

TOASTMASTER®

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JUNE 2012

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How music expresses
what we cannot say.

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READY FOR SHOW TIME?




Do you remember the first time you visited your Toastmasters club? What did you see, feel and hear? First impressions often last. Experts tell us first impressions are formed within 30 seconds of entering a meeting room. Successful clubs instantly radiate a friendly, professional atmosphere. However, a guest who walks into a chaotic, disorganized club meeting may never return.

Imagine attending a Broadway theater production. The curtains part and the performance begins. Much to your surprise, a stage crew is still moving props around. Actors arrive late, looking for their

costumes. The producer is talking on a cell phone. The audience is shocked and quickly leaves the auditorium.

Is your club ready for show time? Many clubs squander their opportunities to make a good first impression. If an event is worth doing, it is worth doing well. Early preparation, communication and teamwork are crucial to success. Here are four keys to making your club shine at show time:

- ▶ **Advance Communication.** Connect via email and phone to rally club members, confirm participants and locate substitutes before each meeting. Communicate early and often, and confirm the next meeting's agenda as soon as the current one is over.
- ▶ **Create an Agenda.** A simple agenda sets clear time expectations, keeps the meeting on track and creates accountability for all participants. Meetings without an agenda are a prescription for disaster.
- ▶ **Meeting Room Preparation.** A messy room indicates a disorganized meeting. Work with the club sergeant at arms to ensure the room is set up (with chairs, desks, banner, gavel, guestbook, timer, forms and ribbons) at least 30 minutes before show time.
- ▶ **Meet Before the Meeting.** The Toastmaster meets with participants 30 minutes before show time to confirm speakers and introductions, make substitutions and finalize the program.

Our Toastmasters brand is on display at every club meeting, and attendees deserve an organized, professional program. Starting well is half the battle. Putting your best foot forward requires preparation and effort, but it is worth it. A club ready for show time becomes a magnet for growth. Members take pride in their achievements and success builds on success. You learn it all at Toastmasters, where leaders are made. 

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WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE
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Since 1924, Toastmasters International has been recognized as the leading organization dedicated to communication and leadership skill development. Through its worldwide network of clubs, each week Toastmasters helps more than a quarter million men and women of every ethnicity, education level and profession build their *competence* in communication so they can gain the *confidence* to lead others.

By regularly giving speeches, gaining feedback, leading teams and guiding others to achieve their goals, leaders emerge. They learn to tell their stories. They listen and answer. They plan and lead. They give feedback — and accept it. They find their path to leadership.

Toastmasters International. Where Leaders Are Made.



“‘Are You a Copyright Criminal?’ by Ellen M. Kozak (March) sets out in simple terms a law which applies, with slight variations, across the world.”

Bob Finch, DTM
Camulodunum Speakers
Colchester, United Kingdom

Speaking of **Trainers**

I've just received my *Toastmaster* magazine, and as soon as I turned the cover, I saw the article “From Speaker to Trainer” by Beth Black (March). I have just handed in my notice at my full-time work to become a speaker and trainer (a scary prospect but a very exciting one), and the article really made me think even more about my audience, how I can get the best out of them and how I can continually meet their needs. It's actually reduced my fear as I realized training is not about me, it's about the participants — the people I'm trying to help.

Kerry Needs
Manchester Orators Toastmasters
Manchester, United Kingdom

Professional Help

Thank you, Christine Clapp, for your article “The Language of Lawyers” (February). When I was vice president public relations for my club, I did a good job of recruiting new members through events, but I always struggled to demonstrate to professionals the value of Toastmasters. This article has provided me with an arsenal of information to work with.

Andrew Staicer, CC, CL
Palomar Airport Toastmasters
Carlsbad, California

Legal **Lessons**

After 22 years of membership I have just read what I consider to be the most important article I have ever seen

in *Toastmaster* magazine. “Are You a Copyright Criminal?” by Ellen M. Kozak (March) sets out in simple terms a law which applies, with slight variations, across the world. With the membership of Toastmasters International including business people, members of churches and charities, and many authors, the information given is vital, both when preparing speeches and in the daily lives of members.

Bob Finch, DTM
Camulodunum Speakers
Colchester, United Kingdom

A **Civil** Issue

I am dismayed to find the front cover of your March *Toastmaster* magazine, featuring an article by Ellen M. Kozak, headlined “Are You a Copyright Criminal?” It is disproportionate, almost offensively so, to use the term “criminal” in relation to misuse of copyright. Copyright misuse should be considered a civil issue and still is in some more enlightened jurisdictions.

John Priest
Silver Service Toastmasters
Auckland, New Zealand

Express or **Impress**?

Anu Garg's article, “Picking the Right Word” (March), pointed out several good practices for doing just that, and for avoiding the opposite. I was surprised that he didn't mention the possibility of picking a word that tied in with a club meeting's theme. So if the theme is taxes, one might consider selecting “income,” “onerous,” “equalizer”

or other choices that may be inspired by the theme, to give members a better chance to use it.

Whenever we pick a word to use, we should ask whether we've picked it to best *express* ourselves to others, or just to *impress* ourselves and others.

Gerald Fleischmann, DTM
Orange Upon A Time Toastmasters
Orange, California

Amazing Marilyn!

Marilyn Wilson, the subject of the “Member Profile” by Julie Bawden-Davis in the March 2012 *Toastmaster*, is truly a lifter of the soul. Reading about Marilyn's determination, enthusiasm, unselfishness and resulting accomplishments should give all of us hope that we too can be more than what others think of us.

Ron McOlin, ACS, ALB
Lakeside Speakers
Dallas, Texas

Warmer **Welcomes**

Congratulations to the young hoteliers for their commitment to introduce Toastmasters to the global hospitality industry, and thank you, Jack Vincent, for highlighting their efforts (“Service with a Smile,” March).

A service professional is the one who anticipates customers' needs and expectations. Communication and listening skills are vital to achieving such goals, and Toastmasters can help.

Pak Peter (retired hotelier), CTM, CL
YMCA of Ipoh Toastmasters
Ipoh, Malaysia

SAVING THE WEDDING DAY

How my speaking skills rescued my son's big day.

By Sharon K. Weaver, CC

Little did I know that when I joined Toastmasters, it would give me the opportunity of a lifetime. It happened quite by accident, at my son Frank's wedding. I proudly watched my son's face fill with tenderness as he said his vows to his bride, Crystal, in front of the guests assembled at a beautiful resort in the Oregon mountains. The sweltering August heat didn't seem to bother the couple as they stood in the gazebo, their bridesmaids and groomsmen attending on either side in their satin dresses and tuxedos.

It was time. I stood up to take my son's dog, Sugar, to the back. The plan was to release Sugar so she could deliver the wedding rings attached to her doggie vest. As I knelt to release Sugar's leash, I heard a collective intake of breath. Looking up, I saw the woman celebrant lying across the steps of the gazebo, passed out from the heat.

Immediately, my training as a nurse kicked in. I handed the dog off to my husband and assessed the delicate woman. She revived within minutes, insisting she was not injured; yet it was obvious she was not up to performing the rest of the ceremony. As I tended to her, I wondered if Frank and Crystal's hopes for a beautiful wedding would be dashed.

It was at this moment that Frank asked if I would take the celebrant's

place for the remainder of the ceremony. Never in my life had I imagined presiding at a wedding, let alone my own son's. I was offered the incredible honor of pronouncing my son and future daughter-in-law *husband and wife!* Would I be able to do it?

Then it dawned on me. Frank would not have asked me to do this if he didn't think I was capable. I thought about my work in Toastmasters over the last few years and realized it *had* prepared me for such an important moment.

The celebrant gave me the wedding book and I stood before the guests. Unsure of myself at first, I began in a normal tone of voice. Right away, I realized no one beyond the first row or two could hear me. I increased my volume and projected my voice, remembering the mantra at meetings: Project! Project! Project!

Although the celebrant had given me the script, stepping in on the spot was similar to winging it in Table Topics. My club practice paid off, and I felt comfortable speaking off the cuff.

In addition, giving manual speeches helped me maintain my comfort level. More than anything else, I am grateful for the constructive criticism my fellow Desert Basin Toastmasters of Alamogordo, New Mexico, provided at every meeting. While I conducted the ceremony, their words were ever-

present in my mind: *Stand up straight, make eye contact, be appropriate for the occasion, know your audience.*

Even now, I'm amazed at the comfort I felt speaking before 50 future extended-family members whom I had only known for a few days! Thankfully, it wasn't until I pronounced Frank and Crystal "husband and wife" that my emotions got the better of me and tears of joy spilled from my eyes. Even so, my new relatives kindly praised my efforts.

