. He lives with his wife and two sons in Fairfax, Virginia.

Saying Goodbye Isn't Easy

How to craft a meaningful eulogy.

By Bill Brown, DTM

There is an old saying that the only certainties in life are death and taxes.

Much as I would like to be writing a eulogy to taxes, I, like many of you, have been called on to deliver a eulogy due to the death of a loved one.

The occasion rarely provides a lot of time to plan it out, and the emotional dynamics of the event contribute to making the eulogy a difficult task. If you are faced with delivering a eulogy and don't know what to say, let me make a few suggestions.

First, find a few characteristics about the person's life that those attending would relate to. Three or four is all that you need.

Second, fill them out with a few examples that will have the attendees either laughing or smiling in remembrance. People want to think about their time with the person you're honoring.

And third, start with something light and fun and finish with something more serious, while still light-hearted or positive.

Perhaps one of my experiences can help you when you are called upon to memorialize a friend or relative.

My father-in-law had passed away. My wife was an only child, so she had the task of planning all the activities surrounding the burial and memorial service. The fact that this would all occur 400 miles away was an added complication.

She told me that she wanted me to deliver the eulogy and that she had written what she wanted me to say. We were in our hotel room the evening before the service when she discovered that she had left the text at home. Fortunately, she had some personal memories that her father had written over the years and asked me to write a new eulogy. And I only had a few hours to do it.

As I read those memories, a template presented itself, and I considered the previously mentioned structure, beginning with finding a few characteristics or themes.

In each of the writings, he talked about the various cars that he had owned. He lived to age 90 but could still remember the first car that he



People want to think about their time with the person you're honoring.

owned as a teenager, how much he paid for it, how many miles it had on it when he bought it, and from whom he bought it. Who remembers those details? Someone who loved cars.

He also wrote about his various jobs. He sold cars. As a milkman, he sold dairy services to the community. He later went into real estate and sold houses. Selling was his thing.

He and his wife were active at church, served as greeters every Sunday morning, and made everyone feel welcome. This was natural for him, since he was a people person. Even in his later years, when he moved into an assisted living facil-

ity, he soon made friends and had many of the residents wanting to sit at his table at meals.

These themes suggested a structure to unify the speech. I wrote a four-point eulogy around the things he loved: cars, sales, people, and his faith.

The first two were lighthearted. The stories about his first cars made some people attending the service smile. This was a glimpse into his past that they did not know.

On the other hand, some of the people had purchased cars from him. Many more bought milk or homes from him. Some of them, both. This gave them an opportunity to reminisce about their times with him.

The last two points gave me an opportunity to move the talk into a more reflective and serious tone.

Many of the mourners knew him from their church. They had been greeted by him and had worked with him in various activities at the church. He was a consummate organizer.

Finally, his dedication to his faith defined his life and this theme helped summarize the eulogy for all those present. This enabled me to bring the eulogy to a respectful conclusion, leaving those attending with a sense that they had truly honored him and his life.

While there are many tasks that surround a memorial service, a eulogy is, perhaps, the most important. It provides an opportunity for attendees to think back on the individual's life and their interactions with them. Hopefully my experience will help when you find yourself faced with writing a eulogy. It's never easy, but hopefully it will be a little easier.

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



A Season to Toast

A quick guide
to getting your
words out right.

By Eddie Rice

Imagine you're gathered with friends and family, your drink of choice in hand. Then someone asks, "Would you like to give a toast?"

Your heart skips a few beats, your face reddens, your chest tightens ... and you begin. Seconds later, you hear a hearty "Cheers!" after your toast and watch as your family and friends clink glasses.

A holiday toast or memorable occasion speech—impromptu or planned—is not the same as a wedding, awards, or commencement speech. I've created a guide to help you write down some thoughts and plan what to say should you find yourself with a holiday-toasting opportunity.

Three goals of any holiday or special occasion toast are to:

- Keep it short.
- Keep the focus on the group.
- Keep your audience in mind to calibrate your humor and stories.

Even though your toast may be short, you will want to think ahead for your planned remarks. It is okay to have your thoughts on notecards or a piece of paper, but when speaking for less than a minute you should try to memorize your toast rather than fumbling around for notes.

Plan for about 30 seconds to one minute at most.

You might have more leeway if you are the host and the occasion is extra special, but people are gathered for the celebration (plus the food and drinks). Your guests want time to mingle and catch up, not to attend a Toastmasters meeting. Although your Table Topics® skills will be helpful in a toast of this length.

The easiest way to keep your toast short but meaningful is to draw inspiration from great one-liners from poetry, popular songs, or quotable movies. The quote can even be your entire toast:

Wedding Anniversary:

From the Song "45 Years" by Stan Rogers:

"After (twenty-three years) you'd think I could find
A way to let you know somehow
That I want to see your smiling face forty-five years from
now."

Note: Feel free to edit the "23 years portion" for your specific anniversary.

Thanksgiving:

"After a good dinner, one can forgive anybody, even one's own relations." —Oscar Wilde

The easiest way to keep your toast short but meaningful is to draw inspiration from great one-liners from poetry, popular songs, or quotable movies.

Hanukkah:

"Hanukkah reminds us where we came from. What a blessing it is to call you 'family.'"
—hallmark.com article

Christmas:

"Seeing is believing, but sometimes the most real things in the world are the things we can't see." —*The Polar Express* (movie)

New Year:

"For last year's words belong to last year's language, and next year's words await another voice. And to make an end is to make a beginning." —T.S. Eliot

Points of Inspiration

Unlike a graduation speech or wedding toast, which have somewhat defined structures, the special occasion toast is relatively free-flowing. Here are a few ideas to get started.

Reminisce upon the past year and the year to come—Pick a single memory that everyone in the room will know and retell that story. Then, talk about your hopes for the year to come. Remember to keep the toast focused on the positive or funny events that happened rather than negative ones.

Focus on the group, not you—When choosing a story to reminisce on, look for shared experiences—not something particular to you.

Remembrance of those who have passed—You may want to say a few words about those who have passed away. You can keep this general, such as, "Let us remember those who are here with us in spirit," or you can name specific friends and family. A word of caution here: If the memory of the loved one's death is too recent or tragic for your group, keep it general or don't mention it.

It's not a boardroom meeting—If it's a company gathering, you do not want to bore everyone with this year's numbers or next year's projections. Instead, focus on a challenging

project or moment when everyone came together and use that as your springboard.

Start a New Tradition

If you are out of ideas, consider drawing inspiration for your toast from other cultures. Let the audience know the significance behind the tradition, and you may be well on your way to starting a new one at your festive event.

Nominating: In some regions, it's proper to give a toast and then select the next person to give one. Warn your guests ahead of time and know who might be shy about leading off or closing. Allow guests to pass, of course. You can even give a prompt, "What are you thankful for this year?" or "What do you look forward to next year?"

