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P.O. Box 9052 • Mission Viejo, CA 92690 U.S.A.  
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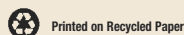
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## Transition Time in Toastmasters



✦ Transitions: a part of life, a scary time, a creative time, a turbulent time... and a time for re-shaping. We've all been through so many transitions in life. Do you recall your transition from high school to college, or perhaps to your first job, or to join the armed forces of your country? How about transitioning from single life to married life... and maybe back again? From a carefree lifestyle to the responsibilities of parenthood? We've been through a lot, you and I, and somehow we survived it all!

Well, it's transition time in Toastmasters, and once again we will survive! Your club's new executive committee has just assumed responsibility for the leadership of your club, and it will be busy creating and implementing a blueprint for a successful year. On the first of July, a new district leadership team took office, with a commitment to serve the district to the best of its ability during the forthcoming year. And next month, a new President and nine new directors will be elected; the new Board will be responsible for managing our organization's transition into a new and exciting future.

What about you? What Toastmasters transition are you going through, as a communicator and leader? Are you transitioning into a leadership role at the club or district level? Or maybe this is the year you transition from good speaker to competitive speaker? Regardless of the specifics of your transition, you can do a number of things to stay on an even keel.

To me, most important is to stay true to the values of Toastmasters International. No matter what we do, if we are always guided by our shared values of respect, integrity, service and excellence, we cannot go wrong. Second, keep mission and vision at the forefront. At club, district or international level, we would be wise to check everything we consider doing against our mission and vision statements. If the action contemplated will contribute to delivering our mission and realizing the vision – do it! And if it doesn't – don't! It doesn't get much simpler than that! Third, embrace it, don't fight it. Transition is inevitable, so you may as well enjoy the ride!

As the late baseball hero Willie Stargell once said: "Life is one big transition." He's right, of course. We will go through so many more transitions as we continue shaping ourselves and shaping our world. After all, change is part of life!

Chris K. Ford, DTM  
 International President

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Helping fledgling Toastmasters face the page.

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By Victor M. Parachin

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### The Toastmasters Vision:

Toastmasters International empowers people to achieve their full potential and realize their dreams. Through our member clubs, people throughout the world can improve their communication and leadership skills, and find the courage to change.

### The Toastmasters Mission:

Toastmasters International is the leading movement devoted to making effective oral communication a worldwide reality.

Through its member clubs, Toastmasters International helps men and women learn the arts of speaking, listening and thinking – vital skills that promote self-actualization, enhance leadership potential, foster human understanding, and contribute to the betterment of mankind.

It is basic to this mission that Toastmasters International continually expand its worldwide network of clubs thereby offering ever-greater numbers of people the opportunity to benefit from its programs.

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Do you have something to say? Write it in 200 words or less, sign it with your name, address and club affiliation and send it to [letters@toastmasters.org](mailto:letters@toastmasters.org).

## LETTERS

### The Best Mike for the Job

Many thanks for the article taking the “dress for success” concept to new heights. I took special note of the box “Miked for Sound” (April)

As the “sound guy” for many district events, I take extra care to be certain that speakers are properly set to be heard. You can guess how many times contestants have lost points because they became overly excited and popped the mike off their collar, becoming nearly mute to many in the audience.

Although I provide several types of mikes, I always recommend using the wireless mike, and I brief the contestants on its proper use. Often, experience is the best teacher and Toastmasters events are the best learning opportunities.

Craig W. During, ATMB • AeroVision Toastmasters, Club 4419  
El Segundo, California

### Speaking Paradoxically

We are consistently admonished in the *Competent Communicator* manual to eschew words of many syllables in our speeches. Words of one syllable are heavily promoted as most effective. One assumes that these short, plain, Anglo Saxon words would be satisfactory for all communication. Most of the others are derived from Greek, Latin and French. Each of these languages was considered necessary for an American High School education in the past.

My dilemma is this paradox we face: Toastmasters are also encouraged to increase our vocabularies at every meeting with our Word of the Day segment. The Vice President Education specifically appoints a member to present an intriguing but not exotic word at each meeting.

Enhancing our vocabularies appears to be considered meritorious. Nevertheless, the more successful

the Word of the Day, the more words we have to cross out when preparing our speeches.

What a perplexing, baffling, inexplicable puzzle! An enigma without parallel!

Peggy A. Caselle, DTM • Savvy Speakers • Syracuse, New York

### Saluting the ‘Sergeant’

I am a “lifer” Sergeant at Arms for my Toastmasters club (I’ve spent eight years in that officer role to date). Ernest Ray Raynor III, the author of the article “Leadership Through Service” (April 2008), said it all and said it well, in respect to the best practices of the Sergeant at Arms role: “Toastmasters should be an oasis of order and purpose amidst the chaos and confusion outside our meeting halls.” Thank you for a long overdue article on this key club-officer role.

Rosemary Wilson, ACS • Midtown Clayton Toastmasters  
Clayton, Missouri

### Voicing Gratitude

At 65 years of age I joined Toastmasters. I was in the hospital for more than six months with traumatic brain injury and a few other serious symptoms, and was told to retire. I did retire but did not like it and looked for a few other things to do. Toastmasters has taught me communication skills and I like it a lot. Thanks for what you are doing.

Jim Davis • South Suburban Toastmasters • Littleton, Colorado

### Fewer vs. Less

As a new Toastmaster, I would like to say how much I enjoyed my first experience of the *Toastmaster* magazine. I did feel compelled to write in to point out a grammatical point that has been passed down from generation to generation in my family as our sacred duty to correct whenever this common mistake is made. I am often branded as a pedant for this

obsession but cannot help drawing attention to [this mistake], even though I make many myself.

This grammatical point is the use of the word *less* instead of the word *fewer*. The word *fewer* should be used whenever something is countable. The word *less* is for a single thing. You can have *less* money but you have *fewer* notes. You can have *less* hair but *fewer* hairs. You can have *less* shopping but *fewer* items. The instructions on the Letters page of the magazine should therefore read: “Write it in 200 words or *fewer*...”

Marc Delesciefs • London Corinthians  
Kensal Green, London, United Kingdom

**Editor’s Note:** You raise a good point. However, some distinguished grammarians (Bill Walsh, chief copy editor at the Washington Post, for example), maintain the use of the word “less” is acceptable in this context. Grappling with grammar rules is always a challenge!

### Article is Letter Perfect

I’ve been a Toastmaster for many years, and generally read all the articles in each month’s issue of the *Toastmaster*. The article “Better Presentations from A to Z” by Carol Smith White (May 2008) was one of the very best I’ve read in this publication, or any other publication. It occurs to me that such a well-written article takes considerable effort to create, so I wanted to commend the author for her effort, and thank the *Toastmaster* for including it. All Toastmasters can benefit greatly from the practical tips and pointers Dr. White packs into three pages, from beginner members to seasoned ones. Anyone who did not read it should do so. Anyone who did read it should read it again.

Tom Fredricks, ATMG, CL • Mad Toasters • New York, New York



A different way  
to tell your story.

# The Mini-Memoir: A Slice of Your Life

Has there been an era in your life that was unusually vivid or intense? A set of circumstances or an event that caused you to make choices you might not have made otherwise? Perhaps it was your freshman year at college, your stint in the Peace Corps, your first teaching job, or your first year of parenthood. Have you confronted a life-threatening illness or played a key role in some larger community event? Do those experiences continue to have an impact on you today? Will they give your audience what one writer calls “that shiver of self-recognition,” the sense that what happened to you could have easily happened to them? If so, you have the ingredients for a particular kind of speech: the mini-memoir.

One of my earliest speeches in Toastmasters was about the year and a half my husband and I lived and worked in New Zealand with the Maori people. They taught us new rituals, including how to introduce ourselves using geographical references. For example, a Maori woman might say, “My mountain is Ruapehu and my river is the Wanganui.” While I lived in Wanganui, I thought of myself that way, too. They also taught us how to throw one of the best parties I have ever been to, a *hangi*, that began in the morning with guests helping to dig a pit so that the sumptuous feast we enjoyed that evening could be cooked underground.

A mini-memoir is a little slice of life, an idea that needs a little shap-

ing and polishing before you present it to an audience. Start by checking out the titles of published memoirs at your local library or bookstore. Many memoirs are organized around a place and a certain time period in the author's life. For example, *Manhattan, When I was Young* is Mary Cantwell's evocation of what it was like to live in Greenwich Village in the 1950s. *Farewell To Manzanar* is Jeanne Wakatsuki's account of spending part of her childhood in an internment camp during World War II.

Other memoirs are organized around some problem or illness the author has faced and overcome, such as Caroline Knapp's *Drinking, A Love Story* or Katherine Russell Rich's *The Red Devil: To Hell with Cancer – and Back*. Memoir can focus on a specific relationship, often between a parent and a child. Calvin Trillin's *Remembering Denny* is the author's attempt to understand why a friend with a bright future ended up taking his own life. Other authors reflect on the roles they played during some national or international conflict. One of the best, Michael Herr's *Dispatches*, chronicles what it was like to be a young reporter during the Vietnam War.