The celebrant recovered from her fainting spell and was able to oversee the signing of the marriage certificate. The next day she sent me an email: "Congrats on your first wedding!" This unexpected experience opened up a whole new world for me, that of ceremonial officiant and lay minister. Presiding at my son's wedding was a first for me, but not my last. That's the beauty of keeping speaking skills in your hip pocket. You never know when they will be needed, or even when they will lead to a new vocation. Thank you, Toastmasters! **T**

Sharon K. Weaver, CC, RN, BSN, is a member of the Desert Basin club in Alamogordo, New Mexico. A hospice nurse, artist and public speaker, she can be reached at weaversk@yahoo.com.



▲ As fill-in officiant Sharon Weaver looks on, her son Frank removes the wedding rings attached to the vest of his dog, Sugar.

AROUND THE GLOBE

▶ INTERNATIONAL INTERPRETATIONS

BOWING TO CUSTOMS



A bow is the traditional greeting used in East Asia. Bending at the waist, eyes downward, with hands to the side (for men), or with hands clasped in front (for women), expresses greeting, gratitude, humility, respect or remorse. Generally, a longer and deeper bow expresses more respect than a brief, shallow one.

“The tradition of bowing is so complex that many Japanese attend classes in the proper protocol of the bow,” says Terri Morrison, author of *Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands*. If you’re an international visitor, “a polite attempt to bow in greeting will be appreciated by your Asian hosts. If you’re the subordinate in the relationship, bow lower.”

▶ WHAT DO YOU SAY WHEN...

A MEMBER IS BEING RUDE?

Members from the Walla Walla club in Walla Walla, Washington, respond:

“Explain to the offending member [in private] how they are being obnoxious. Stay calm while you talk to the person. Explain how this behavior is hurting others. Then give the offending member a chance to succeed.” — **CARL BRENNEISE, CC**

“I would ask the member if they know the difference between an annoying dog and an obnoxious dog. I would suggest the difference is ‘how deep the dog sinks his teeth into you.’ The basic difference is feelings. We all have different levels of feelings and reactions to what others say and do. Always allow the person to save face during any subsequent discussion.” — **ALLEN APLASS**

Congratulations to the Walla Walla club on its 75-year anniversary!

▶ SNAPSHOT



Chaitanya Garg, Heena Garg, CC, Joan Kumar and Roland Sirisinghe, four medical doctors from Spectrum Toastmasters club in Ras Al Khaimah (RAK), United Arab Emirates, participated in the RAK Half Marathon. “We always advise our patients on physical fitness,” says Chaitanya. “What better way than testing our own endurance?”

BOTTOM LINE

Let’s Get Social

Follow, join and “like” Toastmasters on social networking sites to be part of the international community.

www.toastmasters.org/socialnetworking



Member Facts

The average Toastmaster is 45 years old; more than 25 percent are age 18 to 34. Fifty-two percent are female; forty-eight percent are male.

Talk Schmark

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

— Irish playwright
George Bernard Shaw

► PRESENTATION TIP

CHECK YOURSELF BEFORE YOU WRECK YOUR SPEECH

Have you ever sat through a presentation where you couldn't focus on the message because you were distracted by the speaker? Before you walk up to the podium for your next speech, review this checklist to ensure the audience focuses on your message.

- **TURN OFF YOUR PHONE.**

Nothing is worse than a phone ringing during your dramatic pause, interrupting your presentation.

- **REMOVE NOISY JEWELRY.**

A loose watch, funky earrings or elegant cuff links look great, but they may create an unintended soundtrack to your speech.

- **TAKE OFF WORK BADGES.**

Leave work paraphernalia at your seat.

- **CLEAN YOUR EYEGLASSES.**

Eye contact and facial expressions should never be clouded by smudgy lenses.

- **TAKE A SIP OF WATER.** Room-temperature water moistens your throat for a smooth speech.

MEMBER MOMENT

MARKETING WITH PASSION

Romanthi Fernando, CC, of Colombo, Sri Lanka, loves that her career in marketing gives her an opportunity to meet new people and provide them with solutions. Fernando studied marketing at Bangalore University and is a member of the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM). As vice president public relations at CIM Toastmasters, Fernando says Toastmasters has helped her become more assertive.



Romanthi Fernando

How has Toastmasters helped you in your profession?

In my presentation skills, confidence, voice projection and variation, and informal communication. But more importantly, Toastmasters has helped me to accept criticism. Because marketing is a field where no one [gives you] a pat on your back, we need to be able to adjust to what stakeholders say. Before joining Toastmasters, I used to get offended. Toastmasters has helped me to adapt, and to address the concern behind a disappointment, which I believe has made me a better leader.

Why did you become VPPR?

The role gives me the perfect opportunity to network. Writing is also my passion, so I enjoy writing press releases, biographies and articles.

What is your club like?

It's very friendly and united, and our team spirit is amazingly motivating. For me, CIM Toastmasters is my home and family. Our meetings are held in a very professional manner, as a result of having had a series of presidents who are Chartered Marketers [so they are] precise in discipline, conduct and leadership.

Reach Romanthi Fernando at fernando.romanthi@gmail.com.

Convention Countdown: So Hungry You Can Taste It!

While in Orlando for the International Convention, savor some flavors from the Caribbean islands, Latin America, Cuba and the U.S. South. Florida is a melting pot of delicious dishes where you can indulge in frog legs, alligator stew, conch fritters (pronounced "konk") and a slice of key lime pie.

Remember to register and make travel plans — the convention is only two months away! www.toastmasters.org/convention



MUSIC TO MY EARS

Melodies and emotion transport us to a place where logic and language can't take us.

By Ruth Nasrullah, CC

If you're a fan of late-night American television, you may have seen the *Saturday Night Live* skit in which a group of office workers have a good cry to "Someone Like You," a simple song of heartbreak whose rendering by British pop singer Adele brings the employees to cathartic tears. The humor is that the song is a sort of guilty pleasure that each one secretly indulges in until "caught" by the next person; eventually everyone,

"Music may come as close as we can get to expressing what we cannot say."

including the window-washer and the cameramen, are sobbing.

The skit is funny because, like most comedy, it parodies something that is human nature — in this case, how music wields a powerful pull on our emotions. Had Adele recited the song's lyrics without music, they might have been beautiful, but they wouldn't have had the same effect. Just as birds twitter and coyotes howl, people are naturally influenced by the communication of music.

Think about your favorite movie. Chances are good that you recall a musical theme as well as the plot. Films such as *Doctor Zhivago*, *Midnight Cowboy* and *The Godfather* would be far less moving without their musical scores.

Robert Van Horne, ACS, CL, a musician and songwriter from San

Jose, California, has witnessed this phenomenon all over the world, having entertained passengers on cruise ships throughout the Far East as well as audiences close to his home. He knows how the complex sounds of some instruments can evoke detailed recollections.

"When I play at retirement communities, I try to play requests. A classic like [the Debussy piano suite] 'Clair de Lune' — people love it, they remember

playing it or maybe their mother or father played it," says Van Horne, a member of Switch-On Toastmasters in San Jose. "I think music is basically a memory of something from the past, and piano has a wonderful way to bring memories from the past because it's like a little orchestra."

Bluegrass musician — and *Toastmaster* magazine columnist — John Cadley concurs. "[Songs] can be powerful as a communication tool because while we may often forget facts and specifics, we always remember the feelings that were associated with them," he says. "That's why a song can evoke memories long forgotten."

Benjamin Zander, conductor of the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra and a popular speaker, described in a 2008 TED talk how he knows if his music

is having an impact on an audience's emotions: "When I look out and see all those shining eyes in the audience, I know we've created magic." He can sense where the musical highs and lows affect everyone in a concert hall, including those who are playing the instruments. "You can't play great music until your heart has been broken," Zander is quoted as saying.

Techniques Trigger Emotions

So *how* do musicians arouse such powerful responses? As noted earlier, it takes more than lyrics to move the audience. Certain musical techniques are just about guaranteed to evoke emotions in the listener. In any genre, specific chords — particular notes played together — stir certain feelings.

To put it simply, songs in a major key, such as "Happy Birthday," are cheerful, while songs in a minor key, such as the Beatles' "Yesterday," are sad. Even small children have an instinctive ability to identify "sad" versus "happy" songs.

John Powell, author of *How Music Works: The Science and Psychology of Beautiful Sounds, From Beethoven to the Beatles and Beyond*, describes chords as "confident majors and emotional minors." He also discusses how a faster or slower speed, rising or falling melody, and higher or lower volume, influence how we perceive music. These musical elements are like letters, words, sentences and paragraphs.



FROM SONG TO SPEECH

How to make your message more musical.