Paper wishes in glasses: According to winecountry.com this tradition happens in some Eastern European countries: "On New Year's Eve, they're known to write down their wishes for the coming year on a piece of paper. At the stroke of midnight, they will burn the paper, drop the ashes in a glass of bubbly, and take a big gulp of their hopes and dreams that will supposedly come true in the next 365 days."

Light-hearted insults: It's common in Australia to use light-hearted insults during a toast. Of course, know your audience and stay cautious, depending on the event's etiquette. Still, you can get away with some light humor, as suggested by *Drink Me* magazine: "In the land down under, a plain 'toast' may seem like an insult, as Aussies have a fun-loving cultural tradition when it comes to drinking. Whether at a formal event or a dinner with friends, it's common to hear the toaster say, 'Cheers, big ears,' to which the toastee will respond with a gracious, 'Same goes, big nose.'"

The holiday toast does not have to be nerve-racking. It can be a fun moment to share a memory, look toward the future, and, above all, mark the occasion eloquently. The Gettysburg Address, delivered by Abraham Lincoln, clocks in at 272 words—you can leave a lasting impact on your audience with even fewer words. Find the shared memories and lean on those to create a memorable holiday toast!

Eddie Rice is the author of *Toast: Short Speeches, Big Impact*, and a former member of Eastside Toastmasters Club in Shaker Heights, Ohio. You can find out more about him at ricespeechwriting.com.

Do's and Don'ts of Toasting Etiquette

Here are some additional tips to ensure that the toasts run smoothly and your guests enjoy the time they have with each other:

- ♦ In many cultures, it is bad etiquette to toast with an empty glass. Ensure that all guests have a drink and that you have non-alcoholic options.
- ♦ If you are the host, please welcome your guests and acknowledge anyone who put in extra effort to help with the celebration.
- ♦ Have a clear end to the toasting portion if more than one person is speaking. If you lead off, consider closing as well to conclude the toasts for the evening.
- ♦ The toast is not your opportunity to bring up past grudges, even benign ones. Focus on your guests having a great time rather than settling scores.
- ♦ Above all, shine the spotlight on the purpose of the occasion and the shared stories that bring your guests together.

—Eddie Rice

5 Tips to Land a Job or Internship

New to the workforce? Learn what interviewers are looking for.

By Eva Finn

Before you read this article, take a deep breath. That's it. Inhale. Exhale.

Just the word "interview," no doubt, conjures up feelings of anxiety, nervousness, and possibly even dread—especially if you're still in college, trying to get a highly coveted internship, or you've just graduated and you're trying to land your first job. But it doesn't have to be that way.

The five tips in this article will help you overcome some common interview missteps and, perhaps, even get you excited about your job search and who you will meet along the way.

TIP 1 Use Your Nerves to Your Advantage

If you're young and just starting your job search and nervous about the interview, you're not alone. According to a Columbia State Community College study, public speaking anxiety is very common, not just among college students but the rest of the population as well. An easy way to calm your nerves before an interview is to take a few deep breaths. This helps slow down your sympathetic nervous system, responsible for your flight or fight response, which increases stress and anxiety.

Most important, remember that during the interview, pausing is better than using a crutch word such as "uh" or "um" to fill in the time while you're thinking of a response. Kathy Thibault, associate artistic professor of public relations, advertising, and entertainment marketing at Chapman University in Southern California, advises her students: "When you're put on the spot, if you're not sure and truly stumped, it's okay to take a minute to think about it. Or it's okay to say: 'That's a great question, let me think about it and then circle back to that question.'"

She adds, "A lot of times we look at interviews as a place where we're supposed to know all the answers. Truth is, there's a myriad of answers. Answer in a way that shows your thought process and not just your perfect rehearsed answer. It's also important to practice, but don't sound rehearsed."

As a professor myself, the best advice I give my students before they make a presentation in class is to remember that everyone is rooting for you. The same

applies to your interviewer. They come into the interview just as hopeful as you do that you will be the right fit. Having that mindset going in can give you an added boost of confidence.

TIP 2 Strike a Power Pose

In one of the most-watched TED Talks, with over 69 million views and counting, Amy Cuddy's *Your Body Language May Shape Who You Are* describes "[power posing](#)." This is a technique where you stand in a posture of confidence, even when you're not feeling confident.

Other examples of power poses include "The Salutation," where you stretch your arms out and face the sun, "The Loomer," where you lean slightly forward, often onto a desk or a chair back, or "The Vanna White," where you gesture with open arms. One of the easiest power poses is simply to smile. When you smile, your body signals to your brain that you are feeling happy, which can make you feel more relaxed and confident. Even better if you can "smize," meaning you smile with your eyes throughout the interview. This can help you maintain your energy.

TIP 3 Know the Answer to "Tell Me About Yourself"

Perhaps the most dreaded question of any interview is, "Tell me about yourself..." Typically, this will be the first question you're asked. Why? Because the interviewer wants to get to know your personality and see if you'll be a good fit for their company and culture.

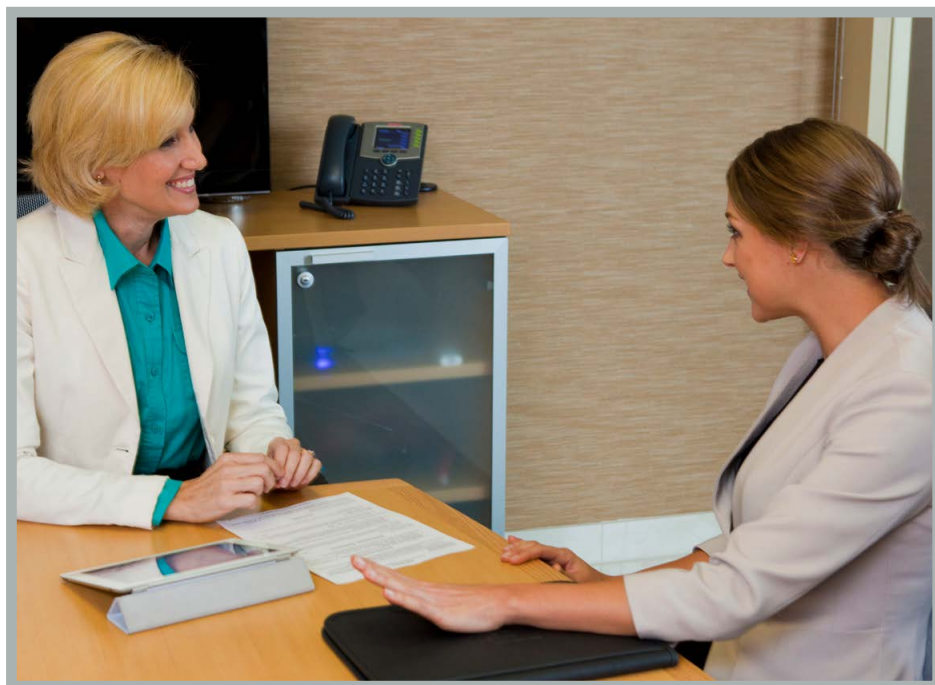
Margaret Walker Scavo, president of MWS Executive Coaching, who has helped place hundreds of job seekers, including college grads, wants to hear stories about who they are.

