What’s Your Club Culture?
When learning is fun, achievement soars.

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Presenting in a Second Language

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Cross-cultural Communication

In Dr. Smedley’s time, the term “cross-cultural communication” was hardly used, nor was it in the general consciousness. Today, as the world has shrunk, cross-cultural communication is common and worth study by any speaker or leader. This is especially true in our organization, where a full 42 percent of our members live outside the United States. Even the U.S. represents different cultures, with a large proportion of its population being foreign-born. I was awed when conducting district visits in the U.S. and Canada recently by how multicultural our organization has become.

For example, members of the Microsoft Speakers club, who meet at Microsoft’s headquarters near Seattle, Washington, represent a proverbial melting pot of cultures.

When I searched online for cross-cultural communication, I came upon the strategy of “LEARN,” which stands for:

L – Listen to what a person is saying
E – Effectively communicate
A – Avoid ambiguity
R – Respect differences
N – No judgment

It occurs to me that the LEARN strategy is equally applicable to all interpersonal communication. This underscores the fact that each individual represents a unique culture made up of personality, character and life experiences. We even speak to different “cultures” within our own families when we speak to our spouse, parents and children. This is why communication, whether interpersonal or cross-cultural, is so challenging. As human beings, we are born with the unique gift of sophisticated communication ability; however, to truly master this skill is a lifelong endeavor.

At least when we communicate cross-culturally, we are aware of speaking in a different context and we understand that the listener holds a different understanding. However, when we speak to another person in our own culture, we tend to assume the listener is a replica of ourselves. This couldn’t be further from the truth.

There are four keys to cross-cultural as well as intercultural communication.

1. Build self-awareness
2. Listen with empathy
3. Take an Attitude of Equality
4. Bring assumptions out into the open

One thing is certain, as our world shrinks inexorably, cross-cultural communication will become increasingly important. Bernard Baruch, American financier and adviser to U.S. presidents Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt, observed a century ago, “We didn’t all come over on the same ship, but we are all in the same boat.”

GEORGE YEN, DTM
International President
“Thank you for offering me the opportunity to perhaps pique people's interest in finding out more about Tourette Syndrome.”
— Cara Wasden, ACB, CL

In Tune
Emiko Hori hit the high note in Craig Harrison's article, “A Musician's Mindset” (January). Ms. Hori credits her public speaking success to her music training, through which she mastered skills like preparation, performance, self-evaluation and goal setting. She used those skills, thinking of a speech as a music score, rehearsing its rhythms and cadence on her journey from her Ice Breaker to becoming a professional speaker.

As a musician myself I have often credited my success in Toastmasters to the very same principles that Ms. Hori brought forth. The speech takes on the feeling of a music composition. The words become notes, the sentences a phrase, the paragraph a verse. Each part must flow smoothly with the next. We become aware of tone and articulation, shading and accents, all the stuff that help make for a good speech and delivery. But a word of advice here: Just as a musician must practice to maintain skills, so must we as public speakers.

Jonathan Bailey, ATMB
Babylon Babblers club
Babylon, New York

Tackling Tourette's
I'd like to thank Mary Nesfield for doing such a wonderful job in writing the "Rising Above the Stigma" article about me in the January Toastmaster. My brother is an eighth-grade English teacher, and he has a student with Tourette Syndrome. He showed the young boy the article and it made the boy's day. Hearing that made my day, too. Thank you for offering me the opportunity to perhaps pique people's interest in finding out more about Tourette Syndrome.

Cara Wasden, ACB, CL
Toast of Petaluma club
Petaluma, California

A Positive View
I get excited about life. I get excited every day when I open my eyes and have a chance of living another day. Living ... do we take it for granted? I asked this question after reading John Cadley's article (“Happy New Year?”) in the January Toastmaster magazine. I know many individuals who (like Mr. Cadley) don't drink alcohol, live in upstate New York, have few hobbies and don't frequent the gym. The one thing they have, that Mr. Cadley might choose to add to his life, is a positive outlook. A new beginning—is it too much? It sure beats no beginning.

Kathy Barlow, CC, Ed.D.
Lunchtime club
Albany, New York

Going Blank
As speakers, we all fear that terrifying moment when our brain shuts down and the words we're searching for simply aren't there. I experienced “brain freeze” recently while giving my 23rd speech. Two sentences into the speech, I went totally blank. With complete composure, I said to my fellow club members and guests: “This has never happened before ... I've lost my train of thought.” Unfortunately, I had left my notes at my seat and considered walking over to get them, but decided to trust that the well-rehearsed words would return—and they did. The moment I relaxed and admitted my lapse, the words came.

I learned two lessons: Always bring notes to the lectern, and know that you can recover when your mind goes blank.

Donne Davis, ACB, CL
Menlo Park Toastmasters
Menlo Park, California

A Tip for Grammarians
I read the “Club Survival Tip” about the grammarian's role (in the Around the Globe section, January). On the whole, I agreed with the tips, but it did not recognize that most Toastmasters speak English as a lingua franca [a language used to make communication possible between people not sharing a mother tongue]. Research shows that “proper grammar” does not automatically make communication clearer. English is a versatile language that allows for a surprising amount of errors before communication suffers. I recommend that grammarians only note errors that may cause misunderstandings; this could include the overuse of native expressions.

