

By Jana Barnhill, PIP, AS

Earning Accredited Speaker status is a daunting journey that is well worth it.



Jana Barnhill

# Becoming a Pro

**T**oastmasters International is proud to welcome two new Accredited Speakers! Rochelle Rice from New York City, and Karen Twichell of Newport Beach, California, successfully completed the final round of judging at this year's International Convention. With this accomplishment, they joined a small group of only 60 Toastmasters who have obtained this lofty goal.

What is an Accredited Speaker? This is a person who possesses expert-level speaking skills. Many have made the jump from speaking for free to speaking for a fee, becoming professional speakers who work for themselves or for their employers. Sound appealing? If so, Toastmasters International encourages you to apply. But be prepared: Similar to advancing to the World Championship of Public Speaking, the journey is quite daunting.

Becoming an Accredited Speaker takes time and requires the completion of several prerequisites. First, you must earn your Advanced Communicator Bronze award. You must also deliver at least 25 speeches to non-Toastmasters groups within three years of your application. But don't let that deter you. The fact is, there are always groups within a community looking for speakers. Lions, Rotary and Kiwanis clubs, women's special interest groups and groups that support causes, such as cancer and diabetes research, are

often looking for individuals to speak either for them or to them. Perhaps you have the opportunity to make presentations at your work or place of worship. You simply have to make the effort to find those opportunities, contact the appropriate people and schedule the presentations.

A bigger challenge as you work through these 25 speeches is having to incorporate *each type of presentation skill*, including informative, persuasive, motivational/inspirational, entertaining/humorous and seminar/discussion leader. This is one of the differences between the Accredited Speaker Program and competing in a speech contest, where you can focus on one skill, such as in the Humorous Speech Contest. But in return for your efforts, you'll "reach the height of excellence in public speaking skills," as the Accredited Speaker Program Brochure and Application points out. This form (Item #1208) is available for download at [www.toastmasters.org/asapp.asp](http://www.toastmasters.org/asapp.asp).

## Submitting Your Application

Once those prerequisites have been met, it is time for you to submit your application, which is due to World Headquarters on November 1, 2011. While this is nearly a year away, it's a good idea to start planning now in order to fulfill all the requirements. Among other things, the application requires you to send an audiotape or CD of a live 15- to 45-minute presentation to a non-Toastmasters audience. That time limit is another big difference between vying to become an Accredited Speaker and competing in a speech contest, where your speech is limited to seven minutes or less.

Your audio, which is sent to a panel of judges, is another true test of your abilities as a speaker. Since you do not have the benefit of engaging the judges face-to-face, you must rely completely on the strength of your ability to transcend the need to be seen. Think of listening to an audio book. Have you ever begun listening to one, then turned it off because it did not grab you from the beginning and hold your attention to the end? Similarly, your vocal projection is crucial on this audiotape or CD.

If you pass that first level of judging, congratulations! You're *almost* there. You must then prepare for round two: a live, new presentation delivered at the next International



Karen Twitchell



Rochelle Rice

Convention, as Rochelle and Karen did this past August.

As happens in speech contests, when you are trying to become an Accredited Speaker, you don't always walk away with the trophy. This was Karen Twitchell's second attempt; she had spoken in the final round during the 2009 International Convention and did not pass.

"I had worked so hard for this and I was very disappointed," recalls Karen. "My fellow Toastmasters urged me to try again in 2010. My family and non-Toastmasters friends told me not to torture myself by trying again."

Past International President and fellow Accredited Speaker Robert Barnhill understands her dilemma. He also did not pass on his first attempt and says, "Becoming an Accredited Speaker requires not only having skills, but a willingness to adapt and change. It doesn't matter how good *you* think you are. If you don't pass, there is a reason and you have to be willing to learn what it is and make the necessary changes so you can pass the next time."

This is exactly what Karen did. "After a couple of months of getting over hurt feelings, I made the deci-

sion to try again." She worked hard, reviewing the tape of her 2009 presentation, seeking advice and making the needed changes. It paid off!

Likewise, Rochelle found each level of the Accredited Speaker Program challenging. "But once I got my message clear, I knew I was on my way," she says. As a former professional dancer, she benefited from her dance training. "I chose my clothes, practiced onstage at 7 a.m. in my heels and practiced my breathing and stretching. I felt like a dancer again, getting ready

### Tackling the Ultimate Challenge

So yes, it is a daunting process: 25 outside speeches, a live recording, a live presentation during the International Convention and training like an athlete. But all the Accredited Speakers I know agree that this program was the ultimate challenge in taking their skills -to the highest level possible. It dared us to ask the question, -"Am I good enough to be a *professional* speaker?"