"I don't want bullet points of I can do this, I can do that. I want to know about their story. If their story sells me, I can teach them the other things," she says. "I want to hear the good, the bad, and the ugly. If you've had a rough go and you are willing to share your vulnerability, that tells me about who you are and how you got here. It's not necessary for you to be all buttoned up."

TIP 4 Learn How to Think on Your Feet

As many Toastmasters already know, impromptu speaking is when someone gives a speech about a topic without preparation. In Toastmasters clubs, this part of the meeting is known as Table Topics®. Developing your impromptu speaking skills will help you gain more confidence at networking events, handle curveball questions in interviews, make new friends, and even land first dates!

In one of my recent “Pitching and Presenting” workshops at Chapman’s Dodge College of Film and Media Arts, students were asked to present a two-minute impromptu speech about a movie they had recently seen of the exercise. Jadon Sand, a freshman in screenwriting, said, “Not only did I learn some new techniques and get a little practice, but I feel more prepared to talk about topics I am unprepared to talk about!” One of the best ways for young people or seasoned professionals to get some practice is to join a Toastmasters club on your college campus or to find a club that’s near you.



When you smile, your body signals to your brain that you are feeling happy, which can make you feel more relaxed and confident.

TIP 5 Develop Your Soft Skills Through Passion

Soft skills in the workplace can be difficult to master, especially if you haven’t had much practice due to the social distancing during the pandemic the last few years. According to an article from *Indeed*, these skills include self-awareness, communication, emotional intelligence, and empathy. So, is there a crash course to get you up to speed? The short answer: Yes. And no. But there are a few ways to help you develop them, keeping in mind that they are even more important to interviewers than your actual experience.

First, make sure that you’ve done your research and that the company who has selected you for an internship or an interview aligns with your passions. Chris Deninno, creative

director at Innocean USA, a global marketing communications company, says, “It starts with having this passion or this drive to do something that is going to be rewarding for you personally and not chasing for financial reward. Liking something a lot makes soft skills easier to master.” Walker Scavo agrees, stating, “I can teach everything. But I can’t teach soft skills.”

Perhaps the group of people hit hardest during the pandemic are soon-to-be college grads and recent college grads who, according to a *Yahoo Finance* article, are lacking in soft skills after the lockdown and need to be trained in proper workplace etiquette. Deninno observes, “Passionate optimism seems to be lacking these days. A lot of people are hesitant to speak up or stand out and be engaged. It’s not just about the effort you put into it, it’s the desire to do it.”

Deninno believes that the key to mastering soft skills starts with the kind of student you are. He advises: “Be involved and eager and engaged while you’re in class. Be the one who asks questions. Talk to the professors after class. Those are the ones who succeed. You only have one shot at graduating. Make it the best.”

And once you’ve aced the interview and landed the internship or job, Walker Scavo says, “Don’t just stay in your cubicle and not venture out. Show that you’re playful and interested and want to grow with the organization.”

Eva Finn is an assistant artistic professor at Chapman University’s Dodge College of Film and Media Arts. She is also a freelance copywriter and fiction writer. To learn more, visit evafinn.com.

Making the Most of Your *Holiday Break*

Recharge—
with intention—
on your vacation.

By Megan Preston Meyer

Lots of people around the world look forward to the end of the year as a time to recharge. Whatever holiday you celebrate (if any), the holiday season is a respite from the hustle and bustle of the workday, a blissful expanse of wide-open days in which you can do as much or as little as you please.

Some people will use the holidays to hibernate. They'll settle down on the sofa for a long winter's nap, visions of sugarplums and TV shows dancing in their heads. Some people will be hyperactive, hoping to use every hour off work to whittle down their to-do lists.

Wherever you expect to fall along the spectrum, you'll want to make the most of your vacation, so you don't go back to work feeling like the holidays just passed you by. Here are some tips to balance productivity and relaxation during your time off—and to do so with intention.

It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Goal Setting

As with most things, moderation is key. If you spend your entire vacation in either hibernation or hyperactivity, you're apt to come out on the other side feeling no better than before. In a [Harvard Business Review](#) article, organizational scholars Laura M. Giurge and Vanessa Bohns say that active relaxation is the best way to recharge. "It may be surprising to learn, but



passive 'rest and relaxation' isn't as effective for recovering from the daily grind as using breaks to accomplish your goals."

In fact, as Giurge and Bohns found, employees who set goals over their holidays reported being happier than those who didn't. For the more driven among us (i.e., the type of people who read articles in a magazine devoted to improving communication and leadership skills), this comes as



no surprise. However, as Giurge and Bohns are quick to point out, the goals that led to higher reported happiness were based on *personal* objectives, not professional ones; thus, the holidays are time to spend on things that you find personally meaningful, not merely extra capacity so you can finally empty your email inbox.

To maximize your holiday happiness, then, it helps to have goals—intentions that you’re actively working toward. “Being intentional ... increases the chances that you’re going to spend the time in a way that feels satisfying to you,” says Laura Vanderkam, author of *Tranquility by Tuesday: 9 Ways to Calm the Chaos and Make Time for What Matters*.

But which personal goals should you aim for? How many should you try to accomplish? And how can you ensure that you actually make progress on the goals you set out to achieve?

Make Your List, Check It Twice

“I always make a Holiday Fun List,” says Vanderkam. “Those are the things that I want to do to make the holidays feel festive for me.” A bit of time spent brainstorming before your break can head off the dreaded *What am I going to do today?* paralysis. “Having a sense of what I would like to do increases the chances that I do many of those things.”

Take a few moments now to create your own list. The items on it can—and should—range from large goals and things you’d like to

To maximize your holiday happiness, it helps to have goals—intentions that you’re actively working toward.

accomplish to small, festive, celebratory moments you’d like to experience. Whether it’s practicing your public speaking or going Christmas caroling, whether it’s decluttering the garage or decorating cookies, write down some things that would make your break rewarding.

This brainstorming has another benefit, as well: The further ahead you plan out your activities, the more time you can spend looking forward to them. “Every year, I like to go see a performance of *The Nutcracker*,” Vanderkam says. Once the tickets are booked, the anticipation begins—and “anticipation is a big chunk of the fun of anything.”

Jingle Bells, Bingo Bells

Making your list is important, but don’t put pressure on yourself to accomplish everything on it. Vacations are a time for flexibility—and for fun. Instead of working your way rigidly down the list, Denise Marek, Accredited Speaker and author of *CALM for Moms: Worry Less in Four Simple Steps*, suggests that you take the items on it and create a bingo card—“and, of course, in the center space you want to have the free spot.” As you go through your holidays, check off the things that you accomplish. “Your goal [is] to hit a bingo at the end of the week,” says Marek. “See which direction you go. It can either be four-corners, a cross, that sort of thing.” The key is to remember that you’re trying for a bingo, not a blackout. By giving yourself permission to not check off every single box, you introduce the flexibility to relax while still enjoying the pride of accomplishment.