Laura Murto-Lindén, CC
Stadi Talkers
Helsinki, Finland

DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?
Write it in 200 words or less. State your name, member number and home club, and send it to letters@toastmasters.org. Please note: Letters are subject to editing for length and clarity, and may be published in both the print and electronic editions.

Have you checked out the digital Toastmaster magazine yet?
If so, please send your feedback to letters@toastmasters.org. Your opinion matters!
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Enjoy the magazine on the go!
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- iPad (second-generation iPad and newer)
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Simply download the Toastmasters International app
for your tablet from the Apple, Google Play or Amazon
app stores.

For more information, go to www.toastmasters.org/magazine.

April Digital Content Highlights
- See the five winning club videos in the Toastmasters brand contest.
- Watch a video clip of the speech that earned Shurooq AlBanna a place
  in the top three at the 2013 World Championship of Public Speaking.
- Watch renowned speech expert Paddy Kennedy talk about how
to reduce your accent to be better understood.

*The April issue will be available soon.
When Kuala Lumpur was selected as the site of the 2014 International Convention, Yat Seow Low, DTM, volunteered to chair the host district committee. Yat Seow, who lives in Kuala Lumpur, is a past District 51 governor and a member of D’Utama Advanced Toastmasters club in Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia.

Yat Seow received a Toastmasters Presidential Citation in 2012 for his contributions to the organization, which include chairing many district conferences and speech contests. He holds an MBA, with degrees in civil engineering and business computing, and is a general manager for a real estate developer.

Why did you volunteer for this role?
I volunteered for the position because (1) I have benefited from Toastmasters International in so many ways since I joined in 1996, and this presents a great opportunity for me to serve the organization in return; (2) I enjoy working with a team of committed Toastmasters in a journey where we can enhance friendship and bonding, as well as strengthen our love for the organization; (3) this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity; and (4) it’s a chance to promote Malaysia to the rest of the world, especially since 2014 is “Visit Malaysia Year.”

What’s the greatest challenge in preparing your district to host the convention?
It is to get enough volunteers from District 51 to serve at the convention.

What do you think will surprise attendees about the city?
The multicultural heritage of Malaysia and the warm hospitality of its residents. I am confident that convention attendees will find Malaysians very friendly. Most Malaysians speak English. A variety of food is available 24 hours a day at a very reasonable price.

What is the No. 1 tourist attraction in or near Kuala Lumpur?
I recommend seeing Batu Caves, a limestone hill with a series of caves and temples that houses a Hindu temple and shrine. The limestone formation of the caves is said to be 400 million years old. The main temple rises almost 100 meters above the ground. After you climb 272 steps, the stunning skyline of Kuala Lumpur unfolds before you.

What are some helpful phrases for attendees to know?
Greet someone with the words selamat datang, meaning “welcome.” Ask someone how he/she is doing with Apa khabar? Express your gratitude by saying terima kasih, which means “thank you.”

What Toastmasters skills have prepared you for this role?
The skills to communicate effectively as a leader, to listen to the views of others and to make better decisions based on sound evaluations.
SNAPSHOT

1 | Batu Caves: Climb 272 steps to see this sacred Hindu shrine.

2 | KL Bird Park: This eco-tourism park is billed as “the world’s largest free-flight walk-in aviary.”

3 | Central Market: A gifts emporium offering a variety of handicrafts, art, textiles and other authentic Malaysian souvenirs.

4 | Putra Mosque: Located in Putrajaya, Malaysia, this gem of Islamic architecture is located next to the Perdana Putra, which houses the Malaysian Prime Minister’s office.

INTERNATIONAL INTERPRETATIONS

KL’s Culinary Treats

Nasi lemak. Char siew. Sago gula melaka. These are merely three of many sumptuous dishes popular in Kuala Lumpur. If you seek gastronomic adventures, this Malaysian city is the place for you! The site of the 2014 Toastmasters International Convention, Kuala Lumpur offers widely diverse fare spiced by Malay, Chinese and Indian flavors. The city is known for its range of both roadside food stalls and acclaimed high-end restaurants. Nasi lemak, considered the unofficial national dish, is made of rice cooked in coconut milk and flavorful pandan leaves. Many variations exist, but nasi lemak is typically served with fried anchovies, sliced cucumbers, a fried egg, roasted peanuts and chili sauce. Kuala Lumpur’s local food hub is Jalan Alor, a street that offers a vibrant scene with food stalls luring visitors with popular offerings like honey-glazed char siew (barbecued pork) and stingray grilled in banana leaf. For a traditional Malaysian dessert, try sago gula melaka, made of sago pudding, coconut milk and a palm sugar syrup.

What to drink? One of KL’s most popular beverages is teh tarik, a tea prepared with condensed milk that offers a frothy texture and sweet flavor.

Nasi lemak is the unofficial national dish of Malaysia.
“Many clubs in and around Montreal, Canada, are bilingual.

