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Be the Composer of Your Life

As I visit Districts around the world, whether online or in person, I am frequently asked how I balance my life.

How do I balance the demands of being International President with being a father and a grandfather, as well as running my business?

For years I struggled to achieve balance in my life, because I realized that I was always out of balance. Some part of my life, whether it was family, work, or another organization, was always taking priority, and I felt guilty. I felt inadequate.

Eventually, I came to embrace a different concept, one I'd like you to consider: the concept of harmony.

Now, why did I choose harmony? One reason is I am a musician, as you may remember from my September [profile](#). Another reason for choosing this concept is because harmony is motion. Music is motion. Music is actually the vibration in the air that lands on our ears, and our brains translate that into something that we call music.

Life is motion. Life is not static; it is constantly changing. We are growing. We are resting. We are continuing to evolve.

So that concept and that parallel really worked for me.

But the most important reason I chose harmony is because of the role of the composer. We are the composers of our own life. We make the choices about which parts of our life will take priority, just like a composer makes a choice about which part of the orchestra will play the melody at any given time.

Life is motion. Life is not static; it is constantly changing.

That's the concept that works for me. The concept that says it's okay that this year being International President is taking priority, and at times that means I need to step away from work, and other times I need to step away from family.

The people in my life know that, and they support me. They understand that this is the current movement in my life. When my time on the Board of Directors is through, Toastmasters will take a much lower priority in my life.

What about you? Are you struggling with balancing your life? Are you struggling with feelings of guilt because something is taking priority, and you always think something else also needs attention?

I'd encourage you to consider the concept of harmony—of integrating your work, your life, your other actions into a whole symphony that demonstrates who you are.

Get the buy-in of those around you and become the composer of your own symphony.

Matt Kinsey, DTM
International President

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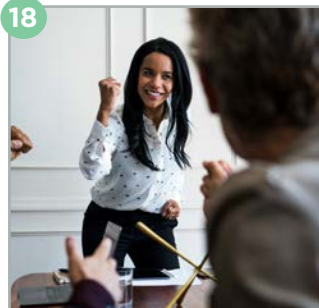
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News



Watch Toastmasters' Speech Tip Videos

Are you looking for some help as you prepare your next presentation? Or maybe you need some advice on how to pick a speech topic or give a proper toast. Learn to speak with confidence by watching videos on these topics and more on Toastmasters International's [YouTube channel](#). You might even recognize a familiar face—2018 World Champion of Public Speaking Ramona J. Smith is the featured speaker in this series.

Widget Is a Winner

The self-help widget on the Toastmasters International website has been a big success in helping members. The digital device provides information for visitors to the website who have questions. Launched in March 2021, it has been asked 250,612 unique questions and successfully answered 206,513 of them (82%), according to January 2023 statistics from the Toastmasters Club Quality and Member Support Department. In addition, the information in its knowledge base has increased from 97 answers to 395 answers since its launch. This is one wise widget.

When you go to the Toastmasters website, the popular resource will display as a pop-up on the bottom right-hand corner of your screen. Simply type your question in the search bar to access helpful answers within our knowledge base (English text only).

If you still can't find what you need, you can reach out to a representative by email at

membership@toastmasters.org or by calling +1 720-439-5050 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Mountain Time, Monday through Friday.

Resources

Webinars On Demand

Are you looking for extra inspiration? Toastmasters has a series of webinars that are here to help you! Sit back, relax, and take in expert tips on small talk, get advice on achieving club excellence, explore humor with a comedic panel, and more. Visit the [Webinars On Demand](#) webpage and start watching today!



Instant Speech Analysis Is Here!

Thanks to the new Toastmasters Yoodli partnership, members can now receive immediate analytical speech feedback by logging into My Home on the Toastmasters website and selecting the Yoodli card. You'll be able to record a speech, and Yoodli's artificial intelligence (AI) will then break down insights, such as how many filler words were used, the pace, eye contact, if any non-inclusive language was used, and more. Encourage members to check it out today!

Word Power

Learning and using the [Word of the Day](#) at your club meetings is a great way to expand your vocabulary. Selecting a word is the job of the meeting grammarian, and it's helpful to find terms that are challenging yet not obscure. Visit dictionary websites, such as Merriam-Webster.com or Dictionary.com, for good resources. Clubs can also stretch members' language skills by introducing a [Word of the Week](#).

Reminders

Confirm Your Club Information

Remember to check Club Central and the Club Demographics section to confirm your Club's Preferred Language. You can also use the Club Contact and Meeting Information to confirm the club's mailing address, the meeting location, and other club specifics.

Send Us Your Photos!

If a picture is worth a thousand words, what would your photo say? The *Toastmaster* is always looking for fun, creative, and collaborative club photos. Whether you're dressed up for a themed meeting, taking a team hike, or know some special members you want to shine—we'd like to see them! Make sure to review the [photo guidelines](#) and then send your best shot to photos@toastmasters.org.

CLUB PROFILE

Experiencing the Toastmasters Journey Together

For 33 years, Taipan Club of Cebu City, Philippines, has been a place for members to fall in love with public speaking—and each other. Since the club began, 14 couples have met and married. One couple even had their proposal during a club meeting, while another had theirs during a club Executive Committee transition ceremony! The *Toastmaster* is happy to share all 14 couples' wedding photos in honor of Valentine's Day.



Traveling Toastmaster



SABEENA M. K., DTM, of Doha, Qatar, poses during the Australia versus Denmark match of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Al Wakrah, Qatar.



SAJEEV KRISHNAN of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, attends a match during the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Al Rayyan, Qatar.

Looking at Language

Top Words of 2022

Gaslighting,” “permacrisis,” and “goblin mode” were among the most prominent words of 2022, according to dictionary publishers. Merriam-Webster tapped “[gaslighting](#)” as its word of the year, noting that searches for the term on its [website](#) jumped by a whopping 1,740% over the year before. It defines the word as “the act or practice of grossly misleading someone especially for one’s own advantage”—and said it is particularly apt in this age of misinformation, when conspiracy theories and Twitter trolls abound.

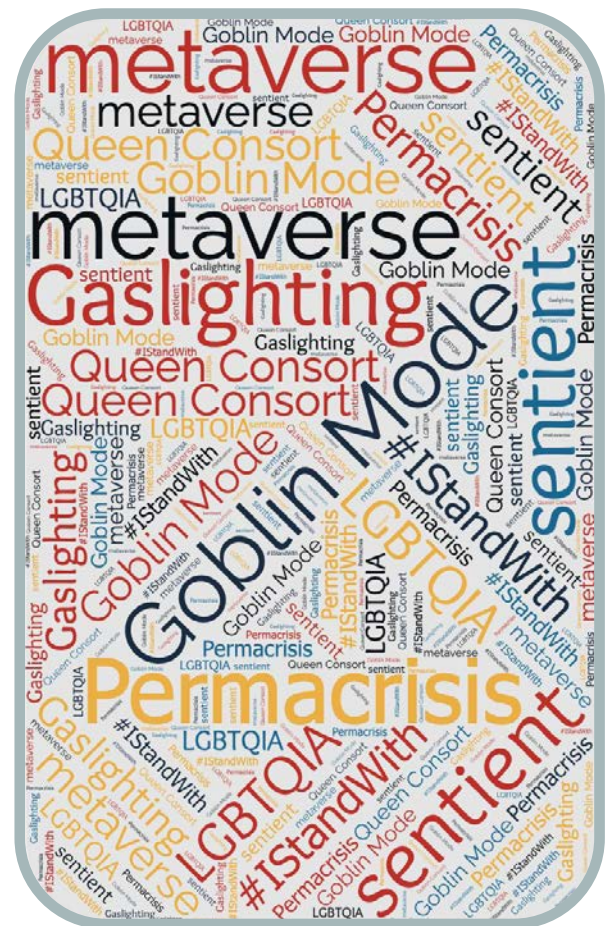
The United Kingdom-based Collins Dictionary chose “[permacrisis](#)” as its top term, the word reflecting a kind of permanent state of crisis. The dictionary company said the word highlights ongoing crises that the U.K. and the world are facing, including the pandemic, climate change, war, political instability, and inflation.

Oxford Languages, creator of the Oxford English Dictionary, did something different. For the first time in its history, it asked the public to choose the [word of the year](#), saying

that people around the world are the “true arbiters of language.” Three terms were picked by Oxford for voters to choose from: “metaverse,” “#IStandWith,” and “goblin mode.” “Metaverse” refers to an immersive virtual environment, “#IStandWith” alludes to showing support on social media for a cause or a person, and “goblin mode” means rejecting societal expectations and instead doing whatever you want. The winner? Goblin mode.

Merriam-Webster’s team of lexicographers listed other terms that stood out in 2022 based on how often they were looked up. They included “omicron,” “LGBTQIA,” “sentient,” and “Queen Consort.”

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



A Corporate Club Reimagined

Our company has always recognized Toastmasters as a great, cost-effective professional development program for our employees.

By Roy Slack

I am a founding member of Cementation Toastmasters, a corporate club based in North Bay, Ontario, Canada. We chartered 14 years ago, and over the years I have seen the ups and downs of our club often mirror the economy and our work. Most recently, the pandemic and the corresponding economic impact posed many challenges but also led to some opportunities to strengthen and repurpose our club.

In 2003, Tom Peters wrote *Re-Imagine!*, a book about change that's as relevant today as it was when it first came out. Peters' premise is to look at business differently, to look at everything differently. The book was some of the inspiration for reimagining our corporate club, but the tipping point was COVID-19.

The pandemic was initially a major club challenge. A reduced workforce meant fewer members, and although we had been utilizing some virtual attendance prior to the pandemic, the impact of no in-person meetings led us to question whether the club would survive.