Have a Holly, Jolly Plan

For the larger goals that you want to tackle, it pays to plan ahead. “Being respectful of our leisure time means treating it with the same level of

seriousness that we would treat our work time,” says Vanderkam. While you don’t have to plot out each day in 15-minute segments, she suggests spending some time thinking about exactly what you want to accomplish and when you’ll work on it. “You want to have very set ambitions that are doable,” she says.

Take your grandiose, abstract goal and break it into concrete elements—and then schedule those elements. If your goal is to clean out the garage, for example, identify tasks and “devote discrete chunks of time to them.”

For instance, tell yourself, *I’m going to empty these two shelves on Tuesday, and on Thursday, I’m going to do this other shelf. On Friday, I’m going to sweep it, and Saturday, I’ll take a box to the donation center*, suggests Vanderkam. In setting yourself discrete, specific goals and then checking them off, “you feel a lot more accomplished ... versus nebulous goals that never feel like they’re done.”

Your vacation objective may not be to clean out the garage, of course, but Marek highly recommends adding a decluttering goal to your list. “There’s this great sense of accomplishment that comes when we’ve decluttered our space, because when our environment is a mess, our brain also feels cluttered.” Take the opportunity to identify at least one thing you no longer need, but that someone else might benefit from. “Drop it off at a local charity shop. Then it goes to good use, and that makes you feel good.” Decluttering your home and spreading holiday cheer at the same time—it’s a winter win-win.

These Are a Few of My Favorite Things

No matter how busy your vacation shapes up to be, “there’s always downtime,” says Vanderkam. “The question is what you do in that downtime.” She recommends using your leisure time during the break to do things you wouldn’t do on a normal weekend or evening. “There are things you can only do during the holidays, so when in doubt, choose something like that.”

Here’s where the smaller items on your Holiday Fun List come into play. Start that book you’ve been meaning to read instead of scrolling



through social media; watch a wintery holiday movie instead of the next episode of the show you’re binge-watching. “Having some slightly upgraded concepts of what you will do with your downtime can vastly increase the chance of having a really fun vacation.”

It’s the Most Wonderful Time of the Year

To get the most out of your holiday break, plan ahead, balance productivity and flexibility, and be intentional about how you spend your time. Vanderkam explains, “Part of [making your] time feel full and rich is that you were doing something you intended to do.”

You may not be able to check off all the goals on your list, and that’s okay. “Keep your expectations about what you’re going to be able to accomplish during this time in check,” says Marek. Don’t feel guilty about what you don’t get done and remember that relaxation is a goal in itself. “Ask yourself, *I’m sitting on the couch, enjoying my life for a moment—isn’t that something that I also wanted to do [on my] time off?*” Give yourself permission to pursue personal goals, to make room for rest, and to enjoy the most wonderful time of the year.

Megan Preston Meyer is the author of the *Supply Jane* and *Fifo Adventures*, as well as *Firebrand: A Corporate Elements Mystery* and *'Twas the Month Before Christmas: A Supply Chain Carol*. She lives in Switzerland and is a regular contributor to the *Toastmaster* magazine. Learn more at supply-jane.com.

Running and Speechmaking Share Common Ground

When the road ahead seems daunting, take it one step at a time.

By Christine Clapp, DTM

In early 2023, I trained for and ran the Baltimore/Annapolis Half-Marathon (13.1 miles/21 km) in Maryland. As a longtime runner who missed races during the pandemic, it felt amazing to complete it with several running friends.

During training, I developed pain in my right hip; a health professional recommended a running analysis to see if there might be ways to prevent, rather than just treat, the pain. I did the running analysis. Turns out, I drop my left hip each time my left foot strikes the ground. And I strike the ground with my right heel. And I scissor my right foot over the midline of my body. And I ever-so-slightly drag my left foot with each stride. YIKES!

As the physical therapist pointed all this out in a slow-motion video on an iPad, I started to feel overwhelmed. How could I possibly fix all these issues? Would I be able to continue to run long distances without pain?

Perhaps as a Toastmaster, you can relate to this experience when you watch a video of yourself speaking. If we have certain problematic speaking habits, video exposes all of it. Or what about when a speech evaluator points out multiple communication behaviors that may not be serving the speaker well? Often the speaker can easily observe or acknowledge the issues but doesn't

know how to remedy them and starts to feel overwhelmed and discouraged.

The good news, in both running and public speaking, is that one behavior change can have a ripple of positive effects. In the case of my gait, the physical therapist suggested that I start by increasing my cadence, or the number of times my feet touch the ground per minute. When I did that

one thing—despite feeling really awkward in the beginning—other positive running patterns fell into line, such as maintaining proper hip and foot alignment.

If you feel overwhelmed by having to fix too many things in your speaking, keep that strategy in mind. Start by changing one behavior rather than focusing on five or six. As a presentation skills coach, I always encourage this approach with my clients. These are some

behavior changes that trigger other positive effects in public speaking.

- Pausing in silence to reduce “ums” and “ahs” can also reduce distracting physical movements, like swaying and fidgeting.
- Rehearsing a presentation six times can help increase eye contact and decrease nervousness.
- Incorporating a story or anecdote into your speech can make facial expressions and hand gestures more animated, authentic, and engaging.
- Breathing deeply between crisp sentences can improve posture, volume, and speaking rate.
- Using a standing desk rather than a chair for an online presentation can boost energy and expressiveness.
- Speaking loudly can eliminate a quiver in the voice and reduce upspeak—a rising intonation that unintentionally sounds like asking a question—at the end of declarative sentences.

Is it easy to change your speaking behaviors or your running gait? No. But it doesn't have to be overly complicated either. In fact, one of Toastmasters International founder Dr. Ralph C. Smedley's guiding principles was to “keep it simple,” exemplified by the organization's learn-by-doing format.

In the months since my running analysis, my gait improved, and I can now run without pain! So, if you want to feel less pain and reach your full potential as a public speaker, schedule your next Toastmasters speech or sign up to compete in a club speech contest. Then, refer to your Pathways project or ask a trusted club member to help you identify one specific speaking behavior to tweak.

As with running, making a small change in your speaking habits will likely feel awkward and uncomfortable at first. But stick with it, because it can also cause a ripple of positive effects that helps you to significantly and sustainably improve your performance in a short amount of time.



Christine Clapp (second from the left) and her running friends are pictured after completing a half-marathon race this year near Baltimore, Maryland.

Photo credit: Christopher P. Lu

Christine Clapp, DTM, is the founder and president of [Spoken with Authority](#), a presentation skills consultancy that elevates the presence and expands the influence of subject-matter experts, leaders, and emerging leaders. She is the co-author of three books, most recently *Presenting Now: A Guide to Public Speaking and Leadership Communication Online, in Person, and Beyond*.

Expect the Unexpected

Anything
can happen
when you're
presenting;
learn to focus
on solutions.