The HEC Toastmasters club conducts the first hour of its meetings in English before moving to a French or bilingual session. English-only sessions start first, since many members are international MBA students who know English well, but are less fluent in French. Those not studying at the university usually have day jobs, so they are more likely to arrive later for a bilingual experience in which French usually prevails as the main language.”

David Rowley, ACB
HEC Toastmasters and Outremont Mile-End Plateau clubs
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

“In 1996, we chartered The Europeans club, an English/French bilingual club in Paris. Members must at least understand both languages, but it is better if they are fluent in both. We have two grammarians at each meeting, one for French and one for English, with each one proposing a word of the day. Members may speak in either language, but if they begin a presentation in one, they must complete it in that same language (no “franglish” allowed).

If the Table Topicsmaster asks a question in one language, the speaker can answer in the other language. The same thing goes for a speech and its evaluation. The club has been functioning this way for 15 years, to great success.”

Odile Petillot, DTM
Past District 59 Governor
Expressions club and The Europeans club
Paris area, France

Every speaker deserves a thoughtful and gracious introduction—it helps the audience feel good about the speaker and sets a positive tone for the speech to come. Although it’s usually less than a minute long, the introduction still has all the elements of a full speech:

- An opening. It grabs the audience’s attention (perhaps with an intriguing fact about the speaker’s topic) and highlights the importance of the subject.
- A body. It explains why the speaker chose the topic and why it is relevant to this particular audience. The speaker’s credentials and expertise on the matter should also be briefly cited here.
- A conclusion. It paves the way for the speaker to begin the presentation.

When introducing a speaker, try to be graceful as well as witty if appropriate. Make your words fun and lively! But don’t steal the show—make it all about the speaker. And leave out claims that the speaker is especially brilliant, successful or a “good speaker.” The goal is to end the introduction just as the audience’s interest is piqued.

If you are the speaker, don’t assume the person who will introduce you will do it well. To be safe, send the introducer an advanced copy of an introduction that you write yourself.

A Memorable Moment: Life Goes On

I woke in the middle of the night to the sound of sirens, flashing lights and fire engines. A police officer was banging on the door, screaming, “Get out, get out. Your barn is on fire.”

When the flames finally died and the sun rose high in the sky, we learned we had lost eight prized show horses that night, along with our tack, our equipment, our horse feed, our livelihood.

I sat and stared at the smoldering ash, when suddenly a feeling came over me as if I could feel the spirits of the horses rising from the devastation. And in that moment I knew life would go on. The strength of the human spirit rises above tragedy—like a spirit from the ashes. Yes, life does go on.

PAT JOHNSON, DTM
Past International President 2010–2011
Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

“The only reason to give a speech is to change the world.”
—John F. Kennedy
MEET MY MENTOR

Dale Grieves, DTM

No one has the potential to influence a member’s experience like a mentor. Trish Appleton, CC, is a financial comptroller and member of City Centre Toastmasters in Prince George, British Columbia, Canada. She shares how her mentor, Dale Grieves, DTM, has helped her.

When did you first meet your mentor?
In 2007, I was taking some college courses that required quite a bit of role-playing and presentations. At about the same time, Dale and I began working together in the same office at the Prince George School District. That was when she began mentoring me, although I was not yet a Toastmaster.

How did Dale mentor you?
She listened patiently as I expressed my fear of speaking in front of my college classmates and reassured me that I had the skills needed to succeed in my assignments. Each time I updated her on my successes, she gave me the kind of smile that said, “There was no doubt in my mind that you could do it.” Dale spent many hours mentoring me, and in 2011, I finally felt ready to join Toastmasters.

Why did you join Toastmasters?
I joined because I had been unsuccessful in securing a position that aligned with my career goals. I’m a bit of an independent introvert, and I wanted to learn how to network and lose my fear of voicing my opinion. I needed to become more assertive, while remaining respectful. I needed to set boundaries and increase my confidence in my abilities.

How has Dale helped you?
Because I was a new Toastmaster, Dale guided, supported and encouraged me as I worked my way through the Competent Communication manual and most of the Competent Leadership manual. She offered honest feedback on my speeches and club meeting roles.

What goals have you accomplished since joining Toastmasters?
Helped by Dale’s expertise and professional demeanor, I reached a level of confidence in public speaking that previously seemed like a fairy tale. I also became financial comptroller for a nonprofit organization.

What is your one favorite thing about your mentor?
Dale has many admirable attributes; if I had to pick just one, I’d say it is her sincere enthusiasm.

FACTS WORTH KNOWING

Kuala Lumpur’s Famous Skyline

If you attend the 2014 International Convention in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, visit the Petronas Twin Towers—the sixth tallest buildings in the world, according to the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat. A popular tourist attraction, the towers house 8 million square feet of shopping and entertainment facilities. Designed by Argentine-American architect César Pelli, each tower’s structure forms an eight-pointed star, a design inspired by traditional Malaysian Islamic patterns. Get a free ticket to the Skybridge connecting the twin towers at the 41st floor, or pay to access the eastern tower’s observatory on the 86th floor for a spectacular view!
1 | KATHY AND HARVEY YOUNGMAN FROM THOUSAND OAKS, CALIFORNIA, enjoy the Great Wall of China.