By Beth Black, CC

Musicians use many techniques to communicate emotion, including controlling speed and adding extra notes. Additionally, a tune with a solid melody can lodge itself in a listener's memory. Do you want your speeches to hold the same power? Try these three tips to add virtuosity to your next speech:

▶ Rubato

When making a particular point, a savvy speaker might slow down at the end of a sentence to accent the message in the final words. For example, try this sentence a couple of ways: "My sister was healthy throughout her teens, until illness stole her freedom." Try reading the second half of the sentence more slowly and see if it adds impact. Do you find your tone dropping as well? The emotion is packed into the speed and tone of your words. On the other hand, you might speed up a phrase in order to distinguish it from a slower, more emotional line that follows.

▶ Vibrato

When a musician holds a note for a while and you hear that vibration, don't you feel the emotion behind the melody just a touch more? You can do the same with words by carefully modulating your voice when needed. Some Toastmasters World Champions of Public Speaking have used this technique when touching on a poignant moment in a story. The voice trembles slightly. The emotion is conveyed. What's more, the sense that the moment is still very real for the speaker is also conveyed. This increases the power by making it personal.

▶ Appoggiatura

While it's important to stay focused on your message, sometimes you can add one or two choice "ornamental" words for emphasis. Such grace notes can embellish the details of a story with more flavor. Example: "He towered over me the way a statue overlooks little scampering squirrels in the park." You may not need "scampering" to express the size difference, but it connotes a sense of playfulness that can suggest related concepts.



▲ LaShunda Rundles, 2008 World Champion of Public Speaking, used several techniques — including singing — to make her speech resonate.

In *This is Your Brain on Music*, author Daniel J. Levitin discusses another evocative use of musical notes: the octave, a series of eight tones forming musical intervals. The first two notes of the wistful song "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" are an octave apart. Levitin says of the octave's universal appeal:

"It is so important that, in spite of the large differences that exist between musical cultures — between Indian, Balinese, European, Middle Eastern, Chinese, and so on — every culture we know of has the octave as the basis for its music, even if it has little else in common with other musical traditions."

The Impact of Instruments

Techniques in playing instruments also impact us. One example is *vibrato*, in which the musician pushes and pulls on the strings of an instrument such as a guitar or violin to create a more dramatic sound; another is *rubato*, in which the musician selectively skips notes and alters the pace, which if done well makes a melody dramatic, romantic and — well, if it's done right you will feel moved.

"Ornamental notes" in singing — those extra notes not carrying the melody — also augment the mood imparted by a song. John Sloboda, a professor of music psychology at London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama, specializes in researching the emotional experience of music. In a 1991 study, he found that the greatest emotional impact in a song comes from the *appoggiatura*, basically an extra note that often clashes slightly with the note next to it. This creates the kind of tension and release found by other music psychologists to heighten the listener's emotional response. (A recent *Wall Street*

Journal article explored Adele's use of *appoggiaturas* as a factor in her songs' emotive power.)

Communicating by Genre

Different genres and styles demonstrate different aspects of musical communication. In the jazz form, communication occurs not just between listeners and musicians but also among the members of an ensemble. During a jazz performance each band member enjoys an opportunity to improvise solo. Coalescing the improvisation portions with the main melody requires good, clear communication among musicians, sometimes even with just a nod of the head.

"A faster or slower speed, rising or falling melody, and higher or lower volume, influence how we perceive music. These musical elements are like letters, words, sentences and paragraphs."

"Jazz musicians definitely communicate with each other during performances. That's part of the magic," says Noal Cohen, a jazz historian from Montclair, New Jersey. Cohen notes that technical perfection is not a requirement for audiences to experience that magic.

"Billie Holiday certainly never had an opera singer's voice but she communicated strongly with listeners because there was such pain and raw emotion in her vocalizations," says Cohen. "The same could be said of Lester Young's saxophone playing. Communication is an essential part of a jazz performance."

John Cadley describes bluegrass as a form of music that developed as a hybrid of upbeat Irish and Scottish songs mixed with American blues. As such, it blends despairing "blues notes" with an upbeat tempo. The

distinctive mix of the banjo, fiddle and mandolin also serve to create the easily identifiable sound of bluegrass. "Bluegrass has even been called sad songs played to happy music," explains Cadley.

Toastmasters Speaking and Music

Cathy Wiegand, a Toastmaster for 20 years, is a singer, songwriter and keyboard player. She has recorded several albums and performs at various venues in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The Hopewell, New Jersey, resident draws a comparison between her Toastmasters experience and her musical career.

"Writing music, in a way, would probably parallel a prepared speech, although it could be like a Table Topic," she says. "You can write extemporaneously and sometimes there are songs that come out in three to five minutes and they're done."

Robert Van Horne also sees similarities between his Toastmasters experience and musical endeavors.

"Toastmasters has allowed me to sit up in front of an audience and speak," he says. "Up until I joined I was afraid to do that. I could sit down at the piano or sing, but ask me to speak into a microphone..."

Van Horne says Toastmasters has also impacted his music writing. "You have to learn to create what you're going to say. You have to search for the right word that will give you the best feeling for communication to the audience," he says.


Wiegand belongs to a Spanish-only club, Toastmasters en Español in Union City, New Jersey, which is open to anyone, whether a native Spanish speaker or someone who just wants to learn by immersion. She is the club's vice president education but also describes herself as its "musical director." She even wrote an "anthem" for the club in Spanish.

When Music Is Mystical

As Cadley asserts, there is a spiritual aspect of music that transcends finger-tapping and guitar chords. "All the mystics in every religion speak of going beyond language and words to 'find God,'" he says. "Music may come as close as we can get to expressing [what] we cannot say but which is nevertheless more real to our human experience than the things we can put into words.

"It has the power to transport us to a place where logic and reason and language can't take us."

Edward Sarath is a performer, composer and music professor at the University of Michigan. He designed the university's Bachelor of Fine Arts in Jazz and Contemplative Studies and is director of its Program in Creativity and Consciousness Studies, both of which explore the link between music and spirituality. Notably, in his work he finds evidence of music as a spiritual experience across multiple faiths and cultures.

Making music and responding to its sound is hard-wired in all of us, just as spoken language is. As public speakers, we make the most of opportunities to connect and communicate, and we'd do well to explore how music expresses aspects of the human condition. It is truly an international language. 

Ruth Nasrullah, CC, a member of the Boeing Toastmasters club in Houston, Texas, is a freelance writer and blogger. Contact her at ruthmiriam@earthlink.net.

Tara Miller: **LACKING SIGHT, BUT NOT VISION**

Legally blind photographer captures sensational images.

By Julie Bawden-Davis

Tara Miller pays no mind to what people think of her methods. Relying on her senses of smell and hearing, the legally blind commercial photographer does what it takes to chase the perfect picture, including crawling along the ground or waiting for lightening to strike.

“If people ask what I’m doing, I say I’m trying to get a creative shot,” says

worked as a professional food photographer since 2008.

“Because I am blind, I go about capturing photos differently than sighted people, and that gives my pictures a different perspective,” says Miller.

She and her son and husband, both of whom are sighted, go out storm-chasing during the summertime, which is when she captured the sunflower-

Developing Speaking Skills

When Miller gained fame for her award-winning photo last year, she realized she needed to improve her public speaking skills. “I was required to do radio interviews, and I never felt comfortable,” she says. Her husband found Toastmasters and suggested they both join, and today they belong to the Key Club in Winnipeg.

“I’ve enjoyed the constructive criticism in Toastmasters, and I’ve learned to make eye contact with people and to gesture,” she says. “Before Toastmasters, I stood petrified with my hands clasped or played with the podium. Now I connect with the audience.”

Miller also appreciates the club’s accepting atmosphere. “I was bullied as a child because of my disability, and even as an adult I sometimes feel people’s discomfort with me. The club gives all positive energy, which is a breath of fresh air. Members are completely honest and don’t feel they have to be nicer [to me] because I’m blind.”

Fellow club member Barb Bayer, DTM, lauds Miller’s attitude and improvement. “Tara is much more confident in her ability to deliver a speech. She never complains about her disability and always has a positive attitude.”

“As a chef depends on smell and taste, I rely on my hearing and smell when I take photos.”

the Toastmaster, who lives in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. “I can’t see people’s faces anyway, so their reactions really don’t matter.”

Miller has less than 10 percent vision. Born with vision problems brought on by congenital rubella syndrome (German measles) prior to birth, she lost most of her sight by age 16. While the concept of taking photos without sight seems infeasible, Miller illustrates that it is not only possible — it can create exceptional results. She won several awards in 2011 for her photo “Fortuitous Twilight,” which shows a sunflower field during a lightning storm, and she has

field photo. “As a chef depends on smell and taste, I rely on my hearing and smell when I take photos,” explains Miller. “I hear the wing flapping of geese, and I know they fly in circles, and when rain is about to fall, I can smell the changes in the air and feel the humidity rise.”