Our company had challenges too. Cementation is a mining contractor with projects across the Americas. The company has won numerous awards as an employer of choice and has always been socially active with employees. Parties, family events, ice fishing, curling, baseball, bowling—you name it, we probably offered it for employees. COVID-19 put a stop to all that.

Our executive team talked about employee engagement, diversity, and inclusion, but still our staff numbers shrank. We wanted to maintain our status as a desirable employer. At the same time, Cementation had made acquisitions in recent years and we found that integrating the new companies into the existing group was a challenge.

Our company has always recognized Toastmasters as a great professional development program—a very cost-effective means of building employee confidence and communication skills. The company pays Toastmasters fees and provides club meeting space. The introduction of Pathways and the emphasis on leadership



Roy Slack

development make it even more attractive from a corporate perspective. We also recognize another key benefit—internal networking opportunities. Through the club, employees from other departments and companies, supervisors and their direct reports, executives, and employees from all parts of the organization, are able to interact on a personal level.

As a result of shrinking numbers, company executives and club officers began to consider

members in North Bay and Sudbury (another city in Ontario). Employees from other divisions who were interested in knowing more about the company and meeting people joined our club. We started to break down barriers and increase understanding between groups.

We held an open house and staged a virtual panel session on diversity and inclusion, a key action item within the company. The facilitator and panel members were all Toastmasters. The event attracted 150 attendees and got great reviews. The main purpose was not recruitment but to facilitate a dialogue on this important subject. The club was helping to increase employee engagement. Now this Toastmasters-staged event has become a regular part of the company's diversity and inclusion program, with two more sessions completed to date and future sessions being planned.

Our club continues to look for ways to support employees and the company, both as a platform for professional development, as well as a way to break down silos and build employee engagement through internal networking, establishing new connections,

Company executives and club officers began to ask—what if our club could facilitate internal networking between the various companies within our corporate group?

the possibility of Toastmasters providing more than professional development. What if the club could facilitate internal networking between the various companies in the corporate group? What if the club could take on challenging topics like diversity and inclusion? What if the club could improve not just leadership skills but employee engagement?

The pandemic gave us the tools and comfort level to take the club virtual. We invited the office staff in our locations around the world—Vancouver, San Diego, Salt Lake City, and Santiago—to join the original club

and championing empathy and understanding among the staff.

In 2021–2022, our club, reimagined and reinvigorated, earned President's Distinguished Club status. Imagine that.

Roy Slack is a professional engineer, founder, and board member of Cementation Americas, an international mining contractor with operations throughout North and South America. He is Vice President Membership for Cementation Toastmasters in North Bay, Ontario, Canada, and for Seasoned Speakers Advanced Toastmasters in Sudbury, Ontario.

The Downsides of Reading Your Speech

Don't bore your audience or miss out on important cues.

By Bill Brown, DTM

I have noticed a recent trend of speakers, particularly Toastmasters, reading their speech or presentation.

I get it. We are all busy. And it is easy to write our speech and then just read it right off our computer screen.

If your entire purpose is to simply stand up and speak, then okay. But if your goal is to improve your speaking skills and the effectiveness of your communication, then I would caution against it.

Recognize that, when I say that, it is not because I don't do it myself. I am a professional reader. I do voice-over work for projects like corporate videos, commercials, and automated messages. I read scripts with the intent of communicating the writer's message in a way that is compelling and natural. But I don't read my speeches.

The first reason I caution against doing that is that most people aren't good readers. Many sound just plain uninterested or bored. If your goal is to put your audience members to sleep, go for it. If you don't want to risk doing that, don't read it.

But what if you *are* a good reader? I still wouldn't do it. One reason why reading is ineffective is that you are focused on the words, paying attention to what is coming next. This focus has the effect of diminishing your vocal variety. Which then diminishes your emotional connection with your audience. Vocal variety is the primary method through which we communicate and transfer emotion to our listeners. If you curtail this important feature, you limit the effectiveness and impact of your speech.

Facial expressions are, frequently, the next to go. Zoom and other online formats are common these days. And for some clubs, they are standard. Body language is difficult in this medium. In my opinion, you can achieve far more by

highlighting your facial expressions. But if you limit what your face can do because you are focused on reading, you are once again limiting what you can achieve with your speech.

There is a second drawback to reading. It trains us to not pay attention to our audience.

If your eyes are glued to a computer screen or piece of paper, how can they be focused on your audience members? And if you do it often, it can create a habit.



Don't assume that you can just pick up a script and read it effectively.

What difference does it make? Eye contact, first of all, tells your audience that you are thinking of them. It is a tool for them.

But it is also a tool for you. By looking at your audience, you find out if they are interested in what you have to say, confused by what you are saying, or have checked out completely. This gives you an opportunity to do a mid-course correction if you need to. If you are looking down, you lose that opportunity.

In addition, by looking at your audience members, you know who is really excited about what you have to say, and you can then focus on them. They are the ones who will carry your message to others when the speech is over.

Thus, the ability to use your eyes is critical.

There is yet another downside that reading your speech carries, especially if you are in a professional or corporate environment. It suggests that you are not all that familiar with your information. Is that the message you want to send to your potential clients or your corporate executives? I suspect not.

Granted, you don't always have time to prepare for a speech. Sometimes you have to read. If you do, let me give you a couple of suggestions.

- Read my article "[Reading a Prepared Text](#)." In it I describe how to mark up a text so you can deliver it naturally and with strong expression.
- Commit to developing the skill. There are times when you may want to read a speech in a live setting. I prefer to use a skeleton outline, but if you must read it word for word, make it a goal to become good at it.

Again, you may think you are a good reader, but most people are not. I have been a professional reader for over 30 years, and I am still improving my skill. Don't assume that you can just pick up a script and read it effectively. When you read a script, you speak *at* your audience. Instead, seek to speak *with* them. Your speeches will be better for it.

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

Legally Speaking

The verdict is in: Lawyers win big by sharpening communication skills.

By Kate McClare, DTM

Shenali Dias had always been quiet, and reluctant to speak up—even if she knew the answer to a question or had a salient point to make.

Today, as an attorney-at-law, she presents confidently and communicates effectively with her colleagues and clients.

Rukhsana Khan also used to shy away from speaking, fearful even to raise her hand to ask a question. Facing a conference room with “lots of men in suits” was especially challenging.

Now, she represents her firm at networking events and can be found on prestigious lists of top attorneys.

What happened?

“I owe it all to Toastmasters,” says Dias, a Sri Lankan member.

Khan, a member in Qatar, is equally grateful to the organization. “I found my voice and freed my voice,” she says. “It made such a difference.”

Toastmasters helps people develop valuable communication and leadership skills that can propel you in your career, whether you’re a lawyer, an executive, or any other professional. The four attorneys highlighted in this article say Toastmasters also helped them sharpen the presentation, negotiation, and networking skills unique to their field.

Veronica Armstrong, DTM

Clubs: Spotlight Speakers (Richmond, British Columbia, Canada) and Hiroshima Phoenix Toastmasters (online)

Area of specialization: securities law

Veronica Armstrong, DTM, was invited twice to attend a Toastmasters club meeting and declined both times. It wasn’t because she thought she didn’t need help in communication or leadership.

“I had heard of this thing called Table Topics, which frightened me to death,” she explains. “I had never had a fear of public speaking, but that was if I was well versed in the subject. And it doesn’t mean I always remember my skills.”

She finally joined a club. And another. Since first pushing past her fear, she’s been in as many as six clubs at a time.

“It has definitely made me a better lawyer in that I am more able to appreciate different points of view,” she says of Toastmasters. “I’ve met people from every walk of life, from every political and ideological persuasion.”

Armstrong sometimes uses club meetings to practice presentations, and Toastmasters’ emphasis on clear communication has aided her work as a communication consultant. She leads workshops helping professionals use plain language to reach all audiences, a critical need in the law.

Faced with reading and signing a contract, for instance, “most people don’t understand it because it’s written in legalese, and that makes it inaccessible,” says Armstrong.

At the same time, her legal expertise has helped her in Toastmasters. She used her negotiation skills when serving as her District’s corporate club liaison, which called on her to help other District members understand the unique character of [corporate clubs](#) so that all sides could work effectively together.

Her commitment led to her being named her Area’s 2012–2013 Toastmaster of the Year.

“What I love about Toastmasters is you have permission to tell people who you are,” she says. “It has given me a better appreciation for people when I meet them professionally.”

Shenali Dias

Club: Bar Association of Sri Lanka Toastmasters (Colombo, Sri Lanka)

Areas of specialization: communication, intellectual property, and corporate law

“How to communicate a complex case in a simple way is what I learned in Toastmasters,” says Dias, who got hooked on Toastmasters when she attended a Speechcraft program in 2020. She served as charter Secretary of the Bar Association of Sri Lanka Toastmasters Club and later as its Club President, and also became an Area Director.

“I felt I wasn’t really growing anymore,” she says of why she initially sought out Toastmasters. “One of the key issues I saw with my development was the lack of finer public speaking skills.”

Toastmasters helped Dias with the interpersonal and negotiation skills she uses to work with clients. Her presentation abilities sharpened; she learned how to use storytelling and other audience-engagement strategies, and to organize her material for better flow and stronger impact.



Veronica Armstrong, DTM



Shenali Dias



Rukhsana Khan, DTM



Steve Replin

The payoff in her speaking skills came when she presented a copyright class for law students. “I had to tailor my knowledge to communicate it in a way that undergrad students truly understood, and there were some laypeople in the audience too.”