2 | RANDY GRAY FROM COLUMBUS, MISSISSIPPI, summits Uhuru Peak on Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Africa.

3 | KENN PLEBANEK FROM CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, admires the Acropolis in Athens, Greece.

4 | CHERYL BROWN (FAR RIGHT) FROM SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA, enjoys a hot air balloon ride in Masai Mara, Kenya, Africa.

PICTURE YOURSELF HERE! Pose with the Toastmaster magazine in your exciting surroundings. Email your high-resolution image (at least one megabyte) to photos@toastmasters.org. Bon voyage!
From Tragedy to Triumph
How education helped me become a catalyst for change in Haiti.

BY SEPHORA PIERRE-LOUIS, DTM

When I was 19 and living in Haiti, my mom—the pillar of my life—suddenly passed away. She was 45. In a heartbeat, I was left to care for my 9-year-old brother while working full time and going to school. Mourning my loss, I struggled with class presentations and my new position as an assistant manager for a manufacturing company. I felt angry and unfocused at work, and I lacked the basic communication skills to perform my job.

My boss had just joined the Flamboyant Toastmasters club in Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti, and she invited me to visit. I loved the spirit of encouragement and professionalism displayed by members, and I joined right away. Little did I know that Toastmasters would become the centerpiece of my education, helping me succeed in my career as well as aid my fellow Haitians in a time of crisis.

As I expanded my network of mentors and friends, I gained confidence and began healing from my pain and mourning. Jean Robert Lebrun, DTM, past division governor of District 81 and one of the pioneers of Toastmasters involvement in Haiti, became my mentor. I joined his team to help sponsor and charter new clubs in Haiti. My confidence grew further, and at work I could now hold effective meetings, communicate with clarity and motivate my team to reach its goals. Eventually, I was promoted to marketing and sales manager.

In December 2009, six years after I joined, I became a Distinguished Toastmaster. Although I continued to mentor clubs and new members, I felt that my time in Toastmasters was coming to an end. Then in 2010, catastrophe struck. A 7.0 magnitude earthquake hit Haiti. More than 200,000 people perished in 45 seconds, and millions were left with nothing. I mourned the families and friends who died. And I became an active member of Partners of the Americas, an international grassroots network that helps others in need. I volunteered on several projects, helping children, elders and people with disabilities, and using the communication and leadership skills that I honed in Toastmasters.

But I wanted to do more: I wanted to help Haitians gain greater access to education, and I wanted to provide small-business entrepreneurs with more training. So I applied for scholarships and pitched business ideas. In 2011, I was granted a Fulbright Award to be used to obtain a master’s degree in business administration in the United States. I moved to attend Mills College in Oakland, California, but with some trepidation—I was going to start a new journey in a new country with two young daughters, in a place where I didn’t know anyone.

My family and I were welcomed by several Toastmasters from various clubs. The support I received was tremendous. For example, when we first arrived in the San Francisco Bay Area, our apartment was not yet ready for us; but Bill Young, ATMS, a member of the Lakeview club in Oakland, opened his home to us until we could move into our new home. I quickly joined two advanced clubs in the Bay Area, Heart2Heart and LaughLovers, to practice my English-speaking skills and build self-confidence.

My support team, especially Area Governor Randie Ellington, ACS, ALB, played a huge role in my journey as a student. I graduated from Mills College last year with honors. Improving my education allowed me to increase my value in the marketplace, and I am now better able to give back to the Haitian community. I established FormatAide to provide training to Haitian business owners, to help them lead and grow their companies to become independent and self-sustaining.

Toastmasters continues to provide me support through its worldwide community. It is a gift that continues to give, and one that helps me give back.

SEPHORA PIERRE-LOUIS, DTM, is a project manager and a member of several clubs in the Oakland, California, area. She is founder and executive director of FormatAide (formataide.org), an organization dedicated to leading the regrowth of the Haitian economy.
Three years after her friend Wafa Alnakhi, CC, introduced her to Toastmasters, Shurooq AlBanna, of Dubai, United Arab Emirates, made Toastmasters history, becoming the first Arab woman to advance to the World Championship of Public Speaking. Not only did she reach this level (the final round of the 2013 International Speech Contest)—she came in third place.

“What I really like about AlBanna is her commitment and her ambition,” says Alnakhi. “Whenever she decides to do something, she will do it, no matter how much that thing will cost her.”

AlBanna works for the Noor Dubai Foundation, a nonprofit organization with a mission to eradicate preventable forms of blindness. She manages the foundation’s charity Art 4 Sight, an annual art exhibition and auction. AlBanna, who speaks Arabic, English, French and Spanish, has a master’s degree in strategic marketing from the University of Wollongong in Dubai.

A member of the Lagoon Toastmasters in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, she won her district’s Humorous Speech Contest in 2012. At the 2013 International Convention in Cincinnati, Ohio, AlBanna delivered her championship-round speech wearing a “shayla” (headscarf) and “abaya” (a black long-sleeved robe or garment). Titled “Finding the Pearl,” the speech urged listeners to look beyond the superficial qualities of people—and appreciate the good that each individual possesses.

One lady told me: “You made Arab women proud, you were our voice.”