She can see with a small spot in her left eye, which helps with close-up shots, but she has no night vision or depth perception. And unless someone tells her, she doesn’t know what her photos look like until she gets back to the studio, where she enlarges her pictures by 400 percent on the computer screen so she can view them.



► **Tara Miller, with her award-winning photo “Fortuitous Twilight” on the screen behind her, has less than 10 percent vision and must enlarge her photos by 400 percent on the computer screen to see them.**

A Long Wait

Miller fell in love with photography in junior high school, before she lost her sight completely. “I had to give it up once I could no longer see,” she says. Then in 2008, during a family vacation to Hawaii, her husband, Jeff, photographed an orchid and enlarged the image to the point where she could see it. It reignited a spark in her.

“Being able to see photos, including details like dew on a blade of grass, was so exciting and changed everything for me,” says Miller, who immediately bought herself a camera. At the time, her husband had made a career change and was studying photography, so they decided to open a commercial studio together. The couple operates the Winnipeg-based 100 Acre Woods Photography.

“Jeff taught me to memorize the settings on the camera and the lights,” says Miller, who excels at lighting objects to make them three-dimensional by using math skills involving 90- and 45-degree angles. Her shots are often artistic, a result of studying art as a child.

Miller spent her early years, before the congenital rubella-induced glaucoma took nearly all of her sight, immersed in drawing and painting.

Her father, Werner Becker, was a professional artist and encouraged her love of art. One of the skills she learned during those years that makes her photos compelling is the use of unusual perspectives.

“I learned from my father how to shade shapes depending on where the sun is located, which makes things three-dimensional and more lifelike,” she says. Miller often approaches objects from various angles until she gets the desired effect.

“When it comes to composition, it’s almost to Tara’s advantage that she can’t see well,” says photographer Joe Kerr, a mentor and the owner of Pixels 2.1 Gallery in Winnipeg, which does custom fine art printing. “According to the basics of composition, if you blur an image by squinting, you can determine if it’s right,” he says.

Animals in Art

Kerr recalls a photo of a moose that Miller recently brought in for processing. “Tara captured the moose at Jacques-Cartier Lake [in Quebec] standing knee-deep in water,” he says. “Tara camped there for two days and patiently waited until the right moment, which resulted in a real beauty of a photo. She does equally well with

food photography. Over the years, she’s learned the skill of the camera, such as getting the right depth of field.”

Miller and her husband volunteer for Agriculture in the Classroom-Manitoba Inc., an organization that fosters an interest in agriculture. Johanne Ross, the organization’s executive director, speaks admiringly of Tara’s photographs. “She follows her heart when taking a picture, which is why the resulting images are so soulful.”

Boosted by her Toastmasters training, Miller regularly speaks in public about her experience as a blind photographer.

“If you have a passion for something, like I do for photography, limitations are merely a roadblock,” she notes. “My vision loss was a negative that I turned into a positive. You can overcome any obstacle to fulfill your dreams.” **T**

To learn more about Tara Miller and see her photos, visit 100acrewoodsphotography.com.

Julie Bawden-Davis is a freelance writer based in Southern California and a longtime contributor to the *Toastmaster*. You can reach her at Julie@JulieBawdenDavis.com.



Past International President Pat Johnson

WHAT HAPPENS IN VEGAS

How I set goals and made new friends at the 2011 convention.

By Jackie Kloosterboer, CC

My lifelong dream has been to become an awesome public speaker. Five years ago, I joined Quay Speakers Toastmasters club in North Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, to help me realize this dream. As an emergency planner with the city of Vancouver, my position involves a significant amount of public speaking, and I often address large groups of people in a variety of situations. Without Toastmasters, this would not have been possible.

Last year, the Toastmasters International Convention was held in Las Vegas, Nevada — my favorite city. You would think that my decision to attend

would have been an easy one to make, but I struggled with it. After much deliberation, I decided to go. Before I knew it, I was boarding a plane to Las Vegas for a journey that would change my life.

I have attended many opening ceremonies over the years, but few were like the one held at the Las Vegas convention. It started with a parade of flags presented in alphabetical order. The cheering as the flags entered the room gave me goose bumps. When it was time for the Canadian flag to appear, I looked in vain for it. Suddenly, toward the end of the parade, it appeared: Canadian Toastmaster (and this year's convention presenter) Paddy Kennedy

carried the flag proudly. Walking close behind her was Pat Johnson, Toastmasters' 2010-2011 International President and a resident of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. The audience erupted into hearty applause and even louder cheering as delegates carrying the Canadian and U.S. flags made their way to the front of the room. The pride I felt for Canada was unbelievable — it brought tears to my eyes.

Selecting Education Sessions

Thinking about where I wanted to go with my own speaking career, I decided to attend Johnny Campbell's session on the Accredited Speaker

process. After hearing his suggestions, I immediately sent myself an email: “Update my goals; become an Accredited Speaker within three years.”

I also was looking forward to the Toastmasters International Speech Contest Semifinals. Mustapha Lansana, ACB, CL, from my home district, was competing. I found a seat, looked beside me and saw there was an empty chair; beside the empty chair was a good-looking man. As we watched Mustapha onstage, I thought back to the time in Vancouver when he beat a

that these speakers could have been any of my fellow Toastmasters — or even me! With hard work, dedication, determination and the support of fellow Toastmasters, any member has the potential to reach this level.

I had seen Angela Louie, DTM, a speaker from my district, compete in previous speech contests. So later that day, I watched her give her final speech in pursuit of the Accredited Speaker designation. It made me think twice about the hard work and preparation needed to earn that title. After

improve my own speaking. The convention came to a close with the President’s Dinner Dance. Luck stayed on my side, as I had yet another date with the same man!

On the flight back home, I contemplated what the convention experience had meant to me. It’s not true that “what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas,” as the saying goes. What happened in Vegas will stay with me forever. My decision to attend this event changed my life, and it continues to do so — in so many good ways. I am confident that I will become a better speaker and a better leader. And I now have a new and exciting goal to work toward: becoming an Accredited Speaker. Additionally, by sitting in that chair at the Semifinals, I met someone who is now an important part of my life.

Who knows what the 2012 International Convention in Orlando, Florida, will bring. But you can be sure of one thing: I will be there — and I hope you will be, too. **T**

Jackie Kloosterboer, CC, belongs to Quay Speakers and Just Pros Toastmasters clubs, both in British Columbia. She is an expert in the field of emergency preparedness and the author of the book *Plan for the Worst*. Reach her at hug467@telus.net.

“While watching, I realized that these speakers could have been any of my fellow Toastmasters — or even me!”

contestant from my club. Mustapha was very good at that time, and he deserved to win, but the amazing part about watching him at the Semifinals was realizing how much better he had become. For me, Mustapha demonstrated how the Toastmasters program works and how our participation in it makes us all better speakers. When Mustapha concluded his speech, I turned to the good-looking man beside me and said with pride, “He’s from my district — I evaluated him.”

The speeches really were the best of the best. While watching, I realized

her presentation, I sent another email home: Revise goal: Practice hard — practice really hard — to become an Accredited Speaker.

A Dinner Date

That evening was the Golden Gavel dinner. I was in Vegas and luck was with me — I had a date with the handsome man who had been sitting near me during the Semifinals!

Saturday’s World Championship of Public Speaking was sensational. Watching the speakers gave me so many ideas about how I could

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NOTEWORTHY POINTS ON EVALUATING

A visit to a Beijing club leads to a valuable lesson.

By Colleen Plimpton, ACB

Accompanied by my daughter, I strolled into the amphitheater-like room where Beijing's China Capital Toastmasters club was about to convene. I introduced myself to the club president as a visiting Toastmaster from America. He promptly asked if I was interested in being an evaluator for the club Speech Contest that day. What? All I had wanted to do was experience a club

I glanced up over my shoulder at my daughter, a tiny figure in the midst of an audience of several hundred. She gave me a jaunty thumbs-up, and off I went to meet the young woman I was to evaluate.

What did I learn that day? Because I made an impromptu decision to deliver my evaluation without notes, I learned more than I ever anticipated.

for your opportunity by obtaining the speech information well in advance. Read about the manual project the person will be delivering; review the speech objectives as well as the evaluation guide for that project; talk to the speaker about the goals he is hoping to achieve; and, finally, have extra paper on which to record your thoughts during the speech.

In addition, consider perusing the Toastmasters publications *The Art of Effective Evaluation* (Item 251) — a seminar-style program — and *Evaluate to Motivate* (Item 292), part of *The Successful Club Series*. Both are available at www.toastmasters.org/shop.