A surprising benefit came during the pandemic. While Sri Lanka’s courts were shut down, her Bar Association club continued to convene online. By the time the courts reopened using Zoom, Dias had had plenty of practice with virtual meetings and could present smoothly in court. The practice also helped her pass her online interview for her Ph.D. program.

But the greatest benefit has been in her confidence level. Table Topics® has helped her get comfortable dealing with impromptu questions, both inside and outside of the legal arena.

“Previously, that really left me tongue-tied,” she says. “Now I can always smoothly communicate my ideas.”

Rukhsana Khan, DTM

Clubs: Qatar Toastmasters and West Bay Toastmasters (both in Doha, Qatar)

Area of specialization: corporate law

Like Dias, Rukhsana Khan, DTM, learned to communicate in a more accessible manner. “Toastmasters helped me explain complex legal concepts and ideas to my non-lawyer clients in a way they told me they had not experienced before,” she says.

She had always loved working with words but found that dealing with people could be difficult. Khan attended a Speechcraft program, but she hesitated to join a club because of Table Topics. “I was petrified. I didn’t want to make that call [to join].” When she finally did, she not only overcame her fear but later became her District’s

champion in the Table Topics Speech Contest. She started the first Arabic club at a public institution in Qatar (Qatar University Toastmasters).

And she went on to great accomplishments in her profession. Starting in 2011, she was named a leading lawyer in Qatar by the prestigious Chambers and Partners annual global legal rankings. In 2018—the same year she

also in working with entrepreneurs and in leadership roles for nonprofits like the American Heart Association.

He says Toastmasters training has helped him reduce, if not eliminate, his nervousness when speaking in front of people. Replin joined the Professional Presenters club in 2018, after a friend had invited him to visit a Toastmasters

“Toastmasters helped me explain complex legal concepts and ideas to my non-lawyer clients in a way they told me they had not experienced before.”

—RUKHSANA KHAN, DTM

became a Distinguished Toastmaster—she was inducted into the Legal 500 Hall of Fame, the only woman in Qatar to make the list. In 2019, she launched her own international legal consultancy, Westway Law, and in 2022, she won the Entrepreneur of the Year award at LexisNexis Middle East’s Women in Law event in Dubai.

“I believe my communication ability (learned in Toastmasters) is one of the keys to the positive reviews I received from Chambers and The Legal 500,” Khan says, adding that Toastmasters also gave her the confidence to become an entrepreneur.

Steve Replin

Club: Professional Presenters Toastmasters (Denver, Colorado)

Areas of specialization: business, entertainment, and intellectual property law

Toastmasters has helped Steve Replin improve his skills in presenting to groups and in one-to-one interactions, not just as an attorney but

club. He later served as Vice President Education, Vice President Public Relations, and Vice President Membership.

Replin has presented some legal topics at his club, but it’s the act of presenting, not the topic, that has made the difference for him.

“Toastmasters has given me the ability to communicate with my clients better [because of] knowing a bit about what it takes to have people relate to you faster, better, more personally,” he says. “Instead of just launching into a talk about Einstein’s theory, you tell them a joke first or find out something about them or throw in something like a story that’s relevant—or even a story that’s not relevant.

“I do a whole bunch of other things that are not related to my law practice,” he adds. “I just need to be competent in so many areas of my life, [whether] in front of one person or 500 people.”

Kate McClare, DTM, is Vice President Public Relations for Miami Advanced Toastmasters in Miami, Florida.



The Power of Empathy

Relating to others is key in successful leadership.

By Nick Morgan

Put yourself in someone else's shoes. Maybe that little step will start the world off in a better direction.

We are an information-overloaded species, and the only surprise in that statement is that we always have been. Even in the ancient savannah, there were too many sounds, smells, and suspicious shadows lurking around the corner to process. Today, not only is there still too much information coming at us through our five senses a good deal of the time, but there is far too much data to process in a host of ways we are not good at processing.

But if a leader has no more important job than, well, leading, then even in this context knowing their people is the key. So, time to get serious about empathy and that means processing a lot of information about these other people—our employees.

I was struck by a comment leadership performance expert Martin G. Moore made in a speech. “No amount of empathy is too much,” he said, adding that a leader needs to understand their people as deeply as possible. It’s an important concept in this era of shortcuts, fast takes, and social media summaries of people, missions, and organizations in a few dismissive words.

I was particularly interested in Moore’s comment because I had just read [a study](#) that talked about how we think about empathy. The study found that we don’t understand how to be empathetic in the right way.

We often figure out what other people are thinking by studying their facial expressions and body language. But what actually works better is putting ourselves in their shoes. This finding is astonishing if you give it more than a passing thought. Putting ourselves in another’s proverbial shoes is demanding intellectual and emotional work. It requires vulnerability, creativity, and something that the psychologists call the “theory of mind”—the ability to realize that not everyone thinks and feels the way we do.

This imaginative work is not easy, and I think it is getting harder and harder as our lives move faster and faster. Why should I slow down my day to get inside the minds of other people? Far easier to study them briefly and draw my own conclusions based on the evidence of my eyes.

The study even asked people to look at their own body language from a month prior, and it turned out they were pretty bad at decoding their own body language. Better if they had to, well, put themselves in their own shoes.

We are better at understanding strong emotional responses in people that we know well—when a child

comes home from school in tears or bouncing up and down with joy—but that’s about it. To understand body language, we must be willing to study the “steady state” body language of someone, and then be ready to spot the changes when they occur. It’s in these changes that we find the limited understanding that we can.

So, let’s do the work. At the office, spend time getting to know Jerome in research and development, Jane in marketing, and even, [gasp] Karen in accounting. How do you get started?

First, ask them questions. Where do they live? How do they commute into the office? Do they have kids? How long does it take to get them ready for school? Are they morning people, jazzed even before that cup of coffee, or not so much? Now you’re beginning to get a picture of how they might feel coming into the office in the morning.

Then, find out about their boss and colleagues. As the adage says, people don’t quit jobs, they quit bosses. So, a big part of having empathy for someone you work with is understanding their boss and coworkers. Then, what’s their calendar like? Is their work seasonal, culminating in an incredibly stressful run up to budget season? Or is it the annual all-hands meeting that defines their year? Once you’ve begun to round out a picture of their work world, then dive into their hobbies and outside interests, if that’s culturally appropriate.

A friend of mine, Chris Tuff, has a genius method for connecting with people authentically and calls that “racing to the middle.” By that he means finding the middle ground, the passion that you both share. But don’t find the middle ground just to have something to talk about; do it so that you can connect deeply with that other person and begin to build empathy.

In the end, you take what you know about the other person and ask yourself, what would that feel like? Put yourself in someone else’s shoes. Maybe that little step will start the world off in a better direction.

Editor’s Note: An earlier version of this article was first published on www.publicwords.com.

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How to Dial Down Defensive Conversations

Tips for turning conflicts into constructive discussions.

By Joel Schwartzberg

No job is paradise—sooner or later, something or someone will upset you. Being upset is human and understandable, but when that frustration manifests in defensive communication—whether spoken, texted, chatted, or emailed—things may get significantly worse.

Defensive communication is typically more provocative than productive, triggering exasperation, anger, and resentment. Possible solutions or compromises are pushed further away as conflict takes center stage.

How can we take our emotional kettles off boil once the pilot is lit? Consider these tips:

Listen to learn. When listening to someone, be present, remove distractions, and don't interrupt. Even if you're upset, showing you're willing to listen signals respect. Listening also lets you calm down if needed. It's a tiny time-out.

Assume positive intent. Always assume that the other person has good intentions—whether or not you know their true motive. This assumption helps take some of the sting out of criticism when you understand the other person's point may not be harsh, even if the words seem that way.

Respond, don't react. A reaction is sudden and emotional: anger, sadness, or embarrassment. A response is measured and more likely to produce a solution, suggestion, or counterproposal.

This doesn't mean you need to avoid a reaction. Just allow yourself time to transition from reaction to response. First, ask yourself: *Do I understand the other person's goal? Have I made assumptions about their concerns? How can I drive us toward mutual understanding?*

Identify common goals. A foundation of respect, agreement, and acknowledgment can immediately reduce the temperature in an adversarial conversation, because agreement and acknowledgment are the opposite of conflict and dismissiveness.

Keep in mind that agreement is sharing an opinion, while acknowledgment is merely listening to and respecting an opinion. If you can't agree with someone's point, at least acknowledge it with phrases like "I hear you," "I understand what you're saying," and "I appreciate your intention."

Keep moving forward. Anyone managing a project—or contributing to one—has a responsibility to keep

it moving. Always ask yourself if a contentious conversation is moving the project forward or holding it back.

If conflict is stalling the project, you can postpone a meeting or a conversation. You can change platforms (such as moving from email to Zoom). You can elevate the issue to a senior manager, or you can "agree to disagree" on an aspect that may have little bearing on the steps needed to move the project forward.

Pick your platform wisely. A one-on-one meeting (live or on video conferencing) may facilitate agreement more effectively than an email or chat because humans tend to be more conciliatory when looking other humans in the eye. Meetings also support back-and-forth communication (which is necessary for compromise), whereas emails travel in one direction.

In emails, one may also be inclined to overexplain a point without realizing this approach may come off as condescending. Condescension is less likely to happen during a live meeting, where social appropriateness is a standard norm.

Overall, defensiveness is *least* likely at meetings, *more* likely in emails, and *most* likely in chats and texts, where participants may respond quickly and impulsively.

Understand feedback versus criticism. Feedback is an offer of helpful support. It may be hard to hear, but good feedback can correct and improve performance.

On the other hand, criticism is an expression of disappointment due to perceived failure, and may be received as an insult. And remember constructive feedback can *feel* like criticism if the speaker dwells on it.