By Jim Cathcart

Sometimes no matter how much preparation you do for a speech—no matter how much you memorize, rehearse your material, exercise your voice, or map out how you'll move onstage—things go awry. Events happen that you would never have anticipated.

The following four situations are actual ones I've found myself in as a speaker.

1 An electrical surge caused the bulb to explode in my 35mm slide projector. (Yes, this was before PowerPoint.) Smoke arose from the machine and the screen went dark as the audience of 700 tax accountants started to laugh, thinking I had done this as a joke. Then the lights in the room began to blink as a fire warning went off, and I stood holding the microphone.

2 A large drunken man stumbled into the banquet room and yelled to all 400 attendees that he was ready for a fight. They sat in stunned silence, I paused mid-speech, and he surveyed the room for an opponent.

3 At a huge convention banquet, from the head table, I had eloquently begun my speech with great audience responses. Then about two minutes into my big story I suddenly realized that I hadn't told the listeners why this story would make sense to them. I forgot to deliver the set-up that would explain the rest of the story and make my big punchline meaningful.

4 My alarm went off just after 5 a.m., before my 8 a.m. keynote. I noticed a strange feeling in my throat and quickly realized that I had no voice. Although I felt fine otherwise, I couldn't speak above a whisper.

In none of the above instances was my speech preparation, content, or delivery style going to determine success or failure. Likewise, neither how well I knew my audience nor how confident I felt about my material was going to help me. I could be distinguished, certified, accredited, and glorified, and I still couldn't have anticipated any of those situations. But I desperately needed a solution.

Speaking is my profession; I have presented more than 3,500 speeches around the world. I'm a past president of the National Speakers Association, a Certified Speaking Professional, and a member of the Speaker Hall of Fame. And yet, even with all of that experience, sometimes my speeches don't go as anticipated/planned/practiced/hoped. But part of being a good speaker is knowing how to adeptly handle the unexpected.

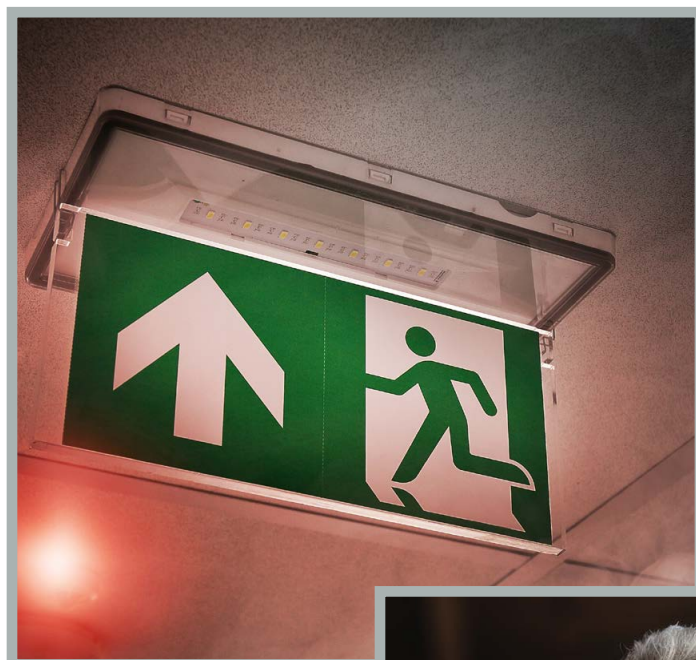
Take a moment and reread the four true scenarios at the opening of this article. Think about what solution or approach you would have tried and then read how I handled those situations.

The Fire Alarm: When I was facing the fire alarm, along with 700 alarmed audience members, I realized it was up to me to provide a solution. It would have been dangerous to take extra time to call on the meeting chair and turn over the mic. So, I said, "Ladies and gentlemen, we don't know if it's really a fire or not, but we can't take that chance. Would the 350 of you on this side of the room (indicated with my hands), please exit through those doors in the back of the room. Don't use the elevators to get up to the main floor, take the stairs and meet me outside. For those on this other side of the room, please follow me through this side door and up the stairs to the street. None of these other exit doors lead out, they simply take you to a hallway that loops around to the two exits I've shown. Please exit now!"

I waited to ensure they were following directions, then led my group to the side exit staircase. Notice, I knew where the exits went. That's because I had come to the meeting room the day before and checked them. Most speakers will check lighting, sound, and staging, but few also think to check the emergency exits.

If you have the microphone and their attention, then you're in charge of their safety. Know a solution and guide them with confidence.

Once we were outside, I assembled everyone on the steps of a nearby building and did an open-air, shortened version of my speech for anyone interested. Five hours later we were allowed back into the hotel. The meeting



chairperson was thrilled with what I had done and recommended me to many other clients.

The Lumberjack: Again, I held the microphone and realized somebody needed to take action, so I spoke loudly, “Would eight of the largest men in the room please rise? Seriously, stand up right now where you are. Okay, that’s four, five, thank you. Now we need three more. Yes, there you are! Thank you. Now, would you eight gentlemen please help this fellow find the exit?” As they turned toward him, he rapidly stumbled out of the room and the security guard took him away.

How did I know to do that? I didn’t. It came to me on the spot but thank heavens it did! The common denominator here is that, once again, I was the guy with the mic. So, I was the logical one to help find a solution. The worst thing I could have done was to tell him to leave or take him up on his challenge.

The Meaningless Punchline: Since I had not explained the setting and meaning of my story, I knew it was going to end badly. So, I stopped mid-sentence and leaned forward dramatically, I beckoned the audience “come here,” and with my crooked finger I encouraged

Don’t think about your dilemma, think about the solutions.

them all to lean in. Then I said, “Here’s a tip for those of you who give speeches. If you are ever giving a presentation and in the middle of it you realize that you didn’t

solution: My colleague Danny Cox is a Hall of Fame speaker who lives nearby. I have called him to come and stand by in case I can’t do my speech. He’s an author, a humorist, and a great guy. I will pay his fee if you’ll allow him to fill in for me.” Though reluctant, the meeting chair agreed. Danny arrived on time and happily sat in standby mode.



I had my introducer tell the audience about my voice problem and say, “Jim is willing to give it his best if you’re willing to lean in and listen a bit more.” They approved so I stepped onto the stage and squeaked “goo-ud mar-ning.” They gasped, and I smiled and whispered, “Okay, let’s get this over with up front. Would everyone please look at me in sympathy and say ‘awwwwww?’” They laughed, and I was able to do most of my talk. Then I told them of my Danny Cox strategy and introduced him to tell one of his signature stories. Not only did the audience love him, but the client hired him for their next convention.

Don’t think about your dilemma, think about the solutions. Tell the truth, know more than you need to know about the setting and the people. Ask for help from your audience when you need it.

Everyone in the audience is hoping you will be the best

speaker they’ve ever heard. Give them what they want. Be the kind of speaker they are hoping you will be.

explain why your story would make sense ... (I paused) ... admit it. You might as well tell the truth. Now, in the story I was telling ...” and I explained the missing set-up. It didn’t have the usual impact, but I at least saved it from a complete disaster.