When the speaker approaches the podium, attend to him with your eyes, ears and other senses. Watch how he moves, initiates his speech and segues from the introduction to the body and conclusion. Observe the impact the speech has on you. Take concise notes. A template can be of assistance — perhaps simple plus and minus columns on a blank piece of paper. An acronym is also helpful in recalling salient points. I like to use the three “C’s”: Content, Comportment and Conclusion. This enables me to gauge the speaker on speech material (did it hang together, did it flow well?); demeanor, manner and posture (did she appear confident, did she engage the audience with her gestures?); and how well she wrapped things up (did she refer back to the opening?).

“A persuasive short critique makes the difference between a ho-hum evaluation and one that exhorts the speaker to new challenges.”

meeting in the faraway city where my daughter lived.

Drawing a stabilizing breath, I smiled and nodded. Yes, I would evaluate. The president returned my smile, settled me in the front row, handed me the rules and moved on to other duties.

The room hummed with activity and anticipation while I, sputtering and stalling, eyed the proffered rating sheet and rapidly considered my options. Would there be a language barrier? Would I make a fool of myself while informally representing the United States of America? I had to admit, however, that I was intrigued. I could do this ... it would certainly stretch my skills and it might even persuade my daughter to join Toastmasters!

Evaluators Benefit, Too

Evaluations, you see, are not beneficial solely for the presenter. They are also a powerful tool for the evaluator, because an evaluation is an opportunity to deliver a succinct speech — ideally, without notes. To give a successful evaluation, you must be quick-thinking, accurate, observant and sensitive. It is difficult to accomplish this sans notes, but not impossible. And it is certainly an undertaking that will help produce a superior speaker, evaluator and all-around Toastmaster.

Here's how to do it:

First and foremost, relish the occasion while accepting that your first obligation is to the speaker; your role is to help him or her improve. Prepare

Aiming for No Notes

It is common for members of advanced Toastmasters clubs to deliver evaluations without referring to notes, but this can be an objective for all Toastmasters. For instance, Pat Nelson, DTM, of Wild Rose Advanced Toastmasters in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, recommends jotting down impressive or unusually creative aspects of the speech, as well as interesting word usage and portions that can be enhanced. She then circles the most significant points and commits them to memory.

As you face the audience to provide your evaluation, remember this is your chance to deliver a dynamic

ful evaluation. This requires seat-of-the-pants organization, which is good practice for every Toastmaster.

▶ **Focus:** In the *Competent Communication* (CC) manual, focus is referred to as “Getting to the Point.” Again, with a limited time frame, the evaluator has a restricted palette of topics upon which to expound, so concentrate on the most pertinent details. Assess and review during the speech. Sift through the verbiage, gestures and emotion to locate the most relevant nuggets and concentrate on these highlights and low lights. If amplification is necessary, chat with the speaker after the meeting.

Delivering a verbal evaluation without notes requires listening with the “third ear” — listening beyond the basic level — to catch speech nuances.

▶ **Visual aids:** Most evaluations need no visual aids, but if the speaker has employed them, it’s easy to comment on their usage, thus adding to the pertinence of the evaluation.

▶ **Persuasion:** A persuasive short critique makes the difference between a ho-hum evaluation and one that exhorts the speaker to new challenges. Use your skills to deliver the best message possible.

▶ **Inspiration:** Be sure to mention if the speaker inspired you, or if her words are likely to result in some action by you. I like to mention when I learn something new, and perhaps how I will use that knowledge.

▶ **Tact:** Diplomacy is a critical skill in both life and Toastmasters, and there is no better way to learn it than employing a “velvet hammer” in your evaluation. Area 53 Governor John Steinbach, ACS, says he avoids “whitewashing” problems in a speech — glossing over them — but he is always encouraging to the speaker. Steinbach, a member of the Voices of Williamsburg club in Williamsburg, Virginia, stresses that it is important to share less-obvious points that need improving; however, he takes into account the experience of the speaker, tending to be more detailed with someone working in an advanced manual than with a new Toastmaster working in the CC manual.

Carol Cichorski, CC, formerly of the Aon Glenview Toastmasters club in Glenview, Illinois, agrees that a “smile sheet” isn’t going to cut it. She says the key to a good evaluation

“Diplomacy is a critical skill in both life and Toastmasters, and there is no better way to learn it than employing a ‘velvet hammer’ in your evaluation.”

short speech. Grab the audience’s attention with an opening question, such as “Did you notice how?” Or draw a comparison. I opened a recent evaluation by comparing the speaker to the “Big E,” an annual fair in Massachusetts. I segued into the “E’s” that the speaker demonstrated and I had memorized from my notes: Enthusiasm, Entertainment and Education. It was then a simple matter to pull out the relevant parts of his speech.

Naturally, the first few evaluations without a paper crutch (i.e., notes) are nerve-wracking, but all you really have to do is recall the speech’s highlights. Other components will be listed on the evaluation guide.

If you employ this note-less, short-speech approach, you will hone several crucial Toastmasters skills:

▶ **Organization:** You have a mere two to three minutes to deliver a help-

▶ **Vocal Variety:** Commenting on vocal variation gives you the opportunity to emulate the speaker, especially if she has employed good range. If not, show her how by raising, lowering and modulating your voice.

▶ **Gestures:** Highlight your evaluation by echoing the speaker’s gestures and footwork. Address how those actions applied to the speech. If she used gestures you admire, let the club know. If, on the other hand, she needed more movement, demonstrate appropriately.

▶ **Listening:** Gail Palermo, ACG, CL, a longtime member of the Barnum Square Toastmasters in Bethel, Connecticut, has given many evaluations and says that her listening skills have improved as a result. Everyone listens differently, she notes, and thereby each evaluator offers the speaker a unique perspective.

is to respect the speaker and deliver praise with aplomb and constructive criticism with grace.

► **Self-evaluation.** Don't forget to evaluate yourself. What did you leave out that should have remained? Were you clear in giving the speaker your best assessment of his speech? To make sure, ask the speaker after the meeting. Take notes for the next time.

Here are a few more road signs on the highway to becoming a better evaluator:

Don't be reluctant to evaluate skilled speakers. Every Toastmaster, at every level, can learn from the evaluation process. In fact, for professional speakers, improving

their work is indispensable to their livelihood and is one reason so many join and remain in Toastmasters.

Enter the Evaluation contests.

There are few better ways of improving your skills than participating in and observing others perform in these competitions. Whether at the club level or beyond, you will learn "the good, the bad and the ugly" of the evaluation process.

Evaluation, especially without notes, may not be everyone's favorite Toastmasters role. But it is fundamental to helping others as well as ourselves become better Toastmasters. By stretching our skill set and evaluating off the cuff we help one another to advance.

Oh, and that speech contest in Beijing? My snap decision to evaluate without notes was my first attempt at that particular undertaking, but the bright red first-prize ribbon I received solidified my hunch that I was on the correct track to improvement. From that day forward I have never again used notes to deliver an evaluation. **T**


Colleen Plimpton, ACB, is a member of the Barnum Square club in Bethel, Connecticut. A professional writer, coach and lecturer on gardening, her most recent book is *Mentors in the Garden of Life*. Reach her at colleenplimpton.com.

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EVALUATIONS MAKE AN IMPACT

Sometimes your feedback is even more valuable than you know.

By Jean Bailey Robor, DTM

One evening about eight years ago, a timid young woman slipped quietly into a Toastmasters meeting and sat in the back row. Having endured a difficult time in her personal life, she wanted to rebuild her confidence and learn public speaking. So there the woman sat, wondering if this Toastmasters club could help her. When she saw the evaluation portion of the meeting — the positive and encouraging feedback that each speaker received —

she began to see that this was a place where she could grow.

First impressions matter. If your members provide useful and encouraging speaker evaluations, then your club is leaving positive and lasting impressions with visitors. Providing effective feedback helps speakers improve their skills and it shows your guests what they can gain by joining your club.

When you set a high evaluation standard, club members will be

challenged to hone their evaluation skills, and they will provide *you* with valuable feedback when it's your turn to take the stage. Learning to give a great evaluation is much like learning to be a great speaker: It comes with practice. Try these four steps to boost your skills:

Remember to give value. Your feedback becomes valuable to speakers when you offer specific tips on how

they can best connect with their audiences. Look for qualities listed in the *Competent Communication* manual, such as speech organization, word choice, sentence structure, body language, vocal variety, eye contact, use of visual aids, and use of or lack of notes. What about the speaker's facial expressions? If the speaker's goal was to inspire, did you feel inspired? If the goal was to persuade, were you persuaded? Notice what worked and what didn't.

Organize your verbal evaluation.

One of the reasons the Toastmasters program is so successful is that evaluators provide immediate verbal feedback. While they are not speeches,

apply this skill in advantageous ways for prosperous results," he adds.