Accredited Speaker Ross Mackay, from Aurora, Ontario, Canada,

**"I do not treat one designation greater than the other. The World Champion of Public Speaking represents performance at a moment in time against a group of contenders. Accredited Speaker represents a solid foundation of professional skills displayed over time. I cherish them both."**

**- Dana Lamon, Accredited Speaker and World Champion of Public Speaking**

for the stage. Having my goal [of becoming an Accredited Speaker] made me stay centered and focused."

Accredited Speaker Johnny Campbell from Carol Stream, Illinois, adds that "Preparing for Accredited Speaker was rigorous and tough. I trained like an athlete."

recalls this advice given to him when he applied for the Accredited Speaker program: "Would you pay money to hear this speaker? If not, that person should not be an Accredited Speaker."

As Accredited Speakers, we are often asked how we have benefited

from earning our designation. In addition to improving our skills and receiving invitations to speak at Toastmasters conferences, the title was important to those of us who speak professionally because it differentiates us and carries credibility. Even though the person hiring you doesn't really know what it means or what you did to earn it, they do recognize that it is a speaking credential.

Past International President and Accredited Speaker Dilip Abayasekara of Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, says, "The AS designation has given me instant credibility with prospects and clients. Although non-Toastmasters don't have any idea about what is required to earn the Accredited Speaker designation, they recognize it as a high-level recogni-

tion of professional speaking skills by an international organization. I use it as a way to differentiate myself from others in the speaking, coaching and training industry."

The title also keeps you on top of your game. Says Accredited Speaker and past District 5 Governor Sheryl Roush, DTM, of San Diego, California: "We are now professionals. We cannot have a bad day. No matter what we are doing, we always have to be 'on'."

That may sound more like a challenge than a benefit, but we are doing what we love: speaking, sharing our knowledge, our hearts and our motivation with others. And we get paid for it. How is that for icing on the cake?

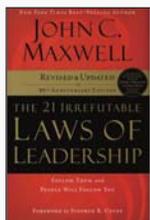
Do you have what it takes to become an Accredited Speaker?

If so, you have a year to submit your application. Be sure to read all the materials carefully, and please feel free to contact any of the Accredited Speakers. We are always ready, willing and excited to help. We look forward to welcoming you as our newest Accredited Speaker in 2012!

For a list of all Accredited Speakers to date, visit [www.toastmasters.org/AccreditedSpeakers.aspx](http://www.toastmasters.org/AccreditedSpeakers.aspx). 

**Jana Barnhill**, DTM, AS, served as Toastmasters International President in 2008-2009 and earned her Accredited Speaker title in 1998. A member of two Toastmasters clubs, she lives with her husband, fellow Past International President and Accredited Speaker Robert Barnhill, in Lubbock, Texas.

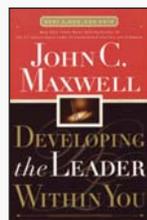
## Literature Guide



### The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership

*By John C. Maxwell*  
In this book, John C. Maxwell sets out the essential "laws of leadership" as well as the principles behind them.

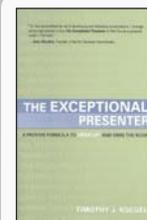
**B117** Hardback **\$22**



### Developing the Leader Within You

*By John C. Maxwell*  
This book gives a fresh perspective of your leadership potential now and in the future.

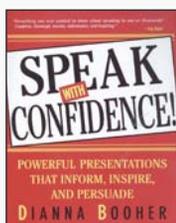
**B118** Paperback **\$14**



### The Exceptional Presenter

*By Timothy J. Koegel*  
This book breaks down the art of presenting into a series of skills and then provides a systematic formula to master each skill.

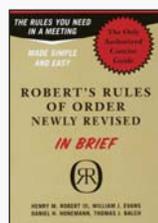
**B8** Hardback **\$20**



### Speak With Confidence

*By Diana Booher*  
Hundreds of tips and techniques to make the most of any presentation opportunity.

**B9** Paperback **\$16.95**

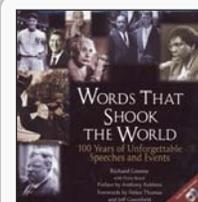


### Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised in Brief

*By Henry M. Robert, III, William J. Evans, Daniel H. Honemann and Thomas J. Balch*

An introductory, condensed version of the handbook outlining parliamentary law.

**B30A** Paperback **\$6.95**



### Words That Shook the World

*By Richard Green*  
This beautifully bound book features evaluations of the best speeches from a variety of speakers over the past century.

**B106** Hardback **\$42**

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