Although your speech will be much shorter than a book-length memoir, your topic may be similar. Your challenge will be to compress these experiences into a relatively short speech. Ironically, once you've chosen your topic, the best way to

start is to write a big, sloppy draft. What do you remember about that time and place? Look at old photographs. Dredge up the sensory details. Try to remember how things felt and smelled. Who else played a role? What do you remember about what other people said and did? Don't start editing yet. At this stage, what is most important is opening the floodgates and allowing the memories to pour in.

Once you have generated enough material, your job is to shape it. Let your audience know from the beginning of your speech what was at stake. Consider an opening like Katherine Russell Rich's first sentence: “I found the lump twenty minutes before breakfast, three weeks before my marriage broke up.”

■ **Make sure your audience knows where and when the action took place.** For example, “I was determined to try my luck in Los Angeles even though I was just out of college and flat broke. It was 1975, the year *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* won an Academy Award for best screenplay. I knew I could do better.”

Note that both these examples take the audience to the place author Philip Lopate calls the *cul-de-sac*, the place where the speaker must turn around and find a way out. By setting up the situation in just a few sentences, you give yourself enough room to tell your story.



■ **Think in scenes.** Imagine that your audience is sitting in a darkened theater. Help them see what you saw. If your mini-memoir is about the impact of parenthood on your life, you could begin with a quick sketch of your oldest child's birth. "Ten years ago last month Jason was born. We had just moved into a new house in Galveston. I was standing outside on the front porch watching the wind whip through the trees when I heard the weather report. Gale force winds were predicted. My husband was out of town and I didn't know a soul."

■ **Create a dramatic arc by building tension.** Instead of telling your audience how you felt, let them experience what you were experiencing. Our novice screenwriter might say, "For a while I crashed on my friend's floor, but the day I found all my belongings out on the sidewalk, I knew I had outstayed my welcome." Our expectant mother might say, "By seven o'clock the winds were up to 75 miles per hour. That's when the lights went out." Try writing three scenes, one at the beginning of

your story, another in the middle and one at the end.

■ Once you've gotten the elements of your story in place, it's time to do what Lopate calls **your "introspective homework," by examining your thoughts and feelings in order to communicate not just what happened, but what it meant to you.** Why is this story so important to you? Why do you remember these events so clearly? How did these experiences change you? Did they make you a stronger, wiser person? These lessons don't have to be life-changing and they can certainly be funny or wry.

Before you decide to give a mini-memoir speech, consider a couple of ethical issues that most memoirists confront. Most likely you will be talking not just about yourself but about other people as well. Are you obligated to present only information that is literally true? How can you accurately remember dialogue that was spoken years ago?

Remember, your first responsibility is to your audience. Your goal is to give a coherent speech that has impact. You may decide, because of

time constraints or the need for clarity, to choose one or two characters and omit others, or even to create a composite character in order to create opportunities to use gestures and vocal variety. You may decide to put words in your characters' mouths they didn't actually say. If you are uncomfortable with this, consider including a disclaimer in the form of a sentence or two letting your audience know that you are telling your version, which probably won't be exactly the same as someone else's. You could say, "The story I'm about to tell you is true, but the names (or some of the details) have been changed," or "I'm sure my ex-husband would tell a very different story, but that's how it was for me."

The mini-memoir speech gives you a chance to tell a story and reflect on a slice of your life with wisdom and insight. It can be a rewarding assignment, for you as well as for your audience. ■

**Nowell King, ATMB**, is a member of Cascade Toastmasters Club in Eugene, Oregon. Reach her at [nowellking@earthlink.net](mailto:nowellking@earthlink.net).

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# Small Steps to *Successful Speechwriting*

Helping fledgling  
Toastmasters  
face the page.

By Aileen Storoshchuk, ATMB, CL





**A** guest arrives at your Toastmasters club and is warmly greeted. He sees an energetic meeting, hears more about programs and benefits that Toastmasters offers, and immediately signs up. Right from the start, he attends regularly, participates in the weekly Table Topics, and continues to hear great speeches and evaluations. He gives his Ice Breaker, and maybe his second speech. Then, inexplicably, he cancels out of giving his next speech three times in a row, or fails to even show up when he is scheduled to speak.

As a long-time Toastmaster, I have witnessed this phenomenon in many, if not most, new members. They appear eager to learn and grow. They participate willingly in Table Topics and take on roles such as the Timer and the Ah-Counter. So what happens after that first or second speech?

Often, it's that beginning speakers feel they're in over their head. If I see what appears to be an avoidance pattern developing with new members, I like to approach them and ask if anything is holding them back. When they get past the initial justifications of time or work commitments, they usually tell me some version of being overwhelmed by all the elements of writing and giving a speech. The more they've listened to evaluations of speeches by more seasoned members, the more they become aware that there are many nuances to writing and delivering a good speech.

My advice to a new Toastmaster in regards to speech delivery is to choose one element, such as gestures or eye contact, to focus on until you have developed some comfort and skill in that area – then choose another element to work on. You can practice that delivery element each time you participate in Table Topics, reminding yourself to focus on it whenever you're called to speak.

Furthermore, you can ask a mentor or friend to give you feedback each week about how

you're progressing with that particular skill. Remember, the projects in the Toastmasters Communication and Leadership manuals are set up to teach one skill at a time.

When I ask what is hampering the new member's speechwriting, the answer is usually some variation of "I don't know how to write a speech." Here's the advice I usually give:

- A speech is simply telling a group of people about something you are interested in.
- You want to convey that message in a way that is memorable. Therefore, *what* you tell people and *how* you tell it are the elements of making a speech. Virtually any topic can be interesting, and I have heard many fascinating speeches on fairly mundane topics, such as baking bread, the history of soap and microcredit.
- After you have selected a general topic, ask yourself, What is my purpose in giving this speech? The purpose is usually to inform, to inspire or to entertain. Deciding

on the purpose will help you narrow the focus to a particular aspect or slant. For example, suppose you settled on the topic of Winston Churchill. If your speech purpose is to inform your audience, you might speak about how he was never elected Prime

## STEPS FOR PREPARING A SPEECH:

- Think of an **idea** for your talk.
- Decide your speech's **purpose**.
- Come up with a particular **slant** or **focus**.
- Write down your message in **one sentence**.
- Draft an **outline** with an opening, body and conclusion.
- **Write out** your complete speech.
- Do the **single sentence** test.
- Write something out for the person **introducing** you.

Minister of England but was appointed to that position by the King of England in May 1940 for the duration of World War II.

■ If the speech is to be inspiring, you might focus on how Churchill's leadership and speaking abilities helped the Allies win the war, despite poor preparation by Churchill's predecessor. For an entertaining slant on

focus on some of the remarkable people you have met on your climbs, an informative speech might discuss the equipment climbers use, and an inspiring speech could tell about the personal transformation you have made through climbing.

Now – and I believe this step is critical to a cohesive speech – write down in one sentence what your talk is going to convey. You may or may not say that sentence within your speech, but it should be understood by all listeners that this sentence is the message of your speech. For example, the message of Martin Luther King's famous "I Have A Dream" speech might be condensed to, "I believe

**"A speech is simply telling a group of people about something you are interested in."**

Churchill, you might focus on his humor and famous quips, such as this gibe he made toward his archrival, Lady Astor: "I'm fat and you're ugly – but I can diet."

Here are a couple of other examples on the subject of speech purpose: If you're a nurse and wanted to speak about nursing, you might give an inspiring speech about a heroic child conquering cancer, or talk about your nursing education for an informative speech, or share some funny stories about patients for an entertaining speech. Suppose you are passionate about mountain climbing. An entertaining speech might

that some day black people will have the same rights as white people."

At this point, draft an outline. An outline is the bridge between your one-sentence speech idea and your actual speech. It creates the structure of a speech and consists of three main sections: the opening, the speech body and the conclusion. What attention-getting device will you open your speech with? What points will you make in the speech body? And how will you close your speech?

Most beginning speech writers find the easiest format to be the classic "tell, tell, tell." In your opening, let your

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audience know what you will be speaking about. Make one main point in your speech, using three points or pieces of evidence to back up that main point. Summarize your speech at the end of the speech body or in your conclusion. In this way, you narrow your topic to something that can be covered adequately in a five-to-seven-minute speech.

I write out my speech in full, even though I usually deliver talks just using an outline. Writing the speech in full has three purposes:

- I ensure that my ideas flow logically and smoothly.
- From experience I know approximately how long it will take me to deliver my speech (for example, four handwritten pages takes me seven minutes to deliver).
- If I get nervous, which I still do, having reviewed my speech in detail tends to help me find the right words when I'm at the podium.

Conclusions are perhaps the most difficult area of writing a speech, even for more experienced Toastmasters. I struggled with speech conclusions until I learned the importance of defining your speech's purpose. Writing a conclusion with impact is much easier knowing whether you are trying to inform, entertain or inspire your audience. Inspirational speeches usually end with a challenge to take some action, whereas the conclusions of informative and entertaining speeches usually relate back to the opening sentences. Strive to make the conclusion memorable.