Here's one good way to ensure your verbal feedback is organized: As you listen to a speech, divide a sheet of paper into three sections:

- ▶ The Good
- ▶ Improvement Points
- ▶ Summary

Sectioning your notes will help you sort and select the points you want to make during the evaluation portion of your Toastmasters meeting.

Conclude with a punch! In your verbal feedback, be sure to wrap it up with something memorable. The last part of an effective evaluation should summarize your suggestions

Greensboro, North Carolina, offers this advice if you find yourself having difficulty with evaluating: "Never evaluate the speech as a speaker evaluating another speaker. Evaluate as a member of the audience and how you received the speech." In other words, your opinions are valid whether you are a well-seasoned speaker or a new Toastmaster. Often, new members are intimidated when asked to evaluate the best speaker in the club. However, if you put yourself in the place of an audience member, you'll notice what the speaker did well and what skills he can improve upon. When you realize that, and provide genuine, valuable feedback, then new and well-seasoned speakers alike will thank you for it.

"A Toastmasters club without effective evaluations is like a school with no tests," says Sharon Anita Hill, DTM, past District 37 governor and president of Sharon Hill International, a business-etiquette training company. "Early speech evaluations are the baseline for [a speaker's] improvement and growth. Advanced speech evaluations keep the speaker's mind and techniques fresh."

As for that shy young woman who slipped into the back row of a Toastmasters meeting? That was me. Through encouraging and effective evaluations, I have grown as a communicator and a leader. When you and your club members deliver valuable evaluations, you may even change a life. **T**

Jean Bailey Robor, DTM, is a member of Burlington Toastmasters club in Burlington, North Carolina, and an award-winning author, professional speaker and 2010 District 37 Evaluation Contest champion. Learn more at jeanbaileyrobor.com.

"Never evaluate the speech as a speaker evaluating another speaker. Evaluate as a member of the audience and how you received the speech."

such evaluations should be organized in a way that helps the speaker process the information.

Evaluators who deliver well-organized feedback not only help speakers to improve, they also help themselves, especially professionally. Angel Guerrero, a member of Triad Toastmasters in Greensboro, North Carolina, and owner of AS Web Pros, an Internet business-support company, says evaluating speakers has helped him in business.

"Evaluation training in my club and in speech contests has allowed me to be an expert at listening and observation," says Guerrero, the 2009 District 37 Evaluation Contest champion.

"There is no question that in my day-to-day leadership responsibilities as a member of the community and as a business owner, I have been able to

to help the speaker's next speech be even stronger. The conclusion should not only be informative but encouraging. Help the speakers realize that they have what it takes to make their next speech even more powerful. Challenge them to apply your suggestions. For instance, "You really connected with me emotionally when your voice dropped to a whisper; to make your next speech even more powerful, I suggest incorporating a pause before you deliver such an impactful statement."

Keep it real. When you are genuine in your evaluations, your club members will take your suggestions to heart; they will know they are receiving good, solid feedback when you evaluate. They'll know you are helping them grow.

Bryant Pergerson, DTM, a member of the Blue Moon Toastmasters in



WHEN YOU ARE A PANEL MODERATOR

How to facilitate an engaging discussion.

By Christine Clapp, DTM

Jim Becker, an information technology director who has spent years moderating panels as well as planning meetings and conferences, says, “A great panel moderator is like a great party host, making everyone feel welcome, knowing how to avoid or handle lulls, knowing how to get a conversation going between others, knowing how to rescue someone from an inappropriate or overly long conversation, and knowing how to wrap things up when it’s time for the

“Seek out panelists who are dynamic speakers; the best authorities won’t make good panelists if they can’t present.”

party to end — all done with alertness and diplomacy, and without expecting to be the center of attention.”

Just as an excellent party requires careful preparation, so does an excellent panel. Here is what a moderator can do beforehand to ensure that guests — panelists and the audience — have a positive experience:

1. Analyze the audience: When planning a panel, the moderator or conference planner should identify the target audience and research the needs and interests of audience members. When the panel presents a timely issue that the audience cares about, you set the stage for a popular panel discussion.

2. Select participants: Along with the right topic, select the right panelists to ensure a packed event. Invite thought leaders and newsmakers who have credibility on the issue, as well as an important point of view. Showcase a range of perspectives.

Seek out panelists who are dynamic speakers; the best authorities won’t make good panelists if they aren’t compelling presenters. Similarly, select speakers who are willing to present within the parameters (topic or time

constraints) of the panel. Some high-profile speakers have a stump speech and won’t tailor their presentation for specific audiences and situations. Find someone who will.

Aim high. When you identify the perfect presenter for your panel, extend an invitation. The perfect panelist cannot say “yes” if you don’t ask.

Research and contact one or two potential panelists beyond the number you need, just in case of cancellations. Each industry and conference differs, but most panels have three to five panelists. Strive for balance between breadth and depth — have a range of perspectives and enough time for a thorough discussion. Include time

for questions from the audience, as well as answers from and exchanges among panelists.

3. Confirm and reconfirm: After panelists accept, confirm the time, date and location in writing. Also explain your vision for the panel: what the desired outcome is, why particular panelists are chosen, what each panelist should address to avoid repetition, how long each person should speak and how the question-and-answer session will be handled. Also include any other relevant details on accommodations or registration. To avoid any surprises or competition for the microphone, warn panelists that their comments may be cut short if they exceed their time limits. Ideally, moderators should then schedule a conference call with panelists.

“Some of the best panels I’ve ever seen are where the moderator had a pre-event conference call with all the panelists,” says Sarah Sennett, a marketing executive at The Institution of Engineering and Technology in Stevenage, Hertfordshire, England. “The moderator found the particular strengths and specialties of each panelist within the subject matter, and pre-agreed on a few [subjects to cover] to ensure a balanced debate that sparked lots of questions.” The key is to listen to the suggestions of the panel on your vision for the session. This will ensure the agenda is

REMINDERS FOR PANEL DAY

By Christine Clapp, DTM

After your preparation is complete, follow these steps on the day of the panel.

- ▶ **Arrive early to set up.** Put out an agenda, large name placard and glass of water for each panelist. Test microphones and other technology. Cue slides.
- ▶ **Brief panelists 30 minutes before the panel.** If they are a few minutes late for the briefing, they'll still be on time for the main event. Remind panelists how the session will unfold.
- ▶ **Keep track of time.** If panelists have opening remarks, set clear time limits beforehand. Find a trusted colleague or audience member to serve as the timer. Tell panelists during your briefing who will keep time, how time signals will be displayed and how you will cut off panelists who go over time. Make sure all panelists can see where the timekeeper is sitting and provide cue cards that are large enough for panelists to see (and hard to ignore).
- ▶ **Start on time.** Two minutes before the start of the panel, make an announcement that the session will begin shortly. Then start the program on time. If attendees aren't seated, repeat a pleasantry, such as "good afternoon," several times and with long pauses between each repetition. A loud and enthusiastic greeting will be met with a quick response.
- ▶ **End on time.** No one likes a panel that goes over time. Allow plenty of time for the final question and your wrap-up. Concluding a few minutes early provides time for the audience to complete an evaluation and approach panelists.
- ▶ **Follow up.** After the event, send thank-you notes to the panelists, event organizer, timekeeper and others who helped. Just like a winning party organizer, a gracious panel moderator won't have trouble attracting volunteers to help with future events.

well suited to the panelists and that they are comfortable with the focus of the session.

A few days before show time, reconfirm in writing, going into more logistical detail. Find out what technology, if any, panelists will need. If they are using PowerPoint slides, get them in advance to ensure compatibility and ease of transition. Most importantly, provide the time and location you'd like panelists to meet before

the program, as well as phone numbers where you can be reached up to the last minute.

4. Craft an agenda: Craft a detailed agenda after the conference call, taking the specialties and suggestions of panelists into consideration. List the exact time that each panelist is scheduled to present, as well as time-lines for other agenda items.

Panelists should receive a copy of the agenda ahead of time so

they know what to prepare, such as opening remarks or responses to specific questions that the moderator will ask. Bring a copy for each panelist on the day of the session and put it at his or her assigned seat.

Prepare and bring copies of back-up agendas. For example, one aimed at a session that is 15 or 30 minutes shorter than the time originally allotted. Because conferences often run late, this will allow you to help organizers get back on schedule. Another alternative agenda should account for a session that is one panelist short, so you can adjust for a last-minute cancellation.