What kind of attention did you receive as the first woman from an Arab country to advance to the championship?

My achievement was celebrated in several countries. I sensed pride in everyone I met who was aware of my achievement, especially the ladies. One lady told me: “You made Arab women proud, you were our voice.” This excites me, and humbles me at the same time.

Do many women in your district enter speech contests?

Definitely. I’ve been in Toastmasters for only three years but I noticed that many women of different nationalities participate in speech contests in District 20, which I find beautiful.

In a recent interview you said, “I’m not who you think I am.” Please tell us more about that.

I am not who you think I am and nobody is who we think they are. It is the key message in many of my speeches. Often, we make judgments about other people and stereotype them based on our cultures or experiences. More often than not, people surprise us with their humbleness, humility and kindness, and we regret our initial judgment. It’s my way of reminding people to give others a chance to prove themselves.

Do you have any role models when it comes to public speaking?

Not really. I get moved and inspired by random people in my everyday life. For example, I might be attending a medical or humanitarian conference and be inspired by a doctor who is presenting a case but delivering it with his heart and soul. I also find myself trying to pick up on certain techniques, altering them to make them my own. You are very likely to find the gems under the most unlikely rocks. I am inspired by teachers, lecturers, doctors and even CEOs who use their words wisely to change the world.

In your championship-round speech, you spoke about the importance of finding the good in people. How has that approach benefited you?

I try to use this approach in my everyday life. It is impossible not to clash with people, but how do we deal with it? By reminding ourselves that despite the actions of others, those people are still...
good. They have their own struggles, and there is a good reason why they behave in a certain way. This is why it’s best to just let it go and take the high road. Forgive them and move on.

Was 2013 the first time you came to the United States? If so, what was that like for you?
That was my second visit to the U.S., and I loved it. During my visits, Americans have been so kind and hospitable. I felt comfortable. It proved to me that regardless of race, humanity and kindness are found everywhere.

Do you alter your presentation style when speaking to Western audiences?
Altering the presentation style to fit the audience is key to reaching out to other cultures, especially when it comes to humor, as it does not translate well. I alter my presentations because I don’t want to see puzzled faces in the audience as I speak.

What is the main difference between Arab and Western communication styles?
The main difference is in body language. I noticed Arabs accentuate their hand gestures a lot more. The choice of topics is also different, but then this applies to all different cultures.

How is your approach to communication and public speaking similar to, or different from, other Arab women?
I rarely compare myself or my style to others; neither do I spend hours studying other speakers. I have a firm belief and I stick to it: Deliver in your own unique style simply by being yourself and speaking from your heart. Being true to yourself allows you to create your own style. I dislike mimicking other people because then I become more like them and less like me. It works for me every time.

Does your traditional attire limit your gestures?
Not at all. In fact, it helps me. It controls my body language so I do not exaggerate my gestures and how I walk on stage. It also reminds me that I am a proud Arab woman who should always be graceful in my words and actions. My traditional attire is part of my identity, and it empowers me when I speak.

Do you see yourself as a role model for Arab women?
I sure do hope so. My main aim is to inspire others to work hard and achieve their dreams and not to be hindered or frustrated by the perils that face them. I hope many are inspired by my nine-month journey to the World Championship, and that they use that inspiration to fulfill their own wishes.

You used humor well in your championship-round speech. How do you make your humor relevant to an international audience?
I am very careful when it comes to using humor. I seek help from my friends in a specific culture so that my words translate well and do not offend anyone. With my championship-round speech, I was lucky to understand American humor as I grew up watching American sitcoms like Friends, The Golden Girls and Frasier.

What was your topic when you won the district-level Humorous Speech Contest in 2012?
I tackled an issue that every girl across the world faces. Regardless of the culture or the means, every woman is set on finding her “Mr. Right,” and so am I. Instead of being frustrated by the process, I decided to inject humor into a normally stressful situation. I am delighted that so many women, and a few men, identified with me.

What are your plans for the future?
I have many, but the most important one is to take a “chill-pill” and practice what I preach. I don’t want to be sucked into a hectic lifestyle and miss out on the simple joys and special “moments” that we take for granted. I aim to nourish my mind, body and soul. This includes practicing other languages, eating well and being very sincere in my prayers.
Show Off

Five winning clubs share their enthusiasm for the brand.

Congratulations to the winners of Toastmasters International’s Video Brand Contest. From August 1 through December 31, 2013, members from around the world captured their enthusiasm for Toastmasters and for their clubs on video. The top 10 club videos for each of those months were selected and entered into a drawing, and one of the 10 clubs was drawn to become that month’s winner.

Since 2011, when the brand refresh was introduced, clubs have made great strides to transition to the new brand. And help is on the way for many clubs with insufficient funds for purchasing branded materials.

The contest will run through December 31, 2014. So if your club needs help branding, enter the Toastmasters monthly brand video contest to win a banner, lectern or popular marketing materials for your club. Best of all, the winning videos are seen by thousands of members and potential members. What better way to promote your club than to show your enthusiasm in a creative way?

For more information, visit www.toastmasters.org/brandportal and scroll down to see, and be inspired by, the latest winning video submission in the Video Brand Contest.