As you write your speech, it sometimes can take on a life of its own and you deviate from your original purpose or even the topic. So after you have written it, give it the test of clarity one more time: Check if its message can be condensed to a single sentence. It may not be the sentence you originally intended, but if you like the speech, its purpose is clear and the message can be stated in a single sentence, then you have created a coherent speech.

The last stage is writing your introduction – a brief description of your speech to be read by the person introducing you. New speakers often take the first minute of their speech to explain the background on their topic; however, any explanation you might be tempted to make belongs in an introduction. For example, if your audience contains younger people or members from other countries, then an introduction to a speech about Churchill could briefly note his role in World War II.

You prepare your introduction and send it to the Toastmaster in advance or hand it to her before your meeting begins. (Different clubs have different policies regarding this process.) Then, when you begin to talk, you launch from “Madame Toastmaster, fellow Toastmasters and Distinguished Guests” directly into the opening sentence of your speech.

If you're new to a Toastmasters club, don't be overwhelmed when it's your turn to give a speech. Instead, let these strategies guide you to success! **T**

**Aileen Storoshchuk, ATMB, CL**, is a member of Grand Blanc Toastmasters in Grand Blanc, Michigan. Reach her at **aistor@comcast.net**.

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By Christopher Mortenson, ACB, ALB

## How much practice is enough?

# Best Ways to Prepare for a Speech

Does the following scene ring a bell with you? It is the night before your Toastmasters club meeting and you are signed up to give a speech. You have a subject, a title, and a few topics and stories you want to cover. Unfortunately, you have been busy lately and haven't quite put it all together, and tonight you want to do other things besides working on your speech, such as school work, household chores and family stuff (and then there's TV). You know you aren't ready to speak, but will more practice make a difference?

For many years I have listened to speeches with a critical ear, and I can not remember once thinking, "That speaker probably practiced too much." However, I can confidently say most speakers could have done at least a little better with more practice.

### Practice Makes Perfect

Last spring I decided to compete in my club's tall-tales contest, with the ultimate goal of taking my speech as far as I could in the speech-contest hierarchy. I put a lot of time

and thought into writing and refining my story. By the time I performed it in my club-level contest, I had rehearsed that speech at least 30 times and I won the contest. I continued to practice the speech more and more, sometimes before friends and family who would always offer me constructive criticism. I also recorded myself on video, carefully reviewing the tape to see where and how I could improve.

I went on to win both my area and division contests, and I met my goal when I competed at the district level. Before I was done, I had practiced or performed the speech more than 50 times. I contribute my success to three things:

1. I wrote the speech with a conscious effort to play to my particular strength, incorporating several accents and voices – a special talent of mine.
2. It was well-constructed with a good combination of repetition and humor (although it needed to be a little better to win at the district level).
3. I knew that speech cold – I could recite it by heart at a

moment's notice (and I still can, almost a year later). I didn't have to think of the next word or phrase because I had already memorized everything, and had spoken the words so many times that they came automatically and effortlessly. All that practice time was well spent.

### Cost-Benefit Analysis

How much you practice can greatly impact the quality of your speech. Practice costs time, and time is both precious and limited. How much time you should invest in rehearsing your speeches depends on the purpose and audience for the speech, as well as your experience and skill level. Following are some guidelines that work for me. You will have to figure out what works for you. Keep in mind that very rarely is a speech over-rehearsed.

For a competition or an important presentation for my job, I will practice the speech a lot and start talking through it as early as possible. Like most busy people, I know if I don't set the time aside and make it happen, it probably won't. How much actual time it takes will





depend on the length of the presentation, how familiar I am with the topic, and also how much speech-preparing I have been doing lately – it takes longer if I am rusty.

When preparing for a regular Toastmasters manual speech or a short informal presentation at work, I like to talk it through four-to six times. That seems to be about the right number of rehearsals to get the feel for the speech flow and to get the length right. Some sections, such as the opening, may need more practice than others, so I focus on the tricky chunks. I'm usually ready when my last two practices journeyed from start to finish with no stops and without need for any changes. To be really comfortable with the speech takes me about 10 to 15 run-throughs, spread over a few days (and not just the night before).

### Quality Time

How you practice your speech is as important as *how much*. Practice time should be used as effectively as possible. Find a quiet spot where you will not be interrupted, and where you can speak in a reasonably loud volume without inhibition.

The more similar it is to where you will present your speech, the better for practicing movements and gestures, using visual aids, and even practicing eye contact. But sometimes you should just practice wherever you can. I have spent many hours sitting in my car or wandering empty hallways practicing for my next speech while one

of my kids was finishing a karate lesson or scout meeting.

Once the speech starts to become refined, you may wish to seek feedback from others. In my experience, spouses and children can be effective if they somewhat represent the intended audience

**“Members shouldn’t wait to be completely comfortable before ‘taking the plunge.’”**

(and aren’t too tired of your request to listen to yet “another boring speech”). Friends and co-workers are usually better than family members, and fellow Toastmasters are often best because they know how to give constructive feedback and they sympathize with you (and don’t be surprised if they ask you to reciprocate).



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The importance of practicing at the actual location of your presentation depends on how familiar you are with the environment, how important the speech is, and whether or not you have complex visual aids. Pay attention to the lighting, how much space you have, and any technology like computers and projectors that need to be set up ahead of time. If possible, run through the whole

you will need to do some extra work. Practice a lot, seek out feedback from others, and if possible record and review video or at least audio of yourself several times. These self-critiques may seem painful because we tend to be our own worst critics, but they deliver the highest pay-offs. Practice, practice, practice! Don't worry about burning out or practicing too many times;

**“Don't worry about burning out or practicing too many times; that's much less likely than not practicing enough.”**

speech using all of the visuals and props at least once and practice the tricky spots several times. For less formal occasions (including Toastmasters speeches), there is no need to go over the whole speech onsite, but it is good to at least run through all the visual aids or PowerPoint slides.

I recommend using a stopwatch to time all practice runs. Like many people, I tend to speak faster in front of an audience than alone when practicing. I aim to finish a five-to-seven minute speech in six to seven minutes when I practice, because I want to always be within the time while allowing a little cushion for speaking faster. I also try to find three to five checkpoints in the speech, often at key transitions, and I make a mental note of the time it takes me to reach them. This will help me pace my speech so I can adjust if I get ahead or behind. It also gets me in the habit of looking at the clock at the same places in the speech every time. Checkpoints are particularly important for longer presentations.

For the extra important speech where you really want to shine,

that's much less likely than not practicing enough. I gauge it's enough when I don't feel improvement after two consecutive good run-throughs. For important speeches, I recommend having contingency plans for potential problems, and practicing dealing with those problems.

### **No Time**

Not long ago a new, young member of our club gave a manual speech that sounded like an extemporaneous talk. He started out fine, but within three or four sentences he was really struggling for words, and then he rattled on in a disjointed, unfocused manner for the next five minutes. After the meeting he told me he had come up with a topic and an opening but had been too busy to practice. It showed! He should have taken the time to go through his speech at least twice so he could have figured out where the speech was going and how to say what he wanted to say. Not only was it uncomfortable to listen to, but I doubt that anyone learned much that day – other than how important it is to practice.

Recently, another new Toastmaster who wasn't as prepared as she should be asked me if she should speak or wait for a future meeting when she had more practice. My advice was, “Go ahead and speak, but don't make a habit of it.” After the meeting, I discussed with her how more practice would have made that speech better.

The Toastmasters program intends to make you a better speaker. By coming unprepared, you might learn something about how to survive a speech, but it is much better to build good habits than reinforce bad habits by teaching yourself how to “get by.”

I would bet that most people who have earned their Competent Communicator award feel they didn't adequately prepare for at least one of their first 10 speeches. I also would bet they learned a lesson from that experience.

It is important to point out, however, that members shouldn't wait to be completely comfortable before “taking the plunge.” Otherwise, they may never get around to giving that next Toastmasters speech. We all have to balance time demands in life; we just need to plan and do the best we can to make the time needed for practice (proportionate to the speech's importance).

Giving speeches is the best way to get better at it, and I truly believe effective practice (eventually) makes perfect. Through Toastmasters I have learned what it feels like to be very under-prepared, to be completely ready, and most everything in between. There's no doubt which I prefer. **T**

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**Christopher J. Mortenson, ACB, ALB,** is a Major in the US Air Force working at the National Security Space Institute. He recently joined the UCCS Toastmasters club 4829 in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Reach him at **MajCMortenson@comcast.net**.



# Unhappy with your speech contest results? Do You Want to WOW the Audience?



In 1998, I never made it past Division 1  
[Toastmaster]

"How do I write a world-class speech?" Toastmasters from around the world ask me this question because of my accomplishments. I tell them, "I wish I could spend a day with you! I'd love to sit down and show you exactly what my two speaker coaches taught me. But, I can't."

If you're anything like me... I wanted to know, "How do world-class speakers approach a presentation? How do they make it look so easy? What do they do? What don't they do?" What I realized is that I needed to learn a World Champion's "perspective."