5. Write speaking material:

While an agenda makes a good outline of the event in general, the moderator must also prepare what he or she will say at certain points in the panel. This speaking material doesn't have to be scripted. Planned and rehearsed talking points work well. Prepare the following:

- ▶ **Opening:** Grab the attention of the audience with a relevant fact, statistic, quotation, anecdote or joke. Then welcome the audience, thank panelists, link the opening line to the purpose of the panel, and preview how the panel will unfold. Be explicit about when and how audience members can ask questions. The opening sets the tone for the entire panel; carefully craft and rehearse it until your delivery is smooth and enthusiastic.
- ▶ **Panelist introductions:** Decide if you will introduce all panelists during the opening, or introduce each panelist right before he or she gives individual opening remarks.
Ask panelists to provide an introduction ahead of time. Most will send a page-long biography that must be shortened and made

relevant to the panel discussion. A good introduction is 30 to 60 seconds long, highlights the most interesting and important aspects of a panelist's credentials and provides a teaser of his or her remarks. An introduction must also include the preferred title and correct pronunciation of each panelist's name and affiliation.

- ▶ **Plan out question session:** Plan in advance how and when you will solicit questions. Seed several questions with trusted audience members ahead of time. Ask one of them to volunteer a straightforward question immediately after you open the floor. This prevents

“Seed several questions with trusted audience members ahead of time to prevent awkward silence.”

awkward silence, encourages others to ask questions and gets panelists comfortable responding. Other seeded questions can be asked during lulls in the discussion. A good moderator has a list of questions prepared so he or she can open new topics of discussion during lulls also.

- ▶ **Conclusion:** Give notice that the panel is coming to a close by calling for the last audience question. After it is answered, pose a broad last question that allows each panelist to offer final thoughts or discuss future trends.

Then, thank the panelists, audience, event organizers, and, if appropriate, sponsors for providing a forum and engaging in a discussion on such an important issue. Share additional resources available to attendees and announce future events of interest.

When appropriate, link the conclusion to the catchy statistic or anecdote from your opening. If you have an evaluation form for the session, ask the audience to fill it out and express thanks for the feedback. Finally, if the panel is part of a larger conference, tell attendees what's next on the schedule and give them directions to get there.

- 6. **Prepare to facilitate the discussion:** Judy Hojel, CEO at People and Performance Training Pty Ltd in Sydney, Australia, sums up the moderator's role: “A moderator is there to encourage interactivity

between the audience and the panelists, and among the panelists themselves. The more relaxed they are, the more they encourage others to relax and therefore generate the best outcome from each person.

“Being a good moderator means knowing when to bring in the participation of the audience, as well as knowing when to encourage the panelists to speak to each other,” she adds. Though effective moderators do much of their facilitating on the spot, they can practice the following relevant skills ahead of time:

- ▶ **Listening:** Moderators need to listen carefully to interject follow-up questions, ask related questions of panelists who haven't been as involved in the conversation, and smoothly transition between speakers and topics.
- ▶ **Repeating and reframing:** Moderators must repeat questions

so everyone can hear and panelists have a moment to formulate a response. The moderator reframes questions on a tangential topic and directs each question to a particular panelist with expertise on the specific issue.

- ▶ **Interrupting:** Effective moderators must be skilled at interrupting politely. This is key to keeping the agenda on track when a panelist has gone on too long during opening remarks or an answer to a question. Audience members should be interrupted if they are using floor time to give a speech, not ask a question.

Interrupt kindly by waiting until the speaker is taking a breath or ending a sentence. Thank the speaker for his or her comments and indicate that it is time to move on, such as to the next panelist's opening remarks or another panelist's perspective.

Moderating a panel truly is like hosting a celebration where someone else is the guest of honor. You won't need streamers or cake, but you will need careful preparation and a smooth delivery for everyone to feel comfortable and have a good time. Follow these tips and your panel will be a hit! 📌

Christine Clapp, DTM, belongs to the United States Senate club and The George Washington University club, both in Washington D.C. As president of *Spoken with Authority*, she develops the voice of experts who want to broaden their impact. She also lectures in the Department of Communication at The George Washington University.



OFFICIAL NOTICE OF VOTE YOUR 2012-2013 OFFICER AND DIRECTOR CANDIDATES

You will have the opportunity to vote for the international officer and director candidates of your choice while attending the Annual Business Meeting on Saturday, August 18, 2012. The International Leadership Committee nominated officer candidates for the positions

of International President-Elect, First Vice President and Second Vice President. International director candidates were nominated for Regions 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 14. The Committee's selection is presented in accordance with Article VIII, Section 1, of the Bylaws of Toastmasters International.

2012 Annual Business Meeting
11:30 a.m. Saturday,
August 18, 2012
Hilton Bonnet Creek Resort
Orlando, Florida, United States

To review details of each officer nominee's qualifications, please visit the Toastmasters website at: www.toastmasters.org/officercandidates



International President-Elect
George Yen, DTM



First Vice President
Mohammed Murad, DTM



Second Vice President
Theo Black, DTM



Second Vice President
Susan Dalati, DTM



Second Vice President
Jim Kokocki, DTM

To view details of each director nominee's qualifications, please visit the Toastmasters website at: www.toastmasters.org/directorcandidates

From Region 2

Mike Barsul

From Region 6

Randie Jacobs
Lori Lococo

From Region 10

Don Griffith
Lois Sicking

From Region 14

Manuel Espina
Joseph Gomez

From Region 4

Patricia Hannan
Mary Swanson

From Region 8

Catherine "Cat" Angus
Kristina Kihlberg

From Region 12

Mike Helm

It is the right and duty of all clubs to participate in the vote, either through their representatives at the International Convention or by proxy.

If you are attending the convention, you will have an opportunity to meet and talk with all the international officer and director candidates before

the election. Additional nominations for officers and directors may be made from the floor at the Annual Business Meeting. **T**

THE SCRUPULOUS SANDWICH APPROACH

How to dish out a satisfying evaluation.

By Jenny Baranick

American author Elizabeth Stone described having children as the decision to forever “have your heart go walking around outside your body.” I don’t have children, but I certainly recognize that sense of vulnerability. It’s the same way I feel when I give a presentation or submit an article. Since I chose the topic, the words, the tone and the

Any word, sentence or paragraph that strays from the work’s main focus — no matter how interesting — does not belong in that particular piece. For example, I attended a seminar in which the speaker was to give book-proposal-writing advice. The speaker, however, spent most of the time sharing his own personal writing and publishing experiences. It’s not

sentiment that you could sense Bill and Alicia’s connection, but I’d love to hear specifically what they did that enabled you to see it.”

With all these extras, the sandwich can become pretty tall. When a sandwich falls apart, a curly toothpick will do the trick; when an essay or speech needs cohesion, transitions hold it together. These can be transitional words and phrases such as *for example*, *another reason*, *however*, *therefore* and *consequently*, or simply repetitions of key words. For example, one of my students gave a presentation honoring her father. It would have greatly benefited from adding transitions. She said, “My father is the most intelligent man I know. He dropped out from high school, but he is very creative.” I told her that her ideas were great, but she needed to tie all these ideas together and make sure everything supported her main idea, which was proving her father’s intelligence. Then I recommended this revision: “My father is the most intelligent man I know. Even though he dropped out of high school, his intelligence can be seen in his creativity.”

If my critique approach seems too coddling to you, perhaps you’ll appreciate my colleague’s tough love approach. When his students’ papers lack specific details, he doesn’t take the time to encourage them; he simply writes “WTF?” It stands for “Where [are]The Facts?”¹

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“When a sandwich falls apart, a curly toothpick will do the trick; when an essay or speech needs cohesion, transitions hold it together.”

style, the work feels like an extension of me even if the work does not cover a particularly personal subject.

Because of the personal nature of written and spoken expression, I consciously strive to be gentle when I critique the work of a student or colleague. Of course, I know I wouldn’t be doing my job if I didn’t point out opportunities for improvement, but I am careful to be encouraging rather than destructive. Consequently, I am a proponent of the popular “sandwich method” often used in Toastmasters, which suggests we begin our evaluation with praise, then deliver constructive criticism, and end with another positive statement. However, to ensure that every aspect of my evaluations, including how I voice my criticism, is positive and encouraging, I have taken the sandwich method a step further by adding the following tenets: the “Ziploc bag,” the “condiments” and the “curly toothpick.”

I employ the “Ziploc bag” tenet when someone’s work gets off topic.

that his experiences weren’t interesting, but I, like other attendees, had a book proposal to write. Consequently, many of us left unsatisfied. If I were to provide that speaker with criticism, I would have followed the Ziploc tenet by suggesting that he cut those fascinating personal anecdotes and save them for another time.

Even if we stay on topic, many of us are prone to making vague, unsatisfying statements to prove our points rather than providing juicy, specific details that hit the spot — and that’s where the “condiment” tenet comes into play. For example, I have heard many wedding toasts that consist of predominately vague statements such as, “I could tell from the first moment Bill and Alicia met that they were made for each other.” If I were to critique this speech, I would say that the meat of it is good but that it could use some condiments to add flavor. And to be as helpful as possible, I would be clear about what flavor it needs. For example, I might say, “It’s a beautiful

OVERCOMING BOUNDARIES

Auditor learns new language and skills in her adopted country.