Try on their shoes. Imagine *you* are the one giving feedback and *someone else* is receiving it. That visualization may shift your perception of a comment from harsh to helpful. With the circumstance reimagined this way, you are likely to be less defensive.

In the workplace, defensiveness can decimate morale, hinder teamwork, and stall projects. No matter what happens to make you feel defensive, take a moment, breathe, and work on transforming it into something productive.

Joel Schwartzberg is the senior director of strategic and executive communications for a U.S. national nonprofit; a presentation coach; and author of several books. Follow him on Twitter [@TheJoelTruth](https://twitter.com/TheJoelTruth).



The Corporate Club Value Proposition: Stronger Than Ever

How Toastmasters develops skills that benefit employers and employees.

By Jennifer L. Blanck, DTM

In 2010, Toastmaster Tom Tryon collaborated with other Molson Coors Beverage Co. employees to charter Toast on Tap in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. From the start, the global company sponsored the club, paying member fees and providing club meeting space.

At one point, club membership dipped below 10 people. That's when the club enlisted the help of two coaches, Shelly Runte, DTM, from Southwest Toastmasters in Greendale, Wisconsin, and Stephan Church, DTM, then a member of NM Speaks! also in Milwaukee. With their guidance, the club grew.

Runte encouraged members to promote the club across additional company channels. The news spread—piquing the interest of more employees, including the Molson Coors learning and development staff.

Leveraging Toastmasters

Today, Molson Coors doesn't just sponsor Toast on Tap—it also integrates the Toastmasters program into the company's learning and development efforts. Molson Coors' TAP2LEAD initiative focuses on growing the

company's diverse talent. The six-month program includes Toastmasters, mentoring, and a capstone project.

Toastmasters training is also a part of the company's eight-month LEAD program to foster the development of prospective vice presidents. LEAD offers a customized development track that includes an emphasis on public speaking.

Tryon is now an innovation project manager at Molson Coors and still a member of Toast on Tap. He's seen the club grow to more than 50 people.

"The degree to which a company can perform well involves hiring, developing, and retaining the right people," says Tryon. "Toast on Tap is integral to the company's curriculum. It's not just a check-the-box training, but something with real depth and richness to it."

Lindsey Wondolkowski worked at Molson Coors and was already a Toast on Tap member when she interviewed for the position of people development specialist-leadership. The company was already integrating Toastmasters into TAP2LEAD, and the hiring manager wanted to find someone with Toastmasters experience for the job. With her skills, expertise, and Toastmasters background, Wondolkowski was hired.

"Developing yourself and learning new skills positions you in a really great place when a job opens up or helps set you up for a promotion," says Wondolkowski.



The Mutual Benefits of Sponsored Clubs

For Employees:

- ◆ Develop skills and confidence
- ◆ Grow in a safe and supportive atmosphere
- ◆ Meet new people across the organization
- ◆ Demonstrate your commitment to personal and company growth
- ◆ Increase your visibility; position yourself for promotions
- ◆ Practice speeches and work presentations
- ◆ Receive feedback and learn how to offer it
- ◆ Practice leading meetings
- ◆ Polish team-based experience
- ◆ Earn continuing education credits
- ◆ Mentor and be mentored

For Organizations:

- ◆ Develop employees' skills through continuing experiential learning
- ◆ Offer a cost-effective professional development activity with a high return on investment
- ◆ Gain a competitive advantage in recruitment and retention while demonstrating an investment in staff
- ◆ Empower employees to take control of their career and skill development
- ◆ Offer employees a networking channel across departments

—Jennifer L. Blanck, DTM

Structuring a Corporate Club

Toast on Tap is just one of some 6,400 employer-based Toastmasters clubs worldwide. Corporate clubs can be organized in several ways. Many are composed of company employees and are sponsored, meaning the company provides some type of support, such as paying membership fees. The club may be for employees only, or open to non-employees too. Corporate clubs can also be a group of like-minded employees who come together on their own, without formal support from the employer.

Corporate clubs are not just for for-profit employers; clubs can also be hosted at nonprofit, governmental, and non-governmental organizations. Regardless, Toastmasters offers skill development and training in areas applicable to any kind of employer.

Fostering Employee Development

When members of a U.S.-based club sponsored by the global biotech Roche relocated to the company's headquarters in Basel, Switzerland, they chartered a corporate club there. It took a year of semi-monthly informal meetings to prove to leadership the group was serious and sustainable.

"Roche recognized the positive impact the informal meeting practice was having on employees' performance and confidence during this first year of informal meetings. They offered meeting facilities and funding



once the club chartered,” says Thorsten Enderlin, Roche learning and development director and RoBa ToMaS - Roche Basel Toastmasters’ Vice President Public Relations.

The club hosts company leaders as guests, while club members are often requested speakers at department-level events. This club is one of at least nine other Roche-based clubs worldwide. Expansion is planned in other company locations, including the possibility of a German-speaking club in Basel. The company holds its own public speaking World Cup to foster connection among its groups.

“High-performing organizations operate as empowered networks coordinated through culture,” says Iulia Dragan, Roche scrum master, coach, and RoBa ToMaS - Roche Basel Toastmasters’ President. “Our club is enabling employees to operate in that network and embody the company’s values.”

“Fulfilled employees—employees who take leadership of their career and development—are how we measure success at Roche from a learning and development point of view,” adds Enderlin.

Power Speakers Club, a club sponsored by BC Hydro, a regional Canadian energy corporation, is based in Burnaby, British Columbia, and open to full-time employees and internal consultants.

“High-performing organizations operate as empowered networks coordinated through culture ... our club is enabling employees to operate in that network and embody the company’s values.”

—IULIA DRAGAN

BC Hydro provides financial support to Power Speakers through its capital infrastructure and development group, rather than the human resources department. Members align their Toastmasters journeys with their BC Hydro personal development plans, and the Pathways curriculum counts toward industry continuing-education credits, as communications and leadership learning is one of four official competency areas for registered engineers and geoscientists in British Columbia.

“Through presenting at club meetings, our members can claim credit toward Engineering and GeoScientists of British Columbia professional development points under the presentation category,” says Mark Sherrington, BC Hydro environment project implementor—water program, and a Power Speakers member.

Roselia Moreno is an asset performance planning—project manager consultant for BC Hydro. A full-time employee and club member encouraged Moreno to attend a club meeting. When she finally visited, she joined right away.

Moreno pays her own club dues. That’s the only difference she notices between members who are full-time employees and internal consultants like herself. “The atmosphere of the club is very welcoming, and there are no differences whether you are an employee or a contractor,” she says.

Moreno recommends getting involved as much as possible to maximize the networking and learning. “You are able to network and meet other people from different business units that might open the opportunity for additional work or facilitate any project that might require support from them,” she notes.

She organized the first joint meeting among the three clubs BC Hydro sponsors. The clubs now meet jointly three times a year, with each one in charge of a meeting. This increases networking, provides a more challenging environment in which to learn, and allows clubs to share best practices with each other.

Boosting Organizational Benefits

Sponsored clubs aren’t just good for employees; they’re also beneficial for organizations. That’s been consistently true, especially now during a tough job market for employers. So, offering on-the-job professional development can be a competitive advantage.

Organizations pay a lot of money to hire and onboard new employees. It’s important for them to retain the talent they invest in. Toastmasters is

a cost-effective approach for long-term professional development, with a high return on investment. It offers an important way for employers to connect and engage employees, helping them get to know each other outside of their work roles, and providing a supportive environment.

“Developing employees and showing you’ll pay for their Toastmasters membership to develop their leadership and communications skills speaks volumes,” says Wondolkowski, of the Molson Coors club. She says one of the reasons employees stay at Molson Coors is they see the development opportunities offered by and through the company.

Supporting Toastmasters Clubs

There are several ways organizations can sponsor clubs. Two of the most typical approaches include paying membership fees and providing meeting space or an online convening platform.

But many employers—like Molson Coors, Roche, and BC Hydro—go beyond that. Supervisors recommend employees join Toastmasters, and company leaders speak at club meetings. Toastmasters members are asked to participate in or lead internal events, and their participation in a club can count for internal or external professional development credits. Organizations may pay for club officers to attend District conferences or may partially sponsor those conferences. Some integrate the Toastmasters program into their learning and development offerings. Other companies even include club information and promote membership on their websites.

Sharing Lessons Learned

Employees hoping to start a corporate-based club should first consider demonstrating the value to the organization’s decision-makers.

“Start small,” says Maud Nale, DTM, District 74 corporate relations manager and member of Randburg Toastmasters in Johannesburg, South Africa, and L’Avenir Toastmasters, in Sandton, South Africa. “Starting a Toastmasters club at a company is largely based on trust. Once they [in management] see Toastmasters as credible, it will snowball, and greater things will come.”

It’s also important to consider connections beyond the human resources office. While this is a logical place to start, don’t limit yourself. Think about other departments that might be supportive of a Toastmasters club and reach out to colleagues there.

To maintain a successful corporate club, it’s important to remain visible to and in communication with your key sponsor contacts. Nale encourages club members to invite executives to the club, especially the ones who are supportive and those signing the checks. “Let them be keynote speakers,” she says. “Let them feel like they’re a part of it.”

For Toastmasters Districts with many corporate clubs—District 74, for example, has 90 such clubs across 12 countries—consider adding a corporate relations manager to the District officer team. Company-sponsored clubs have unique needs, says Nale. She has created special resources for the clubs, conducts specific officer training for them, and has held executive summits for club sponsors.

It’s also important to keep meetings productive and fun. Work environments can be intense, and people might be stressed. You want to offer colleagues something they can’t get in their daily routine.

Tips for Starting a Sponsored Club at Your Organization

Connect with members at sponsored clubs. Ask for their tips and lessons learned. Invite them to speak at your organization. Visit their meetings to learn.