If you were sitting across from me, the first thing I'd say is "you're looking at it wrong." You're spending way too much time trying to write that "magic" speech that's a surefire winner. A "great" speech is one that's synergistic with the presenter. That the message *is* the presenter: they are **one in the same**.

The second thing I would tell you is that you're trying to persuade *before* you connect. A winning speech is one that emotionally connects with the audience. You must connect **before** you can persuade. If you want to connect, you must speak from your own experiences rather than about some "hot topic."

A comment I hear over and over again from people is, "I've got a good speech... I just need to add some humor." As fellow World Champion, Craig Valentine, would say, "You don't add humor, you uncover it!" Humor isn't something to be "added." Telling a joke unrelated to the main point doesn't make somebody a world-class speaker. The problem is not usually "lack of humor." It often lies within the *structure* and *focus* of the speech. I personally had many problems while creating my championship speech. My coach was quickly able to point them out. It was easy for him to see my problems. Why? His *perspective*. Mark Brown had *been there before* and had won the World Championship.

I was an experienced speaker, so I thought I knew "enough." I was comfortable, I could hold the audience's attention, and I could even make them laugh. I just needed that *secret speaker pill*.

Well, I have finally discovered the secret! The secret is I want to be a world-class *speaker*, you want to be a world-class *perspective*.

I really wish I could spend a day with you. Instead, why not get the perspectives of the seven World Champions (including Mark Brown, my coach) and the eight comedians who taught me to be funny?

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- How to change the pace to keep the audience involved!

What fellow Toastmasters have said:

"They are the best, most detailed, and most easily understood programs on public speaking that I have seen."

~ Michael Erwine, Eaton Rapids, MI

"I was able to take a good Area Contest winning speech, and turn it into a great Division Contest winning speech."

~ Mark Perew, Huntington Beach, CA

"After the contest, one of the audience came to me and said, 'I saw your improvement, and you are totally different!'"

~ Hubert, Taiwan

Stage time, Stage time, Stage time,

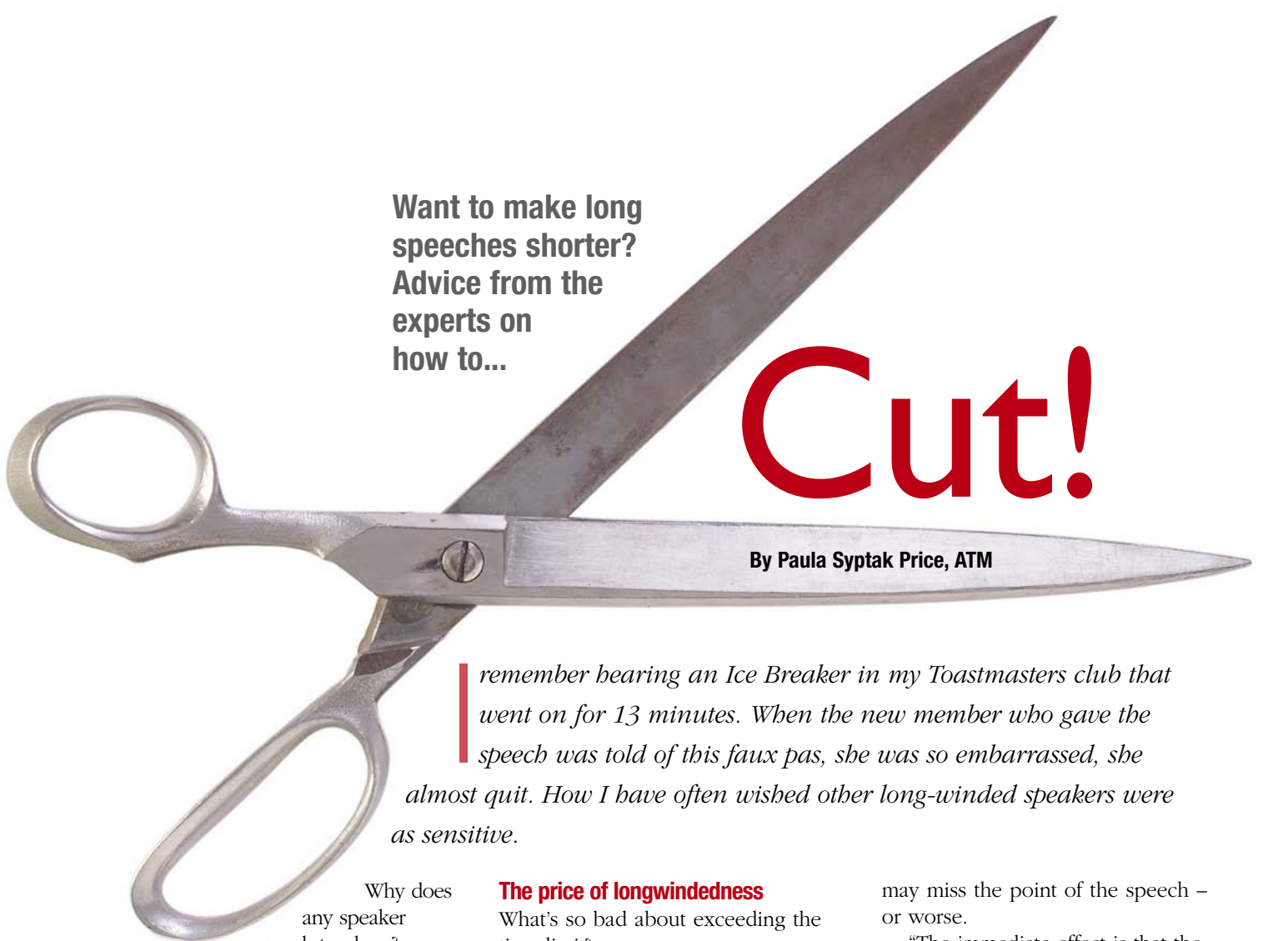
*Darren*

Darren LaCroix  
2001 World Champion of Public Speaking

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Want to make long  
speeches shorter?  
Advice from the  
experts on  
how to...

# Cut!

By Paula Syptak Price, ATM

*I remember hearing an Ice Breaker in my Toastmasters club that went on for 13 minutes. When the new member who gave the speech was told of this faux pas, she was so embarrassed, she almost quit. How I have often wished other long-winded speakers were as sensitive.*

Why does  
any speaker  
speak too long?

Because “they didn’t plan and rehearse,” says Tim Bete, director of the University of Dayton’s Erma Bombeck Writers Workshop. “There’s no reason to go long unless you ramble and get off topic.

“It’s better to keep on schedule and allow time for attendees to ask questions at the end of your speech,” he adds.

Darren LaCroix, a professional speaker and Toastmasters’ 2001 World Champion of Public Speaking, says presenters need to know exactly what they want their speeches to accomplish.

“I think people are not taking time to edit their speeches for the audience,” he says. “If you ask most speakers what their goal is, they will hem and haw. They can’t clearly state what they would like the audience to do, think or feel.”

## The price of longwindedness

What’s so bad about exceeding the time limit?

If you’re speaking at a conference, you can cause a whole host of problems.

“You put the meeting planner in a pickle,” notes LaCroix. “You mess up the schedule for the rest of the conference. Say the speaker goes overtime by 30 minutes: The planner has to scramble to fix the whole day. Lunch will be late, the hotel is upset. You might think you’re doing the audience a favor by giving them extra time, but you have ruined the whole schedule.”

LaCroix says the meeting industry is a small one, so speakers who abuse their time limits earn a reputation. “[Meeting planners] know other people – their counterparts – at other conferences, and they talk.”

Presenters who can’t rein in their speeches lose out in other ways, too. Talks that are too long rarely impress the audience, and listeners

may miss the point of the speech – or worse.

“The immediate effect is that the audience is irritated,” says Max Dixon, a professional speaking coach and consultant. “They look at their watches. One of my favorite speakers wanted to end [his presentation] on time but waited until the last three or four minutes to wind down. He started talking faster about one of the more important things; everyone knew he wasn’t going to make it.

“It’s like someone running to jump across a 25-foot stream, and everyone is saying, ‘He’s not going to make it! He’s going to land in the middle of the stream.’ The audience doesn’t want to hurt the speaker’s feelings, yet we also don’t want to sit there and not listen. We’re not learning from it.”

Dixon says the audience also loses trust. “We become suspicious. If the speaker doesn’t pay attention to the time, we wonder if maybe he didn’t do his research, either.”



## How to shorten a long speech

"Edit, edit, edit," says LaCroix, who writes out his speeches. After seeing the words on paper, he asks himself, "How can I say the same thing in fewer words?"

It's not easy. LaCroix has to force himself to scale back. On his world championship speech, he did a Herculean job of editing, chopping his presentation from its original length of 1,400 words.

"I had to get it down to 800," he remembers. "I asked myself, how can I say it in fewer words? I was constantly working on it and struggling. Rather than trying to shorten the whole speech, think about how you can take three sentences and combine them into one. If you do it in smaller pieces, it's a lot easier."