By Mary Nesfield

Faye Dunn grew up in China and turned her life's challenges into an opportunity for personal development. Raised in a rural and impoverished area of that country, she eventually moved to Australia, worked hard to learn English

a radio show in which people call in with tax questions.

Dunn, who grew up speaking Cantonese, earned her bachelor's degree in Chinese language and literature from Jinan University, in Guangzhou, China. She moved to

Chinese customs with an empty wallet and a suitcase full of toilet paper rolls. I was told that toilet paper was very expensive in Australia!

How do your communication skills benefit you as an auditor?

I need to communicate to the taxpayer, to my team colleagues and to other departments within the tax office. Without my communication skills, I would not be able to do my job at all.

How do you deal with people who are angry or unhappy about their tax situation?

It is never easy to work with angry or unhappy people. The key is to defuse their resentful sentiments. Sometimes one needs to walk in their shoes to understand where the negativity stems from. I work with taxpayers with more than \$100 million in annual turnover; the majority of the people I work with are very professional.

How did you get the chance to do a radio show?

The Access and Diversity Unit of

"I walked out of Chinese customs with an empty wallet and a suitcase full of toilet paper rolls. I was told that toilet paper was very expensive in Australia!"

and forged a successful career in the Australian Taxation Office (ATO).

The ATO, which has offices all across Australia, has seven Toastmasters clubs; Dunn is vice president public relations of the Tuesday Chatters club in Moonee Ponds, a suburb of Melbourne in Victoria. Dunn says her communication skills are a crucial asset in her job as an auditor, both in working with taxpayers and with colleagues. She also uses those skills as a host of

Australia in 1989, and is now an Australian citizen.

Q: What prompted you to move to Australia?

A: I wanted to move away from China and Australia offered me a student visa to study English in Melbourne. My parents, my sister in America and I all pitched in to buy me a one-way ticket to Melbourne and the tuition for a semester at Victoria University. I walked out of



Read about it @ www.toastmasters.org/magazine



Faye Dunn

► Faye Dunn, an auditor for the Australian Taxation Office, hosts a Cantonese-language radio program where she answers tax-related questions.

the Australian Taxation Office and the Australian government-owned Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) jointly host monthly “tax talkback” programs to non-English speaking communities in selected community languages. Mandarin and Cantonese are two of the languages featured. I was approached in 2003 to be one of the ATO hosts — for the Cantonese tax talkback program.

What are some of the most common questions you get from callers?

Many Australians with a Chinese background are astute investors. I get many questions relating to equity and property investment.

Is it difficult to give impromptu answers to questions on the radio?

To answer questions on the radio, one needs to understand the question, know the technical aspects of the subject and provide a precise and succinct answer. This demands good listening, and analytical and communication skills.

Does your Table Topics training help with that?

When I am on the air, I need to be 100 percent focused. The program builds on a question-and-answer format. This differs from Table Topics, but the skills I have learned in Toastmasters definitely help me to enjoy the challenges.

What was the biggest challenge that you faced after moving to Australia?

My biggest challenge was overcoming the language barrier. English is a very difficult language to learn.

Did you know any English before you moved there?

I passed the English subject in high school and entered the university meeting the minimum English requirement. I could not understand conversational English when I first came to Melbourne, nor could I make others understand me.

Why did you join Toastmasters?

I was hesitant when I first walked into a Toastmasters meeting as

a guest. I was a very nervous speaker then. My brain stopped functioning when I talked. I was equally frustrated by my mistakes in English grammar. I decided to join the Tuesday Chatters club after that meeting to become a better, calmer speaker and to improve my English.

How does Toastmasters benefit auditors?

The Toastmasters training has provided me with the confidence to communicate with taxpayers. My training in the Toastmasters leadership program helps me to seize the opportunity to acknowledge taxpayers who have done the right thing. 🗣️

To learn more about Faye Dunn, contact her at faye.dunn@ato.gov.au.

Mary Nesfield is a freelance writer and editor based in Southern California. You can reach her at marynesfield@gmail.com.

THEY'RE PLAYING OUR SONG

A saccharine explosion of lyrics.

By John Cadley

People invented songs so they could say stupid things and get away with it. Let's face it — without the music, “*supercalifragilisticexpialidocious*” sounds like someone having a seizure. And if Tony Bennett had really left his heart in San Francisco, he wouldn't be Tony Bennett. He'd be dead.

I was listening to my car radio recently and a song came on in which the singer intoned, “*I just want you to be my doctor / We can get it cracking, chiropractor.*” This may be the first love song where lower back pain plays a romantic role. Then there's a Top 40 song called “Lotus Flower Bomb.” If the title doesn't scare you the lyrics will: “*Flower bomb, let me guess your favorite fragrance / You got that bomb, huh, I'm tryin' to detonate you.*” I'm not sure if this guy is going to spark his lover's interest or an investigation by Homeland Security.

Madonna is always good for a song. There's one where she sings: “*Shoo bee doo bee doo ooh la la / When I look in your eyes / Baby here's what I see / I see so much confusion.*” Well, Madonna, I hate to tell you, but “shoo bee doo bee doo ooh la la” is confusing. In another song she tells her love interest to stay so they can “*scoop, scoop, scoop, scoodooly be bop.*” If it's the same guy she mentions in the “shoo bee doo bee doo ooh la la” song, I'd ask for a translator before things go any further. Somebody could get hurt.

And then there's American country music, which some people, praising the genre's honesty and simplicity, refer to as “three chords and the truth.” I refer to it as “ridiculousness in 4/4 time.” Hoyt Axton actually had a hit — a *hit*, mind you — singing: “*Work your fingers to the bone and what do you get? Bony fingers.*” No, work your fingers to the bone and you get a trip to the emergency room, but who's worrying about details? Even the legendary Johnny Cash, whom I admire greatly, was not above a really bad lyric: “*I've been washed down the sink of your conscience / In the theater of your love I lost my heart / And now you say you've got me out of your conscience / I've been flushed from the bathroom of your heart.*” Where to begin? He's in the bathroom, then he's in the theater. Or maybe he's in the *theater's* bathroom because he couldn't wait till intermission — and he gets flushed down the toilet. *After* he's been washed down the sink! Where is this song going — besides to a wastewater treatment plant?

At least it's not as bad as finding a corpse in your local tavern. That's what Joe Diffie sang in the lyric: “*Prop me up beside the jukebox if I die / Lord, I wanna go to heaven but I don't wanna go tonight / Fill my boots with sand, put a stiff drink in my hand / Prop me up beside the jukebox if I die.*” You know what? Cancel my reservations for dinner.

The most prominent lyrical theme, of course, is love. As Paul McCartney

sang, “*Some people want to fill the world with silly love songs / And what's wrong with that?*” Apparently nothing, since he just wrote another one. Dean Martin crooned: “*When the moon hits your eye like a big pizza pie / that's amoré,*” while The Platters sang: “*Some day you'll find / All who love are blind.*” Maybe that's because they just got hit in the face with a pizza.

Elvis Presley asks his woman for “*a big-a big-a big-a hunk o' love.*” Paper or plastic? And always, it seems, lovers will swim the deepest oceans, climb the highest mountains and walk the deepest valleys. Forget about being in love — these people are in *shape!*

Believe it or not, there is actually a worldwide consensus on the worst lyric ever written. It's Paul Anka's “*You're Having My Baby,*” a song so saccharine that it's listed in the *Physicians' Desk Reference* as a possible cause of diabetes. Mr. Anka sings: “*Having my baby / What a lovely way of saying what you're thinking of me.*” Of course, that's from *his* point of view. What is she thinking of him? I see a hugely pregnant woman with morning sickness, hot flashes and swollen ankles screaming: ***You did this to me!!***

But it probably wouldn't sell. **T**

John Cadley, a former advertising copywriter, is a freelance writer and musician living in Fayetteville, New York. Reach him at jcadley@twcny.rr.com.

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Michelle Hyde, CC, from New York, New York, vacations in Puerto Viejo, Costa Rica.



Jason Garrett from Kailua, Hawaii, stands on the summit of **Olomana** on the island of Oahu, Hawaii.



Jeff Belotindos, ACB, ALB, and Annie Cel Canete, CTM, CL, from Cebu City, Philippines, visit the Ruins of St. Paul in Macau, China.



Cora D. Nava Bryce, CC, CL, from Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, completes a pilgrimage through Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Bethlehem.



Samantha Tu from North District, Taichung, Taiwan, visits Angkor, Cambodia.



Allan Wong, ACB, ALB, from Montreal, Quebec, Canada, visits Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada.



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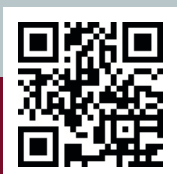
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