August: San Luis Obispo Toastmasters, San Luis Obispo, California
Founded in 1955;
24 active members
The Toastmasters brand represents decades of experience. It signifies the caring and supportive nature of the organization, which is dedicated to making each member throughout its global community a better speaker, communicator and leader. The new logo’s bold and bright color palette mirrors the organization’s forward momentum.

— Rachell Newburn, CL

September: Toastmasters Club of Pune, Maharashtra, Pune, India
Founded in 2008;
42 active members
Toastmasters International is associated with quality. The quality of its educational program and the quality of its evaluations. We love the consistency of the meeting structure across the world!

— Prasad Sovani, DTM
District 41 Governor
Show Off Your Club Video!

October: Camanava Brunch Toastmasters Club, Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines
Founded in 2005; 22 active members
We aim for high quality. We aim for excellence. And with excellence, everything else that we aim for follows.
— Eduardo R. Catayoc, III, ACS, ALB

When brainstorming the concept for our club’s video, we thought of adjectives describing the Toastmasters brand. The list grew long. In 12 words we concluded that Toastmasters is: Transcultural, Organized, Affirming, Supportive, Thorough, Meaningful, Accountable, Successful, Transformative, Encouraging, Rewarding and Spectacular. The Toastmasters logo and tagline, “Where Leaders Are Made,” are inclusive to these adjectives, as are several more. If only “Toastmasters” had more than 12 letters!
— Robin Rueff

November: Peace Speakers Toastmasters, Louisville, Kentucky
Founded in 2005; 12 active members

December: Walter Gage Toastmasters, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
Founded in 1979; 40 active members

The new Toastmasters brand has a refreshing and more contemporary look that shows how Toastmasters continues to evolve. Although there is much to respect of the previous emblem, the new logo allows for greater diversification of the organization. Whereas we have previously and continue to be known for our public speaking, a simplified and unified emblem can draw in both the leadership and educational features of the organization, and put them on the forefront.

— Cassandra Chan, ACB
More and more, speakers around the world deliver talks in their second or even third language. And thanks to globalization, that second language is most likely English. United Kingdom-based speaker coach Max Atkinson, author of *Lend Me Your Ears: All You Need to Know about Making Speeches and Presentations*, explains in his blog the role of the English language with a story about a lecture in Italy presented in English by Italian novelist and scholar Umberto Eco:

He had just started his lecture when a group of locals demanded to know why he was speaking English in an Italian university. His response was impressively democratic and he asked the audience: “How many of you can only speak English?”

I was one of a tiny minority of five or six native speakers of British and American English who raised their hands. In response to which Eco quickly rephrased his question: “For how many of you is English the only foreign language you can understand?”

The vast majority of hands now went up, to which Eco turned to his compatriots and said: “As my lecture was advertised to be in English and the only language most people here understand is English, I shall give my lecture in English”—at which point, the rebellious Italian minority walked out.

Using a second language for your speech or presentation, then, is all about the audience and what the majority of your listeners will understand. But that doesn’t mean your audience understands English *fluently*, nor does it mean that you do. It’s a big challenge for any speaker. Here are suggestions from speakers and speechwriters living and working in countries as varied as Belgium, Canada, South Korea, Spain and the United Kingdom to help you prepare for the challenge:
1 Keep it simple: “When people want to impress an audience, they overcompensate,” says Canadian speechwriter Amélie Crosson, who has written speeches in French and English for bankers, prime ministers and parliamentarians. “A lot of people think plain English is a sign of ignorance—they’ll say ‘utilize’ instead of ‘use.’ Relax. Keep it simple.”

Speaker coach Florian Mueck, ACG, a member of Prestigious Speakers in Barcelona, Spain, agrees. “Having a small vocabulary isn’t a disadvantage,” says Mueck, a native speaker of German who also gives speeches in English and Spanish. “Less is more in public speaking, and often native speakers could [simplify their language] and say less.”

2 Don’t get lost in translation: Use humor, metaphor and analogy sparingly. Mia Doornaert, a former speechwriter to the prime minister of Belgium, says, “Beware of jokes and humor and figures [of speech] that may not translate, or may resonate very differently in other languages and cultures.”

U.K. speaker coach Atkinson warns that popular culture metaphors can cause confusion in a second language—something that is even true when the speaker is using American English versus British English. In his blog, he notes, “As a native speaker of British English, I often find myself bemoaning the fact that we have imported so many baseball metaphors from American English, even though it’s not a game that’s played or understood by most British adults. … Cricketing metaphors may be fine for speakers of English in Australasia, the Caribbean or the Indian subcontinent, but they’re not of much use in the United States, or indeed in the rest of Europe.”

3 Think short: Crosson, the Canadian speechwriter, recommends “thinking short” in every way: short words and short, declarative sentences. She says, “You don’t want to have a long speech, because speakers in their second language tend to speak slower. You need to make your words count.” She notes if your audience includes a lot of people for whom English is a second language, they will have learned a simple sentence structure: subject—verb—object.