Talk to your District Toastmasters officers. District leaders are there to help, and some specialize in starting new clubs.

Promote the opportunity through all possible organizational channels. Spread the word throughout the organization to ensure maximum visibility and participation.

Highlight the benefits to individuals and the organization. Just like with a speech, people will want to know the “WIIFM”—what’s in it for me? Don’t assume people will understand. Share the value proposition for employees and the organization and give examples of how everyone will benefit.

Plan engaging and fun meetings. People will return if their time is used wisely, and they gain something from each meeting.

Invite organizational leadership to speak. Ensure visibility and increase buy-in by engaging executives in the club.

Editor’s Note: *If you’re interested in starting a club at your organization, visit the [Toastmasters Corporate Club](#) webpage to learn more and request information. District 74 also offers [specialized resources](#).*

—Jennifer L. Blanck, DTM

“Can we offer enough bang for the buck for that person to say, *Yeah, I’m going to free up that time. I’m going to make the time, because I need it,*” says Tryon, with Toast on Tap.

Consider starting, joining, or supporting a sponsored Toastmasters club. There are so many benefits for members and organizations. The Toastmasters value proposition is stronger than ever.

Editor’s Note: *To learn about one executive’s experience with his company’s club, go to page 8.*

Jennifer L. Blanck, DTM, is a member of 5-Star Toastmasters Club in Arlington, Virginia, and AAMC Toastmasters in Washington, D.C.—a club sponsored by a nonprofit—and a regular contributor to the *Toastmaster* magazine. Learn more at www.jenniferlblank.com.

10 Tips for a Powerful Workplace Presentation

Bring your information to life for your listeners.

By Karen Friedman

Speaking in front of colleagues, prospects, and managers can rattle even the most seasoned communicator. Perhaps you didn't have time to prepare, or you've been told to present material that is not within your area of expertise. When it's time to contribute, your stomach might start to flip-flop, and your normally confident self freezes or rambles.

I once worked with a man named Patrick who desperately struggled to hold people's attention when he presented at work. Yet, outside of the office he was magnetic, personable, and hilarious.

No matter how often we worked together, nothing seemed to help him improve until he told me he was a die-hard New York Yankees baseball fan. Being from Philadelphia, I couldn't share his passion for the Yankees, but what struck me was how his entire demeanor changed when he spoke about them. So, I gave him a homework assignment: Convert me, a Philadelphia Phillies baseball fan, to his New York way of thinking.

The next time we got together, Patrick showed up in full Yankee garb, carrying a baseball bat and glove, with a big Yankee logo painted on his face. He had plastered pennants and Yankee paraphernalia on the walls of the

conference room and handed me a bag of popcorn as he motioned me to a seat. Patrick then delivered one of the most engaging presentations I can remember.

Without realizing it, Patrick did more than talk Yankees. He pitched his sports knowledge with energy and confidence. He drew me into his story with steady eye contact, big gestures, and movements. His enthusiasm was contagious.

You may not be delivering a work presentation about your favorite team or hobby, but if you want people to listen, you need to bring the same energy as if you were. When you change your mindset, you'll change the way audiences react to you.

In the past 25 years, I have coached thousands of speakers across scores of industries on four continents. The most successful employ these 10 tips to deliver dynamic business presentations in any environment.

1 Know your audience.

All audiences are not created equal. For example, you wouldn't give the same talk to a labor union that you would to a medical association. That's why it's important to understand their concerns, fears, challenges, and subject knowledge before you speak, so you can see the topic through their eyes and tailor your remarks to them. Then, identify what you want them to know, do, or feel when you're done speaking.

2 Begin at the end.

Before you start writing scripts and developing slides, summarize the key takeaway of your talk in one sentence that answers this question: Why should my listeners care? As an example, if you're speaking about a new medication, the takeaway might be "It saves lives." This becomes your story line and everything that follows should drive the story home.

3 Engage with strong opens and closes.

Capturing your audience's attention at the beginning helps listeners stay engaged throughout the presentation. That's why opens and closes are so important. Instead of instantly diving into details and the minutia of your product, try focusing on benefits or frame the problem you are trying to solve. For example, product X is twice as fast and half the price. At the end, circle back to your key takeaway.



4 Use breathable segments.

As a former reporter, I learned how to breathe life into my stories. The same applies to organizing business talks. Like developing an outline, pick three to five key concepts you want to convey. In each, look for places to insert the three V's: vignettes, videos, and visuals. The more interactive you make your talk, the more involved your audience will become.

5 Have a conversation.

You probably have a colleague like Patrick who is fun to be around. Yet, when that person presents, they seem robotic. Don't present. Converse. Conversations are more animated and allow for vocal variety, facial expressions, and gestures that occur naturally, as if we are speaking to a friend. To do that, practice with and without slides. With slides, you'll internalize information and learn the material. Without slides, focus on the key points to be more conversational.

6 Create visual slides.

New research from Prezi, a visual software company, reveals nine in 10 people of 2,000 surveyed said a strong narrative and visuals will keep them more engaged. Look for ways to turn words into visuals with pictures and charts, which are easier to follow. Instead of reading your slides, talk to the audience, not the screen.

7 Presenting across a screen.

The same applies to virtual presentations. Instead of looking at another monitor or at individuals on various parts of the screen, position your camera at eye level so you can look directly into the camera. This makes participants feel you are making eye contact. In a hybrid environment where people are attending remotely and in person, it's also important to look at the camera from time to time so everyone feels included.

8 Make it personal.

Personalizing information with anecdotes and examples makes your message more relatable and easier to understand. For example, I recently listened to a medical director deliver a presentation outlining a shortage of obstetri-

cians and gynecologists in his hometown. The numbers on his slides were important but his message was not that compelling until he told a story about a woman in labor who drove 35 miles by herself in a blizzard to deliver her baby at the hospital because there were no specialists nearby. It's doubtful his audience will recall the numbers on the slides, but they will most certainly remember that story.

9 Keep it simple.

Albert Einstein once said, "If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough." Every industry has its jargon and acronyms but the moment you start speaking in technical terms is the moment you will lose your audience. Even when speaking to peers who understand the subject, crowded slides and complex information make presentations hard to follow, which creates a disconnect between you and your listener.

10 Remember the P's.

Whether presenting in person or remotely, it's important to Pace, Pause, Project,

Pronounce, and Practice. Pace yourself by pausing. Pauses give people time to process what you're saying and can also help emphasize important points. Whether wearing a microphone or presenting remotely, speaking slightly louder to project your voice helps command attention. So does clearly pronouncing words to avoid trailing off at the end of sentences. The best way to master these skills is to tape yourself practicing out loud. This adds up to P for Presence.

Utilizing these techniques to combine content and delivery will reduce anxiety and position you as a confident, energetic speaker who can engage listeners and hold their attention. People came to hear what you have to say. You owe it to them to say it well.

Karen Friedman is a business communications expert, syndicated columnist, and author of *Shut Up and Say Something and Ordinary People: Extraordinary Lessons*. Find out more at karenfriedman.com.

7 Ways to Battle Butterflies

1 **Arrive early.** Greet people before you begin. Shaking hands, making eye contact, and engaging in small talk make you more approachable and your audience less daunting.

2 **Tech check.** Check your equipment and run through your slides in advance. Make sure the room is set up the way you like it.

3 **Time it.** Time your talk before you deliver it. Build in extra time so you don't run out of time and race through material.

4 **Breathe.** Take a few deep breaths before you begin. This will help calm your nerves and prevent you from holding your breath.

5 **Pause.** Taking moments to pause as you switch slides or make an important point will help keep you from speeding up your speech.

6 **Practice.** Practice out loud. Record your presentation and play it back to determine which areas need work.

7 **Smile.** Not only does smiling help you connect with your audience, research shows it reduces stress and helps you relax.

—Karen Friedman

5 Basic Tips for Effective Slide Presentations

Turn your slide nightmare into a dream presentation.

By David Henson

You're having a bad dream. You're standing on the stage giving a talk but next to you stands another person giving exactly the same talk, using exactly the same words. As you speak, you notice that your partner on the stage is speaking faster than you. By the time you get to your second sentence, they're already on the fourth.

The cacophony of noise coming from both speakers is causing people to walk out of the room. Why are these two people onstage giving the same talk, but at different speeds?

Finally, you find yourself alone on the stage staring out at an empty room.

Suddenly you wake up, beads of sweat pouring off your brow. Thank goodness this was only a bad dream.

Of course, you'd never get onstage with a partner and do anything like that ... or would you?

I see it all the time—people onstage with a terrible partner. Except this partner is not a physical person, but, rather, the slides you are displaying on the screen. In your bad dream, your onstage partner is a metaphor for

your slides. And if your slides aren't effective, then it's not only a nightmare for you but for your audience too.

I've spent over 30 years helping people design and image their slides, both the old 35 mm type and today's high-tech PowerPoint versions. Here are my top tips to ditch that poor presentation partner.

1 Stick to one point per slide.

Below is a typical example of what I'm talking about, the sort of slide we see all the time. It shows the five features of a camera in bullet points on the slide with a pretty pointless and small picture of the camera.

Camera Features

- It contains a large bright display that can easily be seen in full sunlight
- Multiple exposure modes that gives you full control of how you want to shoot
- The camera has an ergonomic design that feels more comfortable to hold
- 7 frames per second burst speed allows you to capture all the action
- 4K video at the flick of a switch allowing you to swap between still and movie modes



Generation

5. Electricity is made available to your home



—
Your slides need
to act as your partner
and work in
tandem with you
as the presenter.

Your slides are there to reinforce, illustrate, clarify, or explain the message that you want to get across to your audience, for the time that you're speaking onstage or on-screen.