Laryngitis: Once I was sure I had a voice problem, I called the meeting chair and asked for a recommendation while also offering a solution. I said, “I can still do the presentation, but my delivery will be weak, but here’s another

Jim Cathcart is the 2001 Golden Gavel recipient and served as the keynote speaker for both the 1995 and 2022 Toastmasters International Conventions. He is the author of 25 books including *What To Do When You’re The Speaker*. A free digital copy of this book is available to all Toastmasters through the link [Free.Cathcart.com](https://www.free.cathcart.com). The book is also available in print and e-book editions.



Kindred Spirits

How the Rotary/Toastmasters alliance fosters mutually meaningful experiences.

By Stephanie Darling

It could be said that the groundwork for the Rotary/Toastmasters alliance was laid in 1905, when two visionary leaders had a similar idea—to create organizations where individuals could share ideas, form lasting friendships, improve their skills, and act to serve their communities.

In 1905, Paul Harris founded Rotary International, a businessmen's group that ultimately expanded its mission to worldwide humanitarian service. That same year, Ralph Smedley convened the first unofficial Toastmasters meeting. In 1924, he started the organization that would become Toastmasters International.

In 2019, Toastmasters and Rotary formed an alliance to capitalize on this long history of shared strengths and often-parallel purposes. Clubs in both organizations have been connecting ever since, and are now stepping up efforts to educate and collaborate with each other.

Carrie Goldbeck, membership engagement supervisor and alliance liaison for Rotary International, describes the four-year strategic partnership as “an ongoing, mutually beneficial relationship that offers opportunities for personal and professional growth for members of both organizations, including through grassroots collaborations.”

Alliance collaborations have led to project-sharing, chartering clubs that blend members from both organizations, and co-sponsoring widespread education efforts for both Toastmasters and Rotary members on how the alliance can work. Clubs and members actively engaged in alliance activities enthusiastically endorse it. Here are just a few of their stories.

Close Connections

Kathi Zwicker, a Toastmaster and Rotarian, says the connections between members of the two organizations, be they business, personal, or intra-club, are invaluable.

When Zwicker learned about the partnership, she immediately saw Toastmasters and Rotary members as kindred spirits, with matching energies and interests. She is a member of Fredericton North Rotary in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada, and President of the online Women

Changemakers Toastmasters club, which has encouraged numerous Rotary-Toastmasters speaking activities.

Earlier this year, Changemakers and Fredericton North coordinated an alliance tour. Anastasia Persico, a member of the Rotary Network for Empowering Women (RNEW) Club, spoke at various Toastmasters, Rotary, and public events throughout Maritime Canada.

After the Rotary/Toastmasters alliance launched, Toastmasters created a modified educational curriculum for Rotary members,



Anastasia Persico (left), a member of the Rotary Network for Empowering Women Club, and Kathi Zwicker, a member of the Women Changemakers Toastmasters club, were part of an alliance speaking tour in Maritime Canada.



Anastasia Persico, a Rotary member, spoke at Toastmasters, Rotary, and public events in Maritime Canada. Here, she's shown at a Speakers Corner event.

available on their website. It's composed of leadership-development courses that reflect the content in projects from various paths in Toastmasters' Pathways program (though the courses are not as in-depth as the Pathways projects for Toastmasters).

Recently, Marina Kirsch, DTM, hosted an online webinar to explain the alliance, answer questions, and provide the perspectives of both Toastmasters and Rotary members. Zwicker, who also participated in the webinar, explained Pathways and how it specifically serves the needs and goals of both groups. Based on your path and elective selections, projects in Levels 1–3 will support alliance collaborations, with topics like mentoring basics, consensus-building, and how to use your communication style to work successfully with others.

Pathways projects provide the structure for both groups to take on what Zwicker calls "Big Hairy Audacious Goals." When a Rotary club takes on a large service project, members in a Toastmasters club can apply a Pathways project—like helping with public relations or developing a marketing plan. By pairing up in this way, members of both organizations are bringing their skills and interests together for a successful collaboration.

"Pathways gives us the system, direction, and resources to connect with Rotarians and collaborate on a big step-by-step project. Everyone wins," says Toastmaster Walter J. Smith, DTM, who served as the webinar panel moderator.



Toastmaster Papa Arkhurst (seated at the right end of the first row, in blue) and Rotary member Yvonne Kumoji-Darko (seated to his left) attend a joint induction ceremony for members of the Rotary Club of Accra-SpeakMasters and the New Age Toastmasters Club, both in Accra, Ghana. Arkhurst and Kumoji-Darko led the chartering of the two clubs.

Even unofficial connections between Rotary members and Toastmasters have value, Zwicker says. “We don’t necessarily have to be members of each other’s clubs. We can be friends and partners in a relationship based on sharing ideas of how to make the world better.”

Mutual Mindsets in Ghana

Toastmasters gave Papa Arkhurst, DTM, one of his earliest platforms to try to make the world a better place. He began searching for “something more in life” while pursuing his master’s degree. He wanted to become a motivational speaker and, in 2011, joined his first club, KH Toastmasters in Hyehwadong, Seoul, South Korea. “I loved it, I was obsessed with it,” he remembers.

At the time, Ghana had one club, a situation Arkhurst was determined to change. He eventually sponsored 19 clubs in his country, but he wanted to do more. When he learned about the Rotary/Toastmasters alliance, he quickly realized how it could unite the talents of both groups in humanitarian service and elevate Toastmasters’ visibility in Ghana.

At about the same time, Yvonne Kumoji-Darko, then 2020–2021 District Governor of Rotary 9102 (Benin, Ghana, Niger, and Togo), attended a Rotary leadership training event and was intrigued by the talk she heard about embracing change and new club models.

She went to a Toastmasters event in Accra, Ghana, to talk to Arkhurst about alliance opportunities, and Arkhurst was on board immediately.

Ultimately, Arkhurst and Kumoji-Darko [helped drive efforts](#) culminating in the chartering of two clubs. Rotary Club of


Accra-SpeakMasters counts Toastmasters among its members; New Age Toastmasters Club members include Rotarians and Rotaractors (a distinct membership for those 18 and older). The stage is set for ample collaborative opportunities for the clubs, Kumoji-Darko says.

Arkhurst acknowledges what he describes as “cultural” differences in the way Toastmasters and Rotary clubs operate. While the two share philosophical ideals, Rotary clubs, by their very nature, have their own format and purpose, just as Toastmasters clubs do.

“For example, Rotarians are used to fundraising to support their causes. Toastmasters don’t—can’t—do that,” he notes. “On the other hand, the Pathways program is self-directed. Clubs support and mentor personal development but no one is teaching in the traditional sense. Rotarians may struggle a bit with that transition.” He then adds that Toastmasters clubs, structured around the help of colleagues and mentors, are designed to bridge that transition.

However, Arkhurst also sees the differences between the two groups as an invaluable mini-experience in change management. The alliance allows Toastmasters and Rotary members to honor long-standing priorities, yet also look for beneficial adaptations.