Doornaert agrees: “If you don’t want to get lost in translation, keep sentences short.” At the United Nations she heard the story of a French simultaneous interpreter from Germany who, during a long German sentence, was heard to implore desperately: “Le verbe, le verbe s’il vous plaît!” (The verb, I beg of you, the verb!)
Use each language’s special strengths: Doornaert speaks several languages herself, and noted that as a speechwriter she wrote in three languages: in Dutch (her mother tongue) and French (two major official languages of Belgium) and in English for international speeches. “I really felt how every language has a personality, a genius of its own. I would switch a kind of ‘language button’ in my head. For instance, a French speech will have a different rhythm and flow than one in Dutch or English.”

In an article in The American Scholar magazine, William Zinsser, author of On Writing Well, says the definition of “good writing” depends on which country you are from, thanks to the innate differences in languages. Speakers can benefit from his advice to writers seeking to switch from another language to English:

I once asked a student from Cairo, “What kind of language is Arabic?” I was trying to put myself into her mental process of switching from Arabic to English. She said, “It’s all adjectives.” Well, of course it’s not all adjectives, but I knew what she meant: it’s decorative, it’s ornate, it’s intentionally pleasing. Another Egyptian student, when I asked him about Arabic, said, “It’s all proverbs. We talk in proverbs. People say things like ‘What you are seeking is also seeking you.’” … Now I think it’s lovely that such a decorative language as Arabic exists. I wish I could walk around New York and hear people talking in proverbs. But all those adjectives and all that decoration would be the ruin of any journalist trying to write good English. No proverbs, please.

If you are writing in your second language, Zinsser recommends aiming for clarity, simplicity, brevity and humanity.

Pay attention to sounds: Before you even consider pronunciation, basic sounds might trip you up. Canadian
speechwriter Crosson notes that English poses different problems for different language groups when it comes to speaking certain sounds aloud. She points out how troublesome some sounds in English can be, including h and th for French speakers, j and y for Spanish speakers, w and v for Germanic or Nordic speakers, and l and r for Asian speakers.

“If you don’t know how to pronounce a word, don’t use it,” says Crosson. Speakers also need to consider how a multilingual audience will hear what they’re saying. She suggests staying positive and avoiding contractions such as don’t. English speakers can hear the t, but non-English speakers often miss hearing it.

6 Practice: “A speech is a spoken art,” says Crosson. “If you’re speaking in a language that’s not your own, you have to hear your voice and record yourself to see how you sound. Find the words that trip you up.”

The Japanese English Bilingual Toastmasters club (JETM) in Seoul, South Korea, among other bilingual clubs, gives members lots of practice speaking foreign languages. Club President Taeryeon Jung says their group helps members speak two languages—Japanese and English—without using their native Korean language. At meetings, members speak in Japanese for one hour and in English for another hour. Jung says JETM members “share their stories and experiences from different cultures and fun episodes from small mistakes.” The group has met jointly with the Tokyo Metropolitan Toastmasters club in Tokyo, Japan.

7 Use all the tools: To make sure the audience understands you while you speak in a second language, you’ll need more than just words and pronunciation. Experts recommend emphasizing gestures, movement, inflection, posture and other tools to get your point across. And while many speakers rely on text while delivering talks in their second language, it’s important that they use those tools to ensure a connection with the audience.

“As soon as people talk to a piece of paper, they begin losing,” says José Iturri, a senior Spanish interpreter at the European Commission, who actually puts delegates and meeting chairs into the interpreters’ booth so they can get a feel for what they’re doing as speakers.

In the end, speaking well in your second language shares many of the qualities of speaking well in your first. “The rules are the same, but they matter more,” Crosson says.

Atkinson says the good news is “the same rhetorical techniques are just as effective in getting messages across in any particular language—and have been for at least 2,000 years since the classical Greeks began teaching and writing about rhetoric.”

Mueck says his best tip for fellow Toastmasters is simple: “Good public speaking doesn’t need perfection; good public speaking needs a message that reaches the brains and hearts of your audience. Speak from your heart and the language is secondary.”

―speechwriter Amélie Crosson

woman.blogspot.com. She chaired the 2013 European Speechwriter Network Conference in Brussels, Belgium.

“A speech is a spoken art. If you’re speaking in a language that’s not your own, you have to hear your voice and record yourself to see how you sound.”

―speechwriter Amélie Crosson

Denise Graveline is a Washington, DC-based speaker coach who blogs about women and public speaking at eloquentwoman.blogspot.com. She chaired the 2013 European Speechwriter Network Conference in Brussels, Belgium.
Vive La Différence in Club Meetings!

Does your club need a Snack Master or Posture Peeler? Variety brings fun and excitement to meetings.

BY JENNIFER L. BLANCK, DTM

“New members see that this is a fun, exciting place, and established members find something different each week.”
— Percy Roland, ACS, CL, vice president education of the Achievers club in Marbella, Spain

Have you ever heard of a Listener/Quizzzer, Posture Peeler or Snack Master? I had never heard of these Toastmasters meeting roles until I moved to a new country. My eyes opened to a new variety of club traditions.