And we know what's going to happen. The presenter is going to read those points, one at a time, and the audience will be reading point five while the presenter is still on point two. Audience members suffer cognitive exhaustion caused by listening to the speaker and reading the slide at the same time.

This means that, if you're the speaker, you're not getting your message across effectively, if at all.

So, one golden rule to apply is: only one point per slide.

And this slide shows how I think it should be done.



The first bullet point concerned the camera's large bright display, so you simply have the words "Large bright display" on the slide and a big, clear picture of the camera showing the large, bright display.

Then the presenter can talk around that point and explain all about the display: the technical information and anything else they want to get across. The audience can't read ahead to the next feature because you're just focused on that one point.

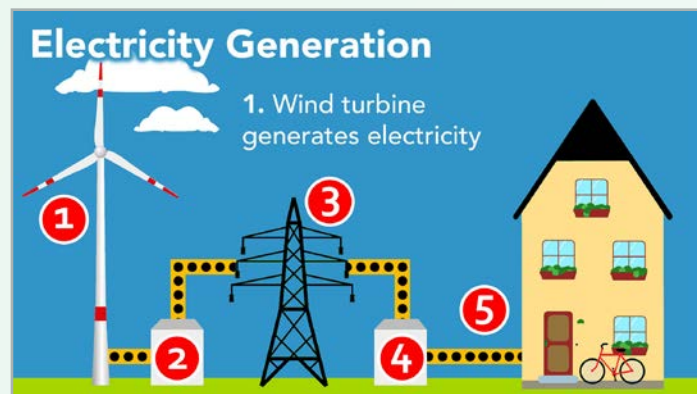
You can then continue to go through the rest of the points in the same vein with minimal text on each slide accompanied by large pictures illustrating each of the features.



Now your visual partner onstage is no longer clashing with you but is in harmony with you as the presenter.

2 Use animation to build your slides.

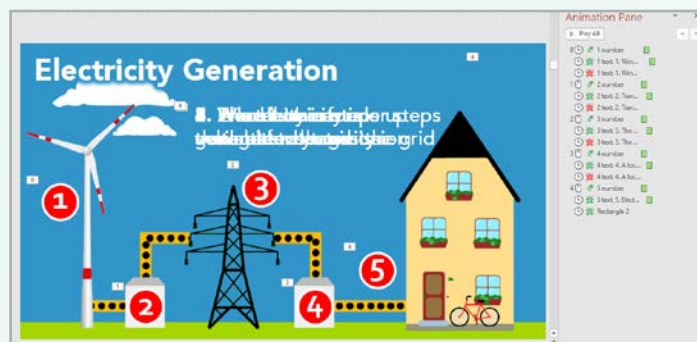
There may be times when you need to keep all of the information on one slide. Here's an example of this: the five stages of the electricity generation process.



It uses a single image in the background, which is animated so the turbine blades go around, and the dotted trail of the electricity journey moves from left to right. So this has to stay on one slide.

In this instance what we can do is build the points up on the slide one at a time using the PowerPoint animations feature.

This is how the slide and animation pane looks in PowerPoint:



The text points are all in the same place on the slide, so they appear to cover one another up in the slide view, but the animation sequence, shown in the animation pane on the right, is set up to bring in all five points in the right order and also to have each line of text fade out before the next one appears.

In a way, this is effectively the same as my first point: showing just one point per slide. It might appear to the audience that this consists of five slides, each making one point, but in reality, it's been produced as a build-up sequence on one slide.

3 Keep your slides and handouts separate.

You'll often hear a presenter say, "Don't worry, I've made all of these slides available as a handout." Whenever I hear that phrase, my heart sinks because I know that their slides are not going to be up to the job.

One of the biggest tips I can give you to ensure that your slides work as your partner is this: If your slides work as handouts, then they don't work as slides.

Your slides are ephemeral. They're there to reinforce, illustrate, clarify, or explain the message that you want to get across to your audience, for the time that you're speaking onstage or on-screen. They need to act as your partner and work in tandem with you as the presenter. Your

handouts, on the other hand, can be taken away by your audience and read at their leisure.

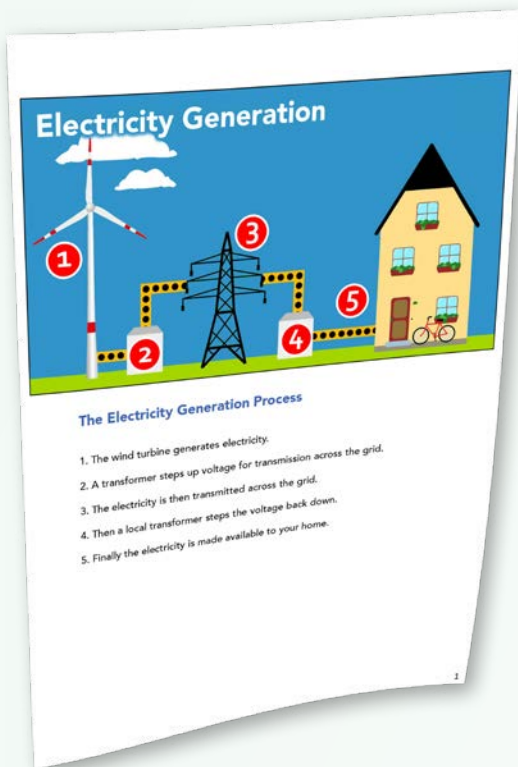
If you need to give your audience a handout containing all the important information, then this is a separate form of communication and therefore should be produced separately.

If your slides aren't effective, then it's not only a nightmare for you but for your audience too.

The good news is that this doesn't necessarily mean more work.

If you'd planned to put all of that information on your slide in the first place, it's not going to be much more work to cut it out and put it into a handout. Put all the information you want to include in the handout in the "notes" section of the PowerPoint. Then print the notes either on paper or as a PDF.

Both your slides and your handouts now work as separate but effective forms of communication to get your message across to your audience.



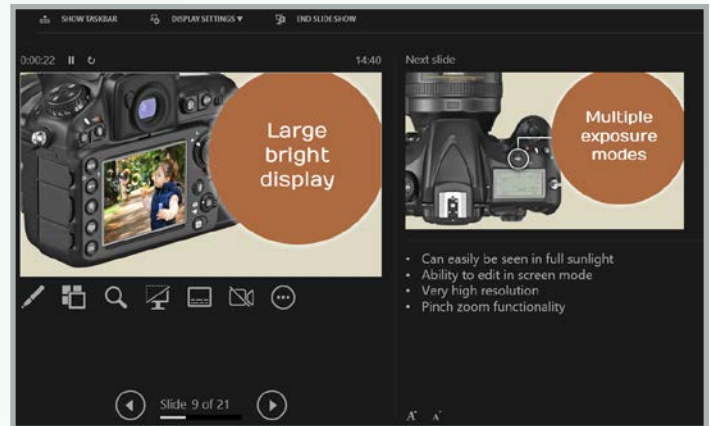
Converting the electricity generation slide into a handout.

4 Use your slides as a prompt, or use the notes feature.

One thing I often hear presenters say is, "I need all that text content on my slides to help me to remember what to say."

And that's absolutely fine. I have no problem with a speaker using PowerPoint as a prompt to help them remember their talk. However, if you do that, please just do one simple but extremely important thing: Unplug the projector (or if you're presenting virtually, just don't share your screen).

If you want to use slides *and* you need some notes, you can use the notes feature at the bottom of the slides to remind yourself of what you want to say. PowerPoint's presenter view allows you to see your current slide, your next slide, and importantly, the notes as your reminder.



PowerPoint presenter view, with notes section under the slide.

Your audience isn't here to read your notes. They've come to listen to you speak and to be inspired, educated, informed, or entertained.

5 Tweak your slides for online or hybrid presentations.

Whether you're presenting in the room or virtually, your slides should work for your audience. In general, there is not a lot of difference between the two but there are three things I would suggest you do if you are presenting online or via a screen in a hybrid environment.

1. Keep your slides simple. I'm always an advocate for simplicity anyway, but it's even more important if you're presenting your slides online. Remember, there may be members of your audience watching on tablets or phones, so your slide area is going to be very small for them. Keeping things simple and large enough to see is essential.
2. Don't go overboard on animations. Some online platforms don't work as well as you might like them to when displaying animations. Zoom is very good if you turn on the option to "Optimize for video clip."
3. Use two screens if possible. You can then share one screen with your audience while keeping your PowerPoint presenter view and your notes on the second screen in front of you.

Avoid that terrifying nightmare of presenting to an empty room. These basic tips will help you enjoy a successful partnership with your slides and wow your audience. Following them will help you sleep better at night!

David Henson helps speakers and businesses present more effectively. He designs and produces presentations, and runs masterclasses teaching people to become better and more effective visual communicators. You can reach him at www.theslidepresentationman.co.uk.

A Daughter Defies Expectations

Leadership lessons help U.K. member prosper.

By Paul Sterman



Diana Robertson

Growing up, Diana Robertson knew she wanted to run her own business. Why? Because her father did.

But that didn't happen when she became an adult—at least not at first. Her father didn't think she had the right stuff, and Robertson believed him. Toastmasters helped her overcome her self-doubts. Her experience as an officer and leader in the organization, says Robertson, helped propel her to success in business.

She is now an educational entrepreneur with her own business and a better perspective on what real-world leadership is. As she learned in Toastmasters, soft skills are a strength.

"I realized there are some other qualities in leaders that are way more important than, I don't know, being tough," says Robertson.

Early Influence

Her father, a hard-nosed, extroverted man, ran an importing business between China and Russia. "Ever since I was a kid, he always told me that you should never work for other people—never in your life," says Robertson, who grew up in Russia and now lives in London. "He said, 'You should always own your own business.'"