“The world is changing. Younger people like to collaborate; they are attracted to dabbling in new ideas and mastering new skill sets,” he says. They care about world issues. In fact, recent studies have shown that upcoming generations are optimistic, and willing to speak out and act on humanitarian causes they believe in.



That could make synergistic Toastmasters-Rotary partnerships, with myriad global opportunities, attractive to young people for years to come, Arkhurst adds.

The “Lark Spark”

Mary Shackleton, a fourth-generation Rotarian, was in Hamburg, Germany, for Rotary’s 2019 annual international convention when she heard then-Toastmasters International President Lark Doley, DTM, speak about the new Rotary/Toastmasters alliance, and the galvanizing opportunities it posed for both organizations.

Shackleton, who had briefly been a member of the Toastmasters’ Cleveland Club in Ohio before moving for a job, was intrigued. “I call it my ‘Lark Spark,’” she laughs. “I had been in enough Rotary meetings to know that we could benefit from Toastmasters.”

In the 2020–2021 program year, Shackleton, then a Rotary District Governor, and her friend Patricia Kidwingira, DTM, Toastmasters’ District 46 Director at the time, had an ambitious idea. It was the middle of the pandemic; clubs in both organizations needed a big dose of positive purpose. The two women wondered—could they charter a new club with Toastmasters and Rotary members?

“Patricia and I literally dared one another to do it, then tapped our respective networks,” Shackleton says. The fledgling club was advised by senior Toastmasters, including past region and District leaders, and Rotary leaders. After months of joint preparation, Goodwill Toastmasters chartered in 2021 as a District 46 online club, with renewed Toastmaster Shackleton as its first Club President.

Past International President Ted Corcoran, DTM, attended Goodwill’s first official meeting and “even evaluated my Ice Breaker,” Shackleton notes. “With such lavish attention, failure was not an option!”

The club, composed of Toastmasters, Rotarians, and Rotaractors, has won numerous District awards and in 2022–2023 was recognized as a President’s Distinguished Club, reaching a “perfect 10” of award requirements. Shackleton believes that the inclusion of members from both organizations is a key to Goodwill’s success.

Shackleton is also an ambassador for the [Empowering Girls Initiative](#), a collaborative effort between Toastmasters and Rotary members to host communication workshops for young women, using Toastmasters’ Young Leadership Program (YLP) curriculum. The program offers a time-tested course and highlights yet another example of the value of shared Rotary-Toastmasters resources, Shackleton adds.

For more information on the alliance and each organization, visit the [Toastmasters](#) website and the [Rotary](#) website.

Stephanie Darling is a former senior editor of and frequent contributor to the *Toastmaster* magazine

The Alliance: What’s in It for Me?

The answer lies in the investment Toastmasters and Rotary members make in the spirit and actionable opportunities the alliance invites. Such as:

- ◆ Members of both organizations are likely to make new friends, master new skills, and discover the rewarding experience of supporting humanitarian causes and one’s community.
- ◆ The alliance may foster a real-life experience in change management. How will your club—whether a Toastmasters club, a Rotary club, or a blend of both—attract new members? Could Toastmasters-Rotary collaborations offer an appealing new way to position your club experience to changing demographic groups?
- ◆ Rotary’s service mission offers compelling perspectives for Toastmasters. If you’re a Toastmaster looking for speech topics, just sit in a Rotary meeting, one “Rota-Toast” advises.
- ◆ Toastmasters, particularly in Pathways Levels 1–3, can complete and get credit for speech and leadership projects while at the same time lending Rotary members an expertise they may not have. Why not pick a Pathways project that can help you and Rotary colleagues, experienced Toastmasters ask. Additionally, for Rotary and Toastmasters native speakers, Pathways is available in [multiple languages](#), and in special translations for select materials.

—Stephanie Darling



Best Odessa Speakers Club in Odessa, Ukraine

Ukrainian Members Stay Strong

In a war-torn country, members turn to Toastmasters for solace and strength.

By Ruth Nasrullah

Nearly two years ago, on February 24, 2022, Russia launched a military invasion of Ukraine, the first move in a war that has since taken thousands of lives and disrupted everyday existence for many.

The Arttalkers Toastmasters club based in Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital, posted a simple message to its members on the Telegram Messenger app that day:

Dear all, taking into account the situation, no meetings for now. Please stay safe and donate money to volunteers.

At that time, Calin Gilea, DTM, was the District 110 Director. A member of the Timisoara English Speakers in western Romania, he was in the midst of visiting clubs in his District and had been pricing out flights to visit clubs in Ukraine just before the war began.

Gilea knew the importance of Toastmasters in people's lives and felt that maintaining continuity would be important. "I knew that I had to act," he says. He proposed using funds from a District Reserve account to cover dues for members of the nine Ukrainian clubs. However, it was not an option, as organizational regulations restrict use of operational funds for paying member dues. Ultimately, the Toastmasters International Board of Directors approved use of funds from the Ralph C. Smedley Memorial Fund® to renew the dues of approximately 170 Toastmasters in Ukraine.

In the meantime, offers of help from Toastmasters and others came in, including opportunities to shelter in western Ukraine or neighboring countries. Information was shared about European countries whose governments were offering asylum to Ukrainians.

On February 27, only a few days after the first attack, Gilea sent a message via Facebook to the members of District 110. He reported that he had been in contact

with Toastmasters leadership in Ukraine and that a plan to directly assist members was in process and thanked everyone involved for their efforts.

Normalcy in the Midst of Chaos

Gilea was correct in believing that Toastmasters would be an important constant in many people's lives.

Tetiana Lytvyniuk, Vice President Education of Chamber Toastmasters Club, found Toastmasters to be a comfort once the war began. She was living in Dnipro, which has been a regular target of Russian shelling. In the first months of the war, 3 a.m. air raid sirens and hiding in bomb shelters became routine. Life began to feel intolerable. Then she shifted her mindset.

"One day I decided that either I return to normal life to the extent possible or I will go mad," explains Lytvyniuk. "So I tried to switch off from what was happening around me."

She watched less news and strove to focus on the things that were normal pre-war, like going to the hairdresser or meeting with friends at a café. Then an apartment building where she had lived shortly before the war was struck by Russian missiles.

"I knew people from that house. I knew people who lost their relatives. I knew people who were injured in that missile strike," she says. "For me, that was kind of a flashback to what was at the beginning of the war; everything returned, all those emotions."

It took her a while to return to the "new normal" after that, but she did. And then she gave a prepared speech in a Toastmasters meeting describing the emotional turns she had gone through.

Lytvyniuk says, "To me, [attending meetings] was a great help to live through all those conditions, because of

course during meetings we discussed what we are living in, and when you understand that, you know that I'm not alone. When the other people expressed the same things that they are worried about, the same things that hurt them, it really becomes easier just to talk, just to discuss everything you have in your mind."