In August 2013, I prepared to move from Washington, D.C., to Budapest, Hungary. I had never lived outside the United States and I didn’t speak Hungarian. My new job would be in an English-speaking environment, but my life outside of work would not. With no family or friends in Budapest, and a totally new environment and language awaiting me, I thought about Toastmasters. I had been a member of Georgetown Toastmasters—which I founded—since 1995. While searching the Toastmasters website, I was excited to find four clubs in Budapest. One was even affiliated with my new employer, and the club met close to my new office.

After my move, I didn’t wait long before attending my first meeting of the Budapest Toastmasters club. As I hoped, the meetings were conducted in English. In a world where everything was new to me, this was the one place where I knew what to expect. Or was it? The meeting followed the regular format: prepared speeches, Table Topics and evaluations. However, it started off with something new to me—a warm-up round where the Toastmaster of the day posed a question to everyone in the room. Depending on the question, the answer could be one word, one sentence or a brief reply. The goal wasn’t to give a speech, but to have everyone talk.

This reminded me of the time I visited the Deloitte Toastmasters club in Sydney, Australia, while on holiday in 2010. The meeting’s structure was similar to what I was used to, except in one area—Table Topics. All Table Topics responses were evaluated, just like prepared speeches.

These are just two ways that clubs differ. While they all offer the same core program, the more I talk with other Toastmasters, the more I learn about creative and fun new roles and approaches that clubs adopt all over the world.

New Meeting Roles
Abbas Kudrati, CC, ALB, president of the Desert Pioneers club in Salmiya, Kuwait, incorporates three new roles into club meetings: Listener/Quizzzer, Round Robin Master and Joke Master. At the end of each meeting, the Listener/Quizzzer tests the listening skills of attendees by asking them questions relevant to topics discussed during the meeting.

Similar to the Toastmaster at Budapest Toastmasters (who begins meetings with a warm-up round), the Round Robin Master
at the Desert Pioneers club also starts meetings by giving everyone an opportunity to speak when a new topic or story is started, and everyone gets to build on it.

To set a positive tone and energize the group, the club’s Joke Master shares a joke or funny story at the beginning of each meeting. This is another opportunity to grow as a speaker. “Telling a joke effectively—building the tension and delivering the punch line successfully—is one of the most challenging forms of public speaking,” says Percy Roland, ACS, CL, vice president education of the Achievers club in Marbella, Spain, which also has a Joke Master.

The more I talk with other Toastmasters, the more I learn about creative and fun new roles and approaches that clubs adopt all over the world.

At the Budapest Toastmasters club, the Joke Master role involves identifying the most humorous speaker of the meeting.

The Kuwait Advanced club in Hawally, Kuwait, adds an Anchor Evaluator to its meetings. As club vice president education, Kudrati explains how the Anchor Evaluator first evaluates the speaker and then serves as moderator while other members provide feedback. He also introduced the Posture Peeler role at the Bohra Toastmasters club in Manama, Bahrain. At the end of each meeting, the Posture Peeler reports on distracting mannerisms or irrelevant and incongruent body language. Kudrati also has heard of an Inspiration role, in which a member delivers a personal story, quote or reading after the welcome message to set a positive tone and energize the group.

Distinctive Learning Experience

While the core of the Toastmasters meeting is the same all around the world, all clubs have their own personality and provide members a fun, distinctive learning experience. They provide common ground, but new roles and approaches offer variety, creativity, fun and increased awareness during meetings, which means more growth for members. Roland, of the Marbella club in Spain, says, “New members see that this is a fun, exciting place, and established members find something different each week.”

As Kudrati of the Desert Pioneers club in Kuwait says, “Toastmasters is all about give and take, and experimentation. You are free to make mistakes and learn from them.”

This is true for members, as well as clubs. Vive la Toastmasters différence!
Taking the Pulse of Your Club

A culture of caring, service and integrity is critical to success. Build it and they will come.

BY CRAIG HARRISON, DTM, PDG

Many factors influence a club’s success: membership numbers, renewal rates and education achievements, for example. But an intangible and often overlooked factor may be the most essential contributor to a club’s long-term success—its culture!

Culture, in this case, refers to the club’s environment—that blend of location, members, values, customs and practices. The easiest way to describe it is to say, “It is the way we do things around here.” Culture can be easier felt than measured, yet it’s what causes members to remain active in their club. It’s the magnet that attracts guests to come back and join. Isn’t it time to take the pulse of your club’s culture?

The Fun Factor

People do business with those they know, like and trust. There is a similar formula for popular clubs. Friendly and inviting clubs that provide an enjoyable experience and generate positive energy attract new members. Long ago, Toastmasters founder Ralph C. Smedley asserted that people “learn in moments of enjoyment.” How fun is your club? Just because members have fun doesn’t mean they aren’t serious about improving their communication and leadership skills. When learning is fun, achievement soars. Club meetings and member experiences should be both fun and fruitful.
James Ware, an adult-learning expert and executive director of a research and advisory firm called The Future of Work unlimited, says, “Learning can be exhilarating, eye-opening and empowering.” But he adds that learning can be stressful and even threatening, because it can require changing long-held beliefs, mastering new skills, doing new things and facing the possibility of failing. “Making learning fun along the way increases the possibility that members will value it, enjoy it and feel good about themselves,” he says. “And if they experience those feelings