What are you trying to accomplish with the speech? Keep in mind that the audience is thinking, "What's in it for me?"

Care enough about your message and your audience to edit your talk and give listeners the best information you have. Next, ask yourself, "What difference can I make in the allotted time I have?"

"Don't just cut the number of words, cut the number of ideas," suggests Bete, the University of Dayton instructor. "If you're trying to make 10 points, cut your speech down to the top five. You can always post the other points on your Web site, and tell attendees to visit it for more great information."

It's better to present sufficient information on a few selected topics, and inform your audience, than to touch inadequately on too many points, leaving your audience at a loss to understand what they just witnessed.

## Cutting in a pinch

Have you ever been in a situation where you were told you'd have 30 minutes to speak – then when you arrived at the event, were asked to do it in 20 instead?

It may not happen at a Toastmasters gathering, but "it happens all the time in the 'real world,'" says LaCroix. "Quite often I'm asked to give an hour-long speech, then I get to the place and find I have only 35 minutes."

As a professional, you don't get angry. "You come prepared, knowing it will happen. [Time limits] will change – that is normal," LaCroix says. "Do the best with the allotted time. Our job as a speaker is to help accomplish something as part of a bigger event. We are not the event."

But how do you cut down a speech on the spot?

"I need to know what is most important to my audience," LaCroix says. "For example, I give a certain presentation: 'Four Habits Essential to Becoming a Great Speaker, and the Four Things I Learned From the Other World Champions.' If my time is cut, I tell 'The Three Habits and the Three Things I Learned.' If my time is cut more, I only talk about 'The Four Habits.' I can't cut down the story that makes the

tial to make your point and yet retain interest," Dixon says. "You have to ration how many descriptive words you have. If you can cut off 10 or 15 seconds [by eliminating a few descriptive words], that helps."

He also says you should be over-prepared – yet ready to cut.

"Prepare yourself with stories," Dixon advises. "When you get up [to speak] with four or five stories, then knowing you can get by with three helps."

And, of course, make sure you practice.

"Lack of practice can lead to forgetting parts of the speech, or to long silent pauses that waste time," says Fred Price, Ph.D., who has taught many technical seminars as well as attending his fair share of them.

He suggests eliminating examples from a speech that are too complicated, given the time limit. Also, avoid the tendency to use too many examples to make a single point.

**"I have to know: If this is all the time I have, what is most important for the audience to understand when I leave."**


**– Darren LaCroix**

point; I have to know: If this is all the time I have, what is most important for the audience to understand when I leave?"

Bete says he always organizes his speeches into separate sections, "so it would be relatively easy to drop a section to shorten a speech." This way he can "cut chunks quickly without sacrificing content."

## More shortening tips

"Be sure you pare the speech down to what is absolutely essen-

In the end, it's clear that tightening your talk so you can deliver it within the time requested is a vital skill to master. As Price notes, "When a speaker uses time poorly, it shows a lack of respect for the listener's time." 

**Paula Syptak Price, ATM**, is a member of San Antonio's Talk of the Tower club in San Antonio, Texas. Contact her at [paulaisright@sbcglobal.net](mailto:paulaisright@sbcglobal.net).



# Giving Effective Financial Presentations with PowerPoint

Let the audience notice slide content – not slide transitions.

By Sally Herigstad

**F**ew people look forward to watching financial presentations. Probably even fewer come away from presentations with a clear understanding of what the speakers tried to communicate. Financial presentations can be boring and hard to see and understand. How can you make your presentation more interesting, without getting too cute or distracting from your message?

Know what story you are trying to get across, and skip anything that distracts from that story. Learn how the right fonts, formats and backgrounds can make the difference between confusing your audience and helping them.

Microsoft Office PowerPoint 2003 gives you many options for presenting data. Learn how to use them to your advantage.

## 10 tips for effective financial presentations:

When you present financial information to team members, investors or other parties, it's essential that you not only communicate the basic information, but that you help the audience analyze and actually understand it. To do this, you can create a PowerPoint presentation to help make your points in a way that would be impossible with just a verbal presentation and handouts.



## The PowerPoint paradox

PowerPoint is a powerful tool with almost limitless design and production possibilities – and therein lies the danger. With so much to choose from in PowerPoint, it's possible to overwhelm your content with your dazzling presentation. And it's so easy to create slides, that you can quickly make more than you'll ever have time to show.

## It's all about the story

Financial presentations tell a story. You're not just showing a collection of profit-and-loss statements and balance sheets – you're telling a story that your audience needs to hear. It may be a story of a new company with promising growth. Or maybe it's a story about meeting market challenges. Whatever your story is, stick to it: Toss everything that doesn't help you tell it in a compelling, easy-to-follow way. Tell your story with simplicity and clarity.

Many studies have been done on the best ways to present financial data. Communication experts, including David Brooks, Toastmasters' 1990 World Champion of Public Speaking, agree on basic principles of effective presentations. These 10 tips can help you focus on your story and present financial information more effectively.

- **Limit the amount of information on each slide.** Most people can easily see five or six words per line and five or six lines per slide. The guidelines apply to financial reports – so instead of showing full reports, focus on just the main points, with no more than four to six columns and six to eight rows. For example, this simplified profit-and-loss statement is easy to read on paper, but on a slide it's more like an eye exam:

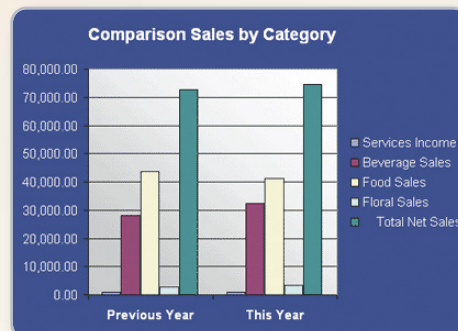
Comparison Profit and Loss 1/1/2002 Through 12/31/2002				
All amounts in U.S. dollars				
Net Sales	This Year	Previous Year	Change	% Change
Beverage Sales	32,501.00	28,201.00	4,300.00	15%
Floral Sales	3,600.00	2,754.00	746.00	27%
Food Sales	41,073.00	43,743.00	-2,670.00	-6%
Services Income	807.00	813.00	-6.00	-1%
Total Net Sales	77,981.00	75,511.00	2,370.00	3%
Cost of Goods Sold				
Purchases	4,280.00	3,997.00	283.00	7%
Inventory Change	-312.00	-275.00	-42.00	-15%
Total Cost of Goods Sold	4,597.00	4,272.00	325.00	8%
Gross Profit	73,284.00	71,239.00	2,045.00	3%
Expenses				
Automobile	718.00	565.90	152.10	27%
Business Insurance	500.00	500.00	0.00	0%
Contract Labor	2,750.25	2,753.00	-2.75	-1%
Supplies	339.36	499.26	-159.90	-6%
Utilities	957.00	919.00	38.00	8%
Total Expenses	5,264.61	5,238.16	26.45	1%
Net Income	68,019.39	66,002.84	2,016.55	3%

People cannot read or retain this much complex information on slides. It's too small to read, and it's too much information to retain. Use your slides to make or illustrate your point, and save the detailed financial statements for the handouts.

- **Use charts.** Your audience would have a difficult time analyzing 12 months worth of data in a report, but they can instantly visualize 12 months of sales and net profit in a chart. Continuing with the preceding example, you can use a chart to show how sales from different areas are changing.

Depending on the point you want to make, you could use pie charts to show how your overall product mix is changing. Or you could play up the fact that although service sales are down, beverage sales more than made up for it and total sales and net income are up.

Unless you are comparing results, for example on two pie charts, use only one chart per slide. Make the charts as large as possible on the slide.



- **Use a readable font and font size.** Some experts recommend a font designed specifically for online viewing, such as Tahoma or Verdana, but others would choose readable classic fonts, such as Goudy. Remember that ornate or very blocky fonts are difficult to read in slide shows, and try to keep the font size at 32 point or greater.

WordArt (text objects you create with ready-made effects to which you can apply additional formatting

options) has its place, but less is generally more in a financial presentation. Brooks considers runaway WordArt to be “the mark of a pure amateur.” He points out that typography is an art form; fonts are carefully created by professionals. And then, “words are squeezed, twisted or worse yet, animated. It’s comparable to listening to music at a different speed, totally destroying the artist’s work.”

■ **Go easy on the transitions.** Venetian blinds and wagon wheel transitions are fun, but they can be distracting in a financial presentation. And checkerboard transitions can actually be difficult to look at when they come between slides that display mostly numbers.

Brooks prefers the left-to-right wipe, but he says, “The important thing is to pick one transition and stick to it.” Some experts recommend a different transition between major topics. In most cases, it’s best to err on the side of simplicity. Let the audience notice slide content – not slide transitions. Remember, if something doesn’t add to your presentation’s story, it probably detracts – and nothing distracts like a big transition fanfare to celebrate the pressing of the **Next** button.

■ **Choose high-contrast backgrounds and colors.**

According to Brooks, you can’t go wrong with a black or dark blue background and white or light yellow text. Some people prefer black text on a white background; although the white background is somewhat harsher, it is easier to see in a room with more light. Bonus: When you use black text on a white background, you don’t have to dim the lights so low that you lose half your audience to a quick nap.