So imagine the daughter's excitement when, as a young woman, she told her dad—her role model—that she planned to start her own business.

His response?

"Darling, just forget it. Look, this is just not for everyone," Robertson recalls him saying. "I asked him, 'Why, what's the problem?' And he said, 'Well, I mean, come on—it's your personality type. You're not the type of person who should be having a business.'"

She was crushed by his words. Sensitive and idealistic, she didn't have the toughness to thrive—according to her father. One thing Robertson did know is she wanted to improve her self-confidence, and her communication skills.

Remembering one venture where she pitched a food-delivery service, she says that just calling people to set up meetings was "terrifying." "I had a schedule where I needed to make 20 calls, and I think I spent most of the day procrastinating, basically thinking, *This is too hard. What am I going to do? What am I going to say?* And in the end, maybe I would make two calls."

In 2016, she joined the WorldSurfers Toastmasters in Moscow, Russia. She felt her confidence grow as a communicator. But she says what really surprised her were

the leadership opportunities Toastmasters provided. In February 2018, she became WorldSurfers' Vice President Membership and about six months later, President of the club, whose membership numbers were rapidly dwindling. These steps were a pivotal turning point, says Robertson. Serving as an officer, she no longer felt daunted by the idea of reaching out to people.

"I actually started to enjoy it. I learned how to do it ... I really enjoyed meeting new members. I actually even really enjoyed persuading members to join the club."

Then her next big leadership step: becoming director of the District 91 (South United Kingdom) Conference in 2020. That year, she had moved with her now-husband to England and joined her current club: Riverside Communicators in London. Directing the District conference in the months after COVID-19 emerged was a unique challenge. Conference organizers were forced to cancel plans for an in-person event at a fashionable London hotel and presented a [virtual conference](#) instead.

Helping steer the conference to success amid such obstacles was huge for Robertson.

"All of that played a major role in developing my confidence in my leadership abilities and gave me the courage to start my current venture," she says.

Career Skills

Defying her dad's expectations, Robertson has become a successful business owner. In 2021, she started the online Skillsme Academy, which helps people hone communication, storytelling, and other soft skills. Robertson describes it as training that supplements what Toastmasters teaches. In fact, her coaches are all Toastmasters. And key to her success is her experience in Toastmasters, she says, where she has served as an officer, organized big events, and gained positive feedback about her strengths.

"For example, things like showing empathy are something people told me many times that they actually really valued in me."

Robertson gave a speech at a TEDxYouth event in London in late 2022. In "How to Learn Communication Skills," she talked about her Toastmasters journey, how important it is to develop communication skills early, and how they contribute to career success. Afterward, she says, one of the parents told her, "Every teenager must hear your speech at least once in their life."

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

Royal Honor

Britain's Queen quietly led and inspired the people she served.

By Steve Vear, DTM

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was the embodiment of public service leadership, both through her words and her actions.

Queen Elizabeth, Britain's head of state, died September 8, 2022, at 96 years old. Her reign spanned 70 years, starting in 1952, making her the country's longest-serving monarch. I, along with countless others in the United Kingdom and around the world, greatly admired Her Majesty.

I was proud to serve in her name. In 2019, I was appointed by the Queen as a Member of the Order of The British Empire (MBE), as part of the United Kingdom honors system. I was awarded the title for my volunteer service with organizations like the Samaritans, an England-based charity that provides support to those in emotional distress. Being made an MBE was the greatest honor of my life.

Even though in most situations the Queen had no official authority, she still displayed a strong sense of leadership and conveyed direction for the country. She projected an authoritative yet supportive tone.

To me, she seemed like a natural speaker—clear and engaging. She offered solace and inspiration in her speeches, and she was able to connect to listeners whether on an intimate scale, such as at a hospital or ribbon-cutting ceremony, or on a larger scale, such as a national broadcast.

On her 21st birthday—just a few years before her coronation as Queen—she famously said, “I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service.”

Beginning in 1957, the Queen delivered her televised Christmas message, which was broadcast annually and offered both reflection and encouragement about the future.

When Britain was in various forms of lockdown amid the COVID-19 outbreak, the Queen delivered a much-needed message of hope in her historic [televised address](#) on April 5, 2020. In it, she acknowledged the pain being endured and the sacrifices people were making during the pandemic.

“Together we are tackling this disease and I want to reassure you that if we remain united and resolute, then we will overcome it,” she said.

The conclusion of that speech was particularly memorable to me. Referencing a line from a 1939 wartime song, “We’ll Meet Again,” she said: “We should take comfort that while we may have more still to endure, better days will return: We will be with our friends again; we will be with our families again; we will meet again.” Such beautiful words of acknowledgement and hope.



Queen Elizabeth II delivered a message of hope in an April 2020 televised address about the pandemic.

While on the throne, Queen Elizabeth served as patron for more than 600 organizations, with the Charities Aid Foundation suggesting that her involvement in these organizations led to more than 1.4 billion pounds (more than \$1.7 billion in U.S. dollars) being raised.

One of her most important roles was the formal appointment of the British prime minister. Queen Elizabeth appointed no less than 14 prime ministers, her final one being Liz Truss (who later resigned) two days before the Queen's death.

The long-established custom of a weekly private audience with the prime minister continued throughout her reign, even taking place remotely during the pandemic. Although she had no direct power in terms of governing, many prime ministers have noted the importance of having the ear of someone who has seen British history at such an intimate level. Many leaders have praised her as an excellent listener.

Another duty of hers involved reviewing and signing bills, something she did thousands of times throughout her reign. Royal commentators have often noted that her reviews were more than just a rubber stamp. As with the prime minister meetings, her long tenure gave her a historical perspective and allowed her to provide insightful advice and observations.

The Queen was a source of inspiration. I was shocked and humbled when I received notice of my MBE honor. It felt surreal when I went to Buckingham Palace and shook hands with then-Prince Charles, who presented me with the medal. He will be coronated as King Charles III on May 6, 2023.

The achievements, words, and gracious leadership of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II are an example to us all. May she rest in peace and may God save the King!

Steve Vear, DTM, is a member of the Wessex Speakers Club in Winchester, Hampshire, United Kingdom. He is a Past Division Director and current Parliamentarian for District 91, and serves as a magistrate in the U.K.

What's Your Working Genius?

Harness your natural strengths for productivity and self-satisfaction.

By Kristin Arnold

For the past 20 years, best-selling business author Patrick Lencioni would get frustrated at work. He loved his job and the people he worked with, but when he was working on certain tasks he found himself quickly becoming grumpy and didn't know why.

For example, when Lencioni led a webinar to teach leadership, he absolutely loved the experience. But a recap call about the presentation with the event staff left him tired and cranky. A few minutes later, he had an idea for his podcast, and he was on fire again!

Amy Hiatt, the co-founder of Lencioni's consulting firm, The Table Group, got curious about this recurring behavior, and asked him why he felt so strongly about some of his work. Lencioni's response: "I don't know, but I'm exhausted. Half of it frustrates me, half of it I love to do. I wish I knew because I'm really kind of frustrated. And I have been for years."

Maybe you've had this feeling too. You wish you could do more of X, less of Y, and absolutely none of Z. Most likely you shrug it off. After all, that's why it's called "work," and that's why they pay you. Besides, it must get done.

Lencioni and Hiatt began exploring the different types of work and identified six work elements required in any kind of activity. This became the basis of Lencioni's latest book, *The 6 Types of Working Genius*.

The duo broke the six types of work required for every task into "geniuses"—having a natural gift of:

- **Wonder** – Pondering the possibility of greater potential and opportunity in a given situation.
- **Invention** – Creating original and novel ideas and solutions.
- **Discernment** – Intuitively and instinctively evaluating ideas and situations.
- **Galvanizing** – Rallying, inspiring, and organizing others to take action.
- **Enablement** – Providing encouragement and assistance for an idea or project.
- **Tenacity** – Pushing projects or tasks to completion to achieve results.

Whether you're working on launching a product, organizing a Toastmasters event, or planning a vacation,

Lencioni found that every job needs the six identified geniuses to create great results.

The Geniuses in Practice

I've spent close to 30 years helping companies teach their people how to facilitate and lead teams. I've seen time and time again that these "genius" concepts can help all teams be more productive and have a higher level of satisfaction.

All ideas, concepts, and projects start with someone who is curious about the world. They wonder why things happen and angst over unrealized potential in people, initiatives, and the company as a whole.

While those with the genius of Wonder ask "why," those with the genius of Invention solve for "how," since people with this genius are innately good at finding solutions for problems.

Those with the genius of Discernment provide feedback to the Inventor, who goes through an iterative process of tweaking it and getting it right.

While the Discerner says, "This is an awesome idea," it takes more than a good idea to deliver on its potential. It takes a team. Somebody needs to rally people around a cause. Galvanizers get energized by a good idea, latch on to it, and sell it.

Once the idea has taken shape, those with the genius of Enablement ride alongside the galvanized idea. They are the selfless "team players" who get great satisfaction in helping and supporting others, and seeing things done right.

Finally, there are the finishers with the Tenacity genius, those with the energy, talent, and drive to get things across the goal line.

All six types of working geniuses are required for getting work done successfully. And we all have working geniuses, competencies, and frustrations.