For Lesia Yurchyshyn, Vice President Public Relations of Dnipro Hills Club in Kyiv, meetings offered a similar sense of normalcy. As she and fellow Toastmasters began to emerge from the initial shock and explored the thought of meeting again, it became clear that it would be beneficial.

"We understood that maybe when we continue to gather together, at least online, it's something like the old routine," she explains. "It motivated us to start to organize meetings online."

Because meetings were virtual, the club attracted members from countries outside Ukraine, many of whom wanted to attend and offer their support. It helped, according to Yurchyshyn.

"It was this feeling that yes, you have all these problems, but you still have strong men and women among you, and you can continue," she says.

Club Meetings in the New Normal

Yuriy Stanchak, a past member of the Best Odessa Speakers Club in Odessa, Ukraine, has been living in St. Albans, England, since July 2022. In Odessa, he worked as a tour guide—an industry that all but disappeared after the war began.

Stanchak notes that in the club meetings he has attended, participants tend not to talk about the war.

"When you start talking about the war it just switches to politics," explains Stanchak. "We feel that speaking about these topics won't bring any positive atmosphere to the club; it will bring only tensions."

He notes that some aspects of the war are difficult to talk about. Several club members were drafted into the Ukrainian armed forces, club meetings were often interrupted by air raid sirens, and overall, Odessa has sustained significant damage and loss of life.

"We can discuss some social problems, but talking about the war itself is quite painful," he says.

Lubov Tisovskaya, President of Chamber Toastmasters Club, is a Kyiv native who has



Calin Gilea, DTM, holds a laptop with online attendees to Timisoara English Speakers club meeting in Romania. Club members and Gilea, former District 110 Director, were early supporters of Ukrainian members.

been living in Norway since early 2023. She and her family moved after an intolerable winter without heat or electricity. Fortunately, the club decided to have regular online meetings so that she and others outside the country can continue to participate.

"Because most of our members live in different parts of Ukraine or even moved from Ukraine, we have continued online. We also have a lot of members who join us from other countries," she says. "[Meetings] release our negative emotions because in most cases we speak about our stories about what happened with us, how the war involves us."

The club, she adds, is planning to organize regular hybrid meetings so people in Kyiv can join in person.

The Psychological Impact of War

Living through the unpredictability and violence of war can prompt negative psychological outcomes such as post-traumatic stress disorder. Interestingly, some victims of war have found that public speaking can help them heal psychologically.

Saeed Fassaie is from Iran, and now lives in Sydney, where he serves as President of Lane Cove Toastmasters Club. In the September 2016 issue of the *Toastmaster*, he described

the post-traumatic symptoms he experienced as a result of the Iraq-Iran war in the 1980s, and how public speaking helped him heal. He expanded on this recently, noting that Toastmasters meetings offer an opportunity to step away from everyday life's demands.

"War can inflict brutal and deeply traumatic experiences upon individuals," he now says. "It is crucial to avoid bottling up those emotions; instead, open up and engage in dialogue, preferably with a qualified psychologist. Connecting with others and sharing your burdens can be instrumental in averting complex post-traumatic disorders. A venue like a Toastmasters meeting offers a valuable platform for recounting your experiences."

For those most impacted by the war in Ukraine, life continues to be uncertain and frightening. Nevertheless, Toastmasters in Ukraine still meet regularly, at times in joint meetings of two or three clubs. The camaraderie and support that Toastmasters worldwide enjoy continue to be a source of strength.

Ruth Nasrullah is a freelance journalist based in Houston. She joined Toastmasters in 2006 and since then has belonged to several clubs in the greater Houston area. Visit ruthnasrullah.com to learn more about her and her writing.

See Ya

It's been crazy, it's been fun, it's been an absolute pleasure.

By John Cadley

It seems only fitting that my column for the last month of the year will be ... my last column.

That's right, folks. This is it—the Grand Finale, the Long Goodbye, the Last Hurrah. My editors tell me I've been occupying this space for 15 years, which proves how fast time flies. To me it seems like only 14. And what wonderful editors they have been, letting me write in my own style, never making me “do it their way,” patiently extending my deadlines, and only asking for revisions when it was absolutely necessary to prevent a multimillion-dollar lawsuit from putting them out of business.

They even gave me a raise beyond my already generous compensation. When I asked why, they said, “You look like you need it.” No argument there.

I have to give special mention to the fact-checkers. Take it from me—if you read it in this column, you can take it to the bank. I thought as a humorist I could just make stuff up. Who cares if it's accurate as long as it's funny? *They* care. I say Isaac Newton was born on January 3, 1643, and they say no, he was actually born three minutes after midnight, making the correct date January 4.

I quote Charles de Gaulle as saying, “How can anyone govern a nation which has 246 different kinds of cheese?” ... and they say his exact words were “that has,” not “which has.” I can't even get smart and ask them to name the 246 French cheeses, because they would. So my hat goes off to the fact-checkers for making me appear to be what I have never been—knowledgeable.

And to my readers—many, *many* thanks for the emails letting me know something I wrote made you smile. You even said there was often real truth in my humor, which I take as the highest possible compliment. It's nice to know that every once in a while I stumbled blindly into accuracy.



To my readers—many, *many* thanks for the emails letting me know something I wrote made you smile.

Of course, not everyone was amused and they, too, let me know it. It would be easy for me to retort that some people just have no sense of humor, but that would be unkind and perhaps not even true. If someone doesn't laugh at my jokes it's because I have failed *them*. I'm sure they do have a sense of humor and I missed it, and for that I apologize. I will say that calling me “about as funny as a case of

shingles” might have been a tad harsh—but funny. If I'm mad at anything, it's that—a reader being funnier than me.

Wanting to write the best farewell column I could, I consulted those of distinguished writers who have done the same—Nicholas Kristof of *The New York Times*, the late Michael Gerson of *The Washington Post*—but they were serious people writing about serious things. I can be serious, too, but you wouldn't want to read it, not unless you think Dostoyevsky's *House of the Dead* is a laugh riot. Hence, I've chosen humor, as much for myself as for you, to lift my own spirits in the process of, hopefully, lifting yours. And, as the American playwright Neil Simon said when asked what it was like to write comedy, “I get to laugh first.”

I've learned some things along the way. For one, writing 750 words is a lot harder than writing 7,500 words. With the latter, all you have to do is type; with the former, you have to think. I don't think well, as attested to by the many people who have said to me, “What were you thinking?!” I've learned that you can be funny when you don't feel funny. As I've mentioned, my editors are kind and patient people, but I knew if I missed a deadline they would kill me—with kindness: “We're not angry, John, we're just ... disappointed.” I'll take a firing squad over that any day. And I've learned that if a magazine like the *Toastmaster* is willing to put up with me for 15 years, maybe I'm not completely nuts after all. I owe them more than I can say. (That was serious.)

So to my editors and to you, my readers, I say, along with James Joyce, *muchibus thankibus* for the memories and God bless you one and all. (Joyce did say that, fact-checkers. Look it up.)

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



toastmasters.org