If you add background designs, keep them simple and make sure they don’t overlap and obscure your information. And consider the quality of the projection system you will be using. Beautiful backgrounds and colors may not look the same on the large screen as they do on your computer – another reason to keep your backgrounds simple.

■ **Use blank or black screens between illustrated points.**

When the action is not on the screen, don’t hesitate to insert a blank screen, or temporarily black out the screen. The focus will then be on you and your message – not on the previous topic or the one coming up next.

■ **Check for unintended color combinations or symbols.** It should go without saying that unless you’re presenting financial statements for a doll company, avoid pink and purple. If it’s not a Christmas boutique, stay away from green and red combinations. Likewise, look for incongru-

ous background shapes, like shapes that look like stop signs on an otherwise positive financial presentation:

Comparison Sales and Gross Profit			
<i>All amounts in U.S. dollars</i>			
	2003	2004	Change
Net Sales	72,757	75,781	4%
Cost of Goods Sold	14,597	16,072	10%
<b>Gross Profit</b>	58,160	59,709	3%

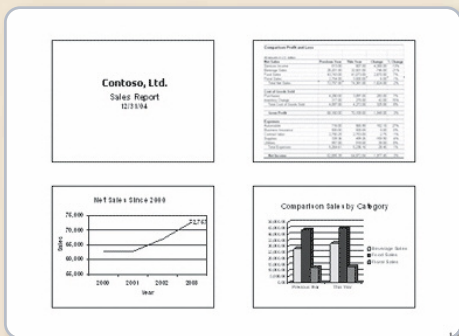
Comparison Sales and Net Profit			
<i>All amounts in U.S. dollars</i>			
	2003	2004	Change
Sales	72,757	75,781	4%
Cost of Goods Sold	14,597	16,072	10%
Expenses	47,445	48,765	3%
<b>Net Profit</b>	10,715	10,944	2%

■ **Provide useful handouts.** A good PowerPoint presentation seldom makes a useful handout without some adjustments. If you’ve kept your PowerPoint slides concise – five or six words to a line and five to six lines per slide – printing your slides one to a page would take reams of paper and have text so large it would strain the eyes. One solution is to print more than one slide per page:

- ▶ Hide any slides you do not want to print.
- ▶ On the **Slides** tab in normal view, do one of the following:
  - ◆ To select nonadjacent slides, click one slide, and then hold down CTRL and click each additional slide.
  - ◆ To select adjacent slides, click the first slide in the sequence, hold down SHIFT, and then click the last slide.
- ▶ On the **Slide Show** menu, click **Hide Slide**. The hidden slide icon appears with the slide number inside, next to the slide you have hidden.
  - ◆ **Note:** The slide remains in your file, even though it is hidden when you run the presentation.
- ▶ On the **File** menu, click **Print Preview**.
- ▶ To set headers and footers, click the arrow on the **Options** button, and then click **Header and Footer**.



- ▶ On the **Print Preview** toolbar, in the **Print What** box, click the **Handout** layout option you want.
- ▶ Two to four slides per page generally works well.
- ▶ To choose the page orientation, click Portrait or Landscape on the toolbar (toolbar: a bar with buttons and options that you use to carry out commands. To display a toolbar, press ALT and then SHIFT+F10.).



Handout with four slides on a page

- ▶ On the **Print Preview** toolbar, click **Print**.

Handouts are also the place for all the reference material, detailed charts and any other information that is too difficult for viewers to see in a slide presentation, or that they need to take away with them.

Avoid passing out more than a sheet or two of paper at the beginning of the presentation. Some viewers won't be able to resist looking ahead – distracting themselves and the people around them.

■ **Arrive early.** Allow yourself ample time for making sure that everything works. You don't want to be searching for power cords and connections as your audience arrives.

■ **Get to the point.** Remember that your audience is busy and intelligent. Make your points – then know when to quit and let them read the handouts themselves.

By following these tips from the professionals, you can give more effective financial presentations. And when you see that your audience really understands the financial story you have to tell, you'll know that your presentation is a success. **T**

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By Mark McLaughlin, ATMB, CL

**Make your stories sing with voices, accents and quirks.**

## 10 Tips for Dramatic Readings

I am a man with a secret life! By day, I am the public relations specialist at Nehlsen Communications and also a member of Toastmasters. But by night, I create – and kill! – vampires, zombies and monsters of every size and shape imaginable.

In other words, I am a horror writer. Over the years, I have written several books and hundreds of short stories. My writings are like my kids, and though I love all my children dearly, my proudest achievement would have to be *The Gossamer Eye*, a book of poetry by Rain Graves, David Niall Wilson and me that once won the Bram Stoker Award for Literary Excellence.

I've given readings from my books at dozens of literary conventions across America and in England, and because of those readings, I'd considered myself a pretty experienced public speaker. Then I joined Toastmasters and soon learned that being able to read well from a book does not necessarily make a person a great speaker. A person also needs to learn how to speak off the cuff – at a moment's notice, if necessary.

I have reached the level of Advanced Toastmaster Bronze, and because of the speeches I've given, I feel that the book readings I give these days are much better. I'm much more at ease in front of an audience.

Over the years, I have come up with a variety of handy techniques to improve the quality of dramatic readings, and I'd like to share my top 10 secrets with my fellow Toastmasters:

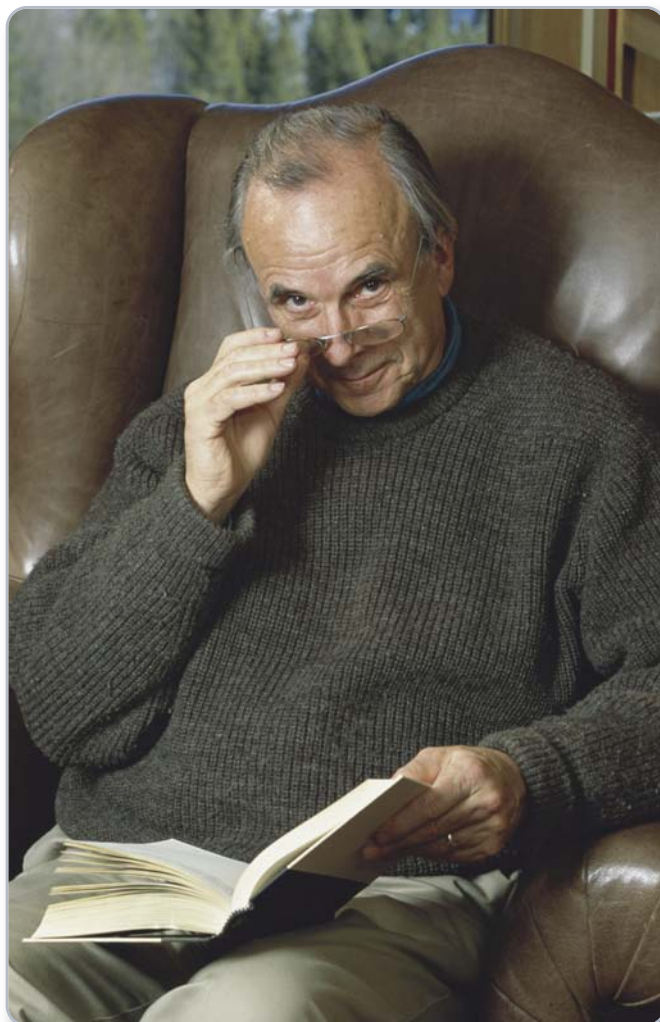
**1 Unless it's a large-print edition, you may not want to read straight from the book.** Enlarge the pages on a photocopier.

**2 Develop a different voice for each character.** The listener has to know who is speaking – otherwise, they may get confused by your narrative. You don't have to be a Mel Blanc-wannabe who can do a million voices. Simply change

the tone of your speaking voice for each character.

For example, male characters can have a tone that's a little deeper than your usual voice, and female character can have a lighter tone. Have one character – perhaps a child – speak a little faster than the rest.

**3 Use different highlighters to mark the words each of your characters say.** Find ways to remember which color goes with which character: When Bobby is in blue and Ronald is in red, you'll never get the two mixed up. Make sure your highlighter doesn't smear the print, or isn't so dark that it is hard to make out the words.





#### **4 Develop mannerisms for characters, in addition to their voices.**

In one of my stories, there is a character who is both an exuberant artist and a chain-smoker. When I do her voice, which is a little raspy, I also wave one of my hands around as though I'm punctuating

you left off, so you'll know where to pick up the story again.

**9 To be used only in case of emergencies:** If, for some reason, you completely lose your place in the story and you need some time to find it, give a quick

**“Over the years, I have come up with a variety of handy techniques to improve the quality of dramatic readings.”**

the air with a cigarette holder. I also throw in an occasional cough for her. If a character is nervous, I portray him or her as wide-eyed and breathless, with quick, jittery gestures.