- **Working genius:** Your natural ability that brings you energy, joy, and fulfillment. Think of this as your "flow state." You could do this kind of work forever and because you love that kind of work, you usually gravitate toward it and are pretty good at it.
- **Working competency:** You can do this type of work well (and may get lots of positive reinforcement about it), but you are not completely joyful nor completely

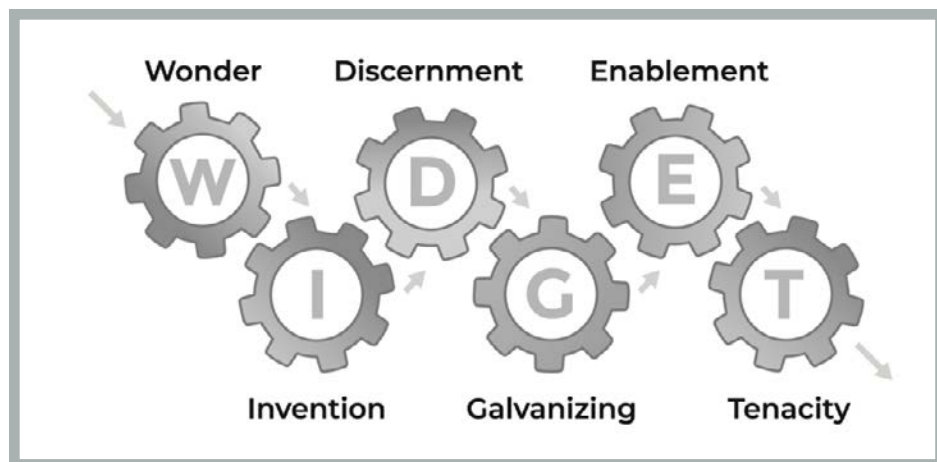


Photo Credit: The Table Group

miserable with this kind of work. Over time, this drains your energy and productivity.

- **Working frustration:** You dislike doing this type of work and find it draining, even if you are capable of it. For many of us, our working frustrations are the source of a lot of guilt and judgment because we feel bad about not being competent or eager to help in particular areas of work. Though you can't always avoid those areas, you can try to minimize the time you have to spend on those tasks. But again, if you don't know what those deficiencies are, you can't minimize them.

Though each and every one of us are *able* to do all six genius elements, some are better than

Unfortunately, in a team environment, I rush to “get it done” to help and support others without tapping into my Enablement competency or frustration around Galvanizing and sharing my vision with others. Ironic, isn't it?

Speaking about the impact of the working genius theory, Lencioni reflected, “Many people attribute their failures and struggles to having a bad attitude, not being smart enough, or making bad decisions. When people realize they have certain areas of genius, and other areas of frustration, they can attribute their struggles to the lack of alignment between their geniuses and their role. This reduces their sense of guilt and shame and allows them to move into work that provides a better chance of fulfillment and success.”

Though each and every one of us are *able* to do all six genius elements, some are better than others at particular geniuses.

others at particular geniuses. Recognize when you are working in each element and reinforce those activities that bring you joy. You can try to minimize your areas of working frustration by finding out if someone else on your team enjoys that type of task, delegating to others (if you're the one in charge), outsourcing it, or eliminating it.

For example, my working geniuses are Discernment and Tenacity. I continually evaluate ideas and situations, bringing years of team process and business knowledge to my thought processes.

To determine your geniuses, competencies, and frustrations, think about each category. Ask your family, friends, and colleagues to help you identify your gifts and limitations. For a fee, you can take the online [Working Genius Assessment](#) to confirm your findings and maximize your satisfaction and contribution in your work and life.

The Working Genius and Teams

Since no one person can embody all six geniuses, teams use the Working Genius model to find immediate impact on their productivity and

morale. If you're a manager or project owner, you can use this model and tap into each of your team members' working geniuses when staffing and making assignments.

By knowing what is needed for each phase of the team's task, you can minimize people's frustrations and be cognizant to not overburden those who are less skilled in that particular phase.

The Working Genius model also gives a framework to discuss how the team wants to do its work and to reduce the guilt and shame that come along with operating outside of your working genius.

For example, a manager was frustrated with what she thought was a lack of creativity from one of her direct reports. Her team took the Working Genius Assessment, and she realized that this Enablement-Tenacity team member was plenty creative in his genius areas—supporting and helping others to complete myriad tasks and getting his own work done. His working frustration was in the Wonder-Invention phase (pondering and creating novel solutions), which the manager confused with lack of creativity.

In this case, the manager realized that she didn't need a “new idea” guy—she had plenty of those on her team—but she did need this team member who could take that idea and bring it across the finish line!

Imagine if every company, every organization, every team knew the areas of genius, competency, and frustration of their people and organized them for success. And imagine if every parent knew those areas of genius for their spouse and children. It's not an exaggeration to say that there would be more joy and less misery in society.

But that happens one person at a time. And that person might as well be you. What are your areas of genius?

Kristin Arnold is one of the first batch of facilitators to get certified in the 6 Types of Working Genius. She uses this model as part of her facilitation repertoire to build high performance teams. For more info, go to www.ExtraordinaryTeam.com.

Nice Try, AI

Writing is thinking. Writing with artificial intelligence is ... thinking artificially?

By John Cadley

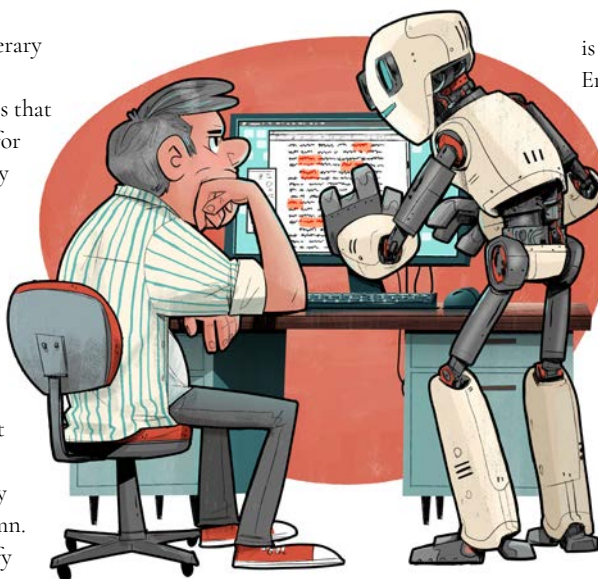
This column might well sound my literary death knell. In telling you about the many artificial intelligence (AI) apps that do your editing—and even your writing—for you (more on this to come), I am telling my editors why they no longer need me—not when they can download, say, Grammarly, Jasper, or Wordtune for \$4.99, enter a few key words relevant to a particular subject, click “Generate,” and get a perfectly publishable column in minutes. Needless to say, I make more than \$4.99 per column. Not a lot more, but times are tough, or so my editors tell me.

My only hope of not being replaced by an algorithm is that this is a humor column. All of these programs claim to write spiffy copy for advertising, marketing, emails, websites, blogs, and other work-world communications. None of them are funny. They try to be, by mimicking a real comic author’s style that they’ve copied off the web. But it’s like Alexa telling you a mother-in-law joke. It’s only funny when you have a real mother-in-law.

As someone who came up the hard way—doing my own thinking and writing—I find this whole business more than a little unsettling. Are people really willing to surrender their unique voices, thoughts, and insights to an unknown programming whiz in Silicon Valley? Do they really believe a manufactured facsimile is superior to their own majestic cerebrum?

Boy, do they ever.

The testimonials for these apps sound like their users have found the Fountain of Youth. Someone named Mark wrote, “I’ve been a journalist for 30 years and Wordtune often suggests sentences that are better than mine.” Gee, Mark, nothing like advertising why you should be fired. George, another Wordtune enthusiast, gushes, “My writing has improved tremendously!” An admirable accomplishment indeed, and even more so if George actually had something to do with it.



Does this sound like sour grapes? Am I whining because I think these people are cheating? Is my own writing so great that it couldn’t use a little cyber help? Worst of all, am I suggesting that Toastmasters shouldn’t use these programs to improve their own communication skills?

I refuse to answer on the grounds that it may incriminate me.

I’m not saying these tools are completely devoid of value. An app called Hemingway, for instance, will take what you’ve written and

As someone who came up the hard way—doing my own thinking and writing—I find this whole business more than a little unsettling.

highlight everything that’s wrong with it, thereby improving your prose and shattering your ego. Sentences highlighted in yellow are too long and complex; those shadowed in red are deemed dense, meandering, and hard to follow. Your task

is to make them shorter and simpler, much like Ernest Hemingway’s own style. Which is not to say that people will start comparing you to the real thing. I think we can all agree that if you could write like Hemingway, you wouldn’t need Hemingway.

Simplified is another AI app geared toward marketing communications, promising to produce exciting advertising copy in minutes. As a former copywriter, I know that while the writing may be artificial, the client isn’t. What happens when they hate it? Perhaps Simplified will write a nice resignation letter for you.

And then there’s Peppertype, which you can “train” to adapt to your own style.

Question: If your own style is the problem, why would you adapt the program to produce more of it? Peppertype will do it because its intelligence is artificial. If it were really intelligent it would ask, “With all due respect, do you have a wastepaper basket?”

All of these programs offer the one benefit that they assume you will find more valuable than a free year of Amazon Prime: NO MORE WRITER’S BLOCK! Not being human, AI doesn’t understand that many writers welcome writer’s block. It gives them an excuse to escape the agony of a blank white page and go do something they actually enjoy.

(ALERT! This is John Cadley. The column you have just read is NOT mine. It was written by a new AI app called WriteyTighty, which they asked me to beta test and then published the results without my permission. I’m sure you’ve noticed it’s not nearly as funny as my own columns—none of the biting wit, searing satire, and side-splitting humor that prompt so many to compare me with Aristophanes and Mark Twain. Please write and tell the editors you agree with me that this is not funny. Please.)

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

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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

amazon

We are happy to speak with you about your publishing needs.

Call us at 978-440-8364 or visit us at <http://www.eBookIt.com>.



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