#### **5 While rehearsing, experiment with different vocal patterns for characters.**

Try different accents. For example, maybe the neighbor in your story should have a compelling Southern accent. Make it a point to avoid stereotypes: People might be offended if they think your version of an ethnic accent is making fun of that ethnicity.

**6 Practice the story at least a dozen times before you read it for any audience.** Videotape a practice performance so you can see what your audience will be seeing.


**7 Read the story to a friend and ask for feedback.** Just make sure it's not a hypercritical person who's prone to finding problems when none exist, or the exact opposite, someone who is helpful to a fault and will automatically say anything you do is wonderful.

**8 During the reading, be sure to look up at the audience regularly.** Keep a finger on the page where

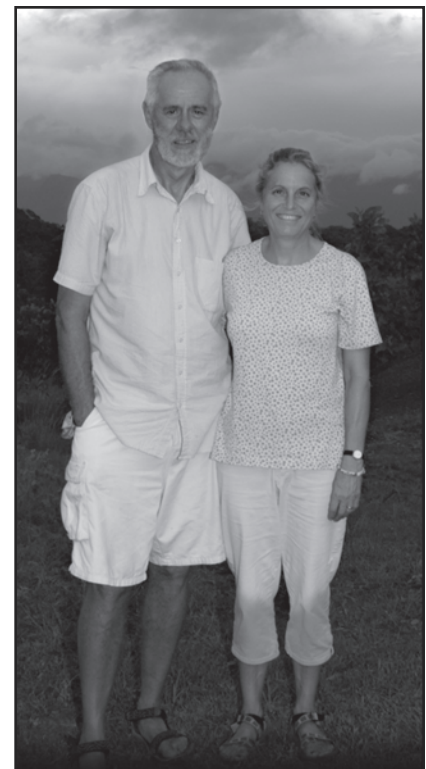
question to a nearby member of the audience, like this: “If this story were made into a movie, who would you pick to play Andy, the lead, and why?” While that person is talking, you can find your place in the story.

Be sure to listen to what the individual is saying, and respond appropriately before continuing with the story – for example, “Tom Cruise? I like that idea! Now let's see what Andy is going to do next...”

**10 Have fun!** If you practice enough, you will feel more confident and have fun with your reading. The audience will be able to tell if you're not enjoying the reading experience.

So there you have it: my top 10 secrets! Here's a bonus tip that's pretty obvious, so I can't really call it a secret. Always make sure you have a glass of water handy – all that talking can dry out your throat. I hope my tips will help make all your future readings a rewarding experience for both you and your enthralled listeners. 

**Mark McLaughlin, ATMB, CL,** is a member of the Quad City Executive Toastmasters in Davenport, Iowa.



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*At a company sales conference, the corporate sales manager stood before 2,000 of his firm's staff delivering a motivational speech.*

*At one point he asked: "Did the Wright brothers ever quit?"*

"No!" the sales force shouted back.

"Did Walt Disney ever quit?" he asked.

"No!" the salespeople shouted again.

"Did Lance Armstrong ever quit?" he asked.

"No!" they bellowed back.

Then, the sales manager asked: "Did Thorndike McKester ever quit?"

To that question there was confused silence. Finally, a salesperson stood up, asking, "Who in the world is Thorndike McKester? Nobody's ever heard of him." The sales manager snapped back, "Of course you've never heard of him – that's because he quit!"

That humorous story clearly shows that leadership is not something mysterious, nor is it confined to a few who are naturally born with that skill. The sales manager's lesson reveals that one simple but vital aspect of leadership is the mere ability to persevere. Whether you are a clerk or a CEO, a homemaker or a highly paid professional, life will consistently call on you to provide leadership. Rather than shrink from that call, believing that leadership is limited to a few creative and gifted individuals, rise to the challenge by reminding yourself that leaders are both born *and made*.

Many of the world's greatest leaders evolved from humble beginnings. Peter Drucker, one of the world's leading authorities on leadership, notes: "No institution can possibly survive if it needs geniuses or supermen to manage it. It must be organized in such a way as to be able to get along under a leadership composed of

your business, you can guarantee that at some stage they've tried to tell you what the problem is. It's likely you weren't listening (or didn't want to listen), or perhaps your initial reaction made the person think twice about bringing the problem to you. Truly listening is one of the greatest skills to develop, regardless of your role. Good listeners are genuinely interested, convey empathy and want to find out what's behind the conversation. Great leaders are great listeners – without exception."

**2 Monitor your attitude.** When times are tough, the temptation to become negative, cynical and despairing increases. Monitor your attitude. Remain optimistic and hopeful. Continue to pursue a successful, triumphant goal. Attitude determines outcome. Many prominent individuals first faced hardship before enjoying success:

- When musician Bob Dylan first performed at a high-school talent show, classmates booed him off the stage.
- Walt Disney went bankrupt and suffered a nervous breakdown before making his breakthrough in animation.
- Sir Walter Raleigh wrote his best-selling *The First Part of the History of the World* while serving a 13-year prison sentence.
- Dante wrote *The Divine Comedy* while under a sentence of death and during 20 years in exile.
- Helen Keller was blinded and deafened as a young child but emerged to become a world-renowned author and lecturer well-known for her grace and charm.

**3 Cultivate the habit of going the extra mile.** Give more, do more, offer more than is expected and you will both lead and succeed in life and work. Author and speaker Zig Ziglar tells of a young man who went that extra mile. It started when Ziglar checked into a Minneapolis hotel at 9 p.m. and began going over notes for his presentation the following day. Unpacking, he discovered he had neglected to bring a necktie. Panicking, he rushed downstairs to the gift shop, which was closed. The desk clerks told him there were no shops in the neighborhood open at that hour. Then, one of the other young men working the front desk – Jon Snyder – offered to help. With his supervisor's approval, Snyder told Ziglar he lived near the hotel and offered to drive home and bring back several ties that would match Ziglar's suit. "He returned promptly with a nice selection of ties, one of which worked perfectly. Crisis averted," Ziglar says.

# Deck Leadership Potential

By Victor M. Parachin

average human beings." Here are eight ways to unlock your leadership potential:

**1 Listen, listen, listen.** That is the advice of Sydney-based leadership consultant Megan Tough, who has written: "If there are unhappy or disgruntled people in

**4 Be a problem solver, not a problem spotter.** Anyone can identify a problem. Leaders *solve* the problem. Non-leaders are quick to point out problems but slow to work at solutions. Here is a humorous example taken from registration sheets and comment cards returned to staff at the Bridger Wilderness Area in Wyoming:

- Trails need to be reconstructed. Please avoid building trails that go uphill.
- Too many bugs and leeches and spiders and spider webs. Please spray the wilderness to rid the area of these pests.
- Please pave the trails so they can be plowed of snow during the winter.
- Chairlifts need to be in some places so that we can get to wonderful views without having to hike to them.
- The coyotes made too much noise last night and kept me awake. Please eradicate these annoying animals.
- A small deer came into my camp and stole my jar of pickles. Is there a way I can get reimbursed?
- Escalators would help on steep hill sections.
- Too many rocks in the mountains.

**5 Operate on the elevator principle.** In all of our relationships we can function in one of two ways: We can lift people up or we can take people down. Strong leaders add value to other people; poor leaders take value away. Here's an example from the life of highly revered Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik. During the early 20th century, a horrific fire broke out in the Russian town of Brisk. Many homes were completely destroyed. Hard hit were shacks belonging to the poor. Although the Rabbi's home was not damaged, he slept that night in the synagogue with the many others who lost their homes. When the town's citizens asked him why he was doing so, he told them he would continue sleeping in the synagogue "until everyone has a roof over his head. If I remain in my own house, who knows how long it will take the community to raise the necessary funds to rebuild the homes of all the poor, the widows and the orphans? But if it is known that I too will sleep here until the work is completed, the fund-raising will go much faster." Finally, when the last house was rebuilt, Rabbi Chaim returned to his own home.

**6 Never settle for average.** People who lead commit fully and, in the process, release immense amounts of energy, enthusiasm and creativity. Whatever you do, do it with total commitment. Consider this wisdom from Brian Souza in his book *Become Who You Were Born to Be*: "Sometimes a half looks pretty good. Half a chance is better than no chance at all. Half a dollar certainly beats a dime! But in the things that really matter in life, half just isn't enough. Half a plan, half an ethical standard, half a commitment – they're worth absolutely nothing. Try this: 'Hey sweetie, I love you half the time'

and see how that goes over!" Souza strongly advises, "If we ever hope to get anywhere in this world, there's only one way: Give it everything we've got."

**7 Have a beginner's mind.** In the beginner's mind there are endless possibilities. In the expert's mind there are very few options. Leadership authority Warren Bennis stresses the importance of having an open, inquisitive approach: "Openness means being able to listen to ideas that are outside one's current mental models, being able to suspend judgment until after one has heard someone else's ideas. An open leader listens to their people without trying to shut them down early, which at least demonstrates care and builds trust. Openness also treats other ideas as potentially better than one's own ideas. In the uncertain world of new territory, being able to openly consider alternatives is an important skill."

**8 Make the world better for others.** Do this by being a generous giver of time, talent and money. Giving is a crucial component of effective leadership. In his book *You Don't Need A Title To Be A Leader*, Mark Sanborn tells of standing in the checkout line at a bookstore. In front of him was a group of inner-city schoolchildren who were touring the store. To encourage greater reading habits, the store gave each child a gift certificate to use toward buying books. The little girl directly in front of Sanborn arrived at the counter with three books she hoped to buy with her certificate. When the cashier totaled the amount, it turned out the young woman's certificate would not cover all three. She set one aside but the second tally revealed the two remaining books were still over the certificate value. By now, people in line behind Sanborn were becoming impatient; the cashier was feeling their impatience; and the little girl appeared ready to give up trying to buy any books.

Acting on impulse, Sanborn reached into his pocket, offering to pay for the three books. The little girl, overwhelmed by his generosity, glanced up shyly, muttering "Thank you." The woman behind Sanborn was more expressive, throwing her arms around him and hugging him. "You've restored my faith in human nature!" she exclaimed.

Of that incident, Sanborn writes: "When you make the world better for others, you make the world better for yourself. For the 20-odd years I've worked in leadership development, I've observed that giving – being of service – can be the most overlooked aspect of leadership, whatever your title. Usually, when we think of leadership we think of performance, effectiveness and results. But those critical aspects of leadership shine all the more brightly when they coexist with giving, service and contribution." **T**

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**Victor Parachin** is a freelance writer living in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Reach him at [vmp5@cox.net](mailto:vmp5@cox.net).



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**Key leadership strategies  
for team building.**

**By Bob Hooley, DTM, AS**

# Bringing Out the Best in People

*Leadership success is built on our ability to communicate and coordinate the best efforts of a group of people to reach a common or agreed-upon goal. Successful leaders understand this is best accomplished by drawing on the strengths and desires of those they guide. Toastmasters International is a great training ground for skills that translate to greater career and leadership success.*

Nearly 25 years ago, Alan Loy McGinnis – a family therapist, corporate consultant, writer and public speaker – wrote a book called *Bringing Out the Best in People*. It was well received, gaining exposure and acceptance among progressive leaders at that time.

Over the years, I've had the chance to reflect on the ideas and principles outlined by the late

author, who was based in Glendale, California. In fact, his 12 rules from that book are attached to the wall above my desk as a reminder of how important they are in leading and coaching the people I work with across North America.

If you are committed to being an effective leader or manager (whether in your career, community or Toastmasters club), perhaps these

rules should be near you, as well. They provide the foundation for effective management, leadership success and leveraged teamwork.

I include the guidelines here, expanded with my own thoughts, for your inspiration and illumination:

- **Expect the best from the people you lead.** Often people will rise or fall to the level of our expectations. So envision them as they could be, not as they are! Don't limit them by expecting less than their best. Then-District 21 Governor Irene Evans, DTM, challenged us to be Number One during my year as area governor. This challenge slowly caught on with our members and we made this goal a reality.



■ **Make a thorough study of the other person's needs.** Each person on your team is an individual with specific strengths, weaknesses, needs and dreams. Taking time to know them makes it easier to lead and direct them for mutual success. This strategy worked successfully for me in rebuilding my Toastmaster club when I served as an area governor, and later in my role as District 21 Governor. It is one of the foundations of my success in serving clients.

■ **Establish high standards for excellence.** Leaders fail when they accept mediocre results or don't set high standards. Don't be afraid to challenge your team to live up to and surpass achievable goals and standards of excellence. We do this in our Toastmasters evaluations of presentations and we see vast improvement. Why are we reluctant to do that in our leadership roles? People will amaze you when you set the bar higher and lead by example.

■ **Create an environment where failure is not fatal.** Mistakes are a natural part of life, and taking risks

means occasionally falling short of the goal. If your team feels supported and encouraged, it will take risks and move past its comfort zone into the winners' zone. Help your group learn from any mistakes or missteps, and enable team members to move ahead with energy to face the next challenge. This is one of the underlying secrets of Toastmasters: We provide that safe place to experiment and to stretch.

■ **If they are going anywhere near where you want to go, climb on other people's bandwagons.** At times, it works best to let others lead and be the supportive cheerleader, coach and champion for their success. However, you need to be honest and realize that people are not always going in the same direction, nor do they share the same values that you live by. In that case, let them go and stay your own course. Others who share your values will follow and support your leadership.

■ **Use Models to Encourage Success.** This goes to the heart of leadership by example. Make sure the principles of success that you point to are

modeled in your own life and in the lives of those you promote and delegate to succeed. When you take personal responsibility for your success in any leadership role, you encourage those you guide to follow suit.

■ **Recognize and applaud achievement.** People do not work simply for money. Deep inside each of us is the need to feel appreciated and important. As a leader or manager, the most effective thing we can do is to recognize achievement and effort from those we lead, and to share and publicly applaud their accomplishments. This can be applied equally in club, corporate and community roles.

■ **Employ a mixture of positive and negative reinforcement.** We understand it's a good thing to provide praise and positive reinforcement for our team members' efforts. This affirms their actions and encourages them to move ahead.

It is also necessary at times to apply the opposite tack when one of them is doing something detrimental in the fulfillment or follow-through of their role. Letting them

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know what is not acceptable is also part of a leader's role. We can do it nicely and in kindness, but do it we must if they are to grow and maximize their potential. Amazingly enough, people appreciate knowing their boundaries.

■ **Appeal sparingly to the competitive urge.** Each of us has a natural competitive edge. If used wisely, competition can be a great tool to higher achievement. But it also has its dark side, allowing divisive actions and attitudes to creep into a team environment. Focus on the team accomplishment and mutual win. Encourage each member to compete for higher standards and *personal* skill development.

■ **Place a premium on collaboration.** This is where team “works,” and where effective leaders learn to weave people from diverse backgrounds, agendas and experiences into an effective unit. Brainstorming is one way of effective collaboration, allowing each to build

and draw on the brainpower of another.


When I was a very nervous area governor with struggling clubs under my care, I asked Peter Legge (a Golden Gavel recipient) to speak to the clubs. I hoped that seeing a great speaker would inspire them to apply what we teach in Toastmasters. It did, and each of those five clubs finished the year as Distinguished Clubs or better.

■ **Build into the group an allowance for storms.** It is not always smooth sailing as a leader or manager of team efforts. Storms, challenges, detours and disasters can strike when you least expect them. As a leader you need to build in allowances for these unexpected obstacles in your team's progress and have some back-up plans in place.

■ **Take steps to keep your own motivation high.** You are “on” as a leader all the time. This means people will be looking at you and taking their cue from you. So you

need to keep your personal motivation high and maintain a positive outward attitude (even when you are experiencing personal challenges or doubts).

You may need to find a trusted advisor who you can discuss your doubts with in private. Letting your negative feelings show can be devastating to your team. They look to you as being confident and clear in focus. Don't disappoint them.

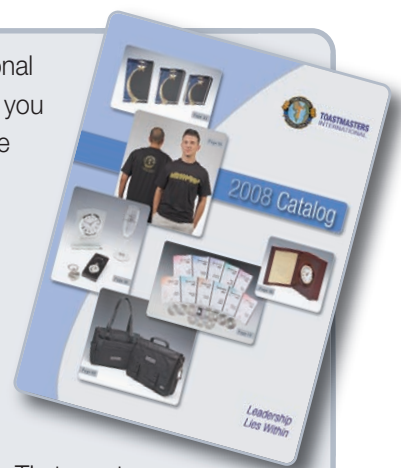
Learn to apply these strategies in your leadership path, and the road will be smoother for both you and those you are guiding. 

**Bob ‘Idea Man’ Hooey, DTM, AS,** is the author of 10 books on leadership, sales and business success. A twice-Distinguished Toastmaster as well as a past District Governor and a Toastmasters Accredited Speaker, he is the presenter of the Leadership Luncheon during the Toastmasters International Convention in Calgary, Canada, this August 16. Reach him at [www.ideaman.net](http://www.ideaman.net).

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### U.S. SHIPPING CHARGES

WEIGHT	STANDARD	1 DAY COURIER	2 DAY COURIER
.00 - .81	\$3.50	\$20.50	\$10.25
.82 - 2.00	\$5.00	\$26.80	\$11.65
2.01 - 3.00	\$5.75	\$29.15	\$12.85
3.01 - 4.00	\$6.10	\$31.55	\$14.20
4.01 - 5.00	\$6.50	\$33.85	\$15.60
5.01 - 6.00	\$6.60	\$36.15	\$17.05
6.01 - 7.00	\$6.75	\$38.35	\$18.55
7.01 - 8.00	\$7.00	\$40.55	\$20.10
8.01 - 9.00	\$7.25	\$42.70	\$21.75
9.01 - 10.00	\$7.50	\$44.85	\$23.30
10.01 and up	\$7.75 + .75 Each additional lb. (or portion thereof)	\$47.00 + \$2.00 each additional lb. (or portion thereof)	\$24.75 + \$1.50 each additional lb. (or portion thereof)

See current catalog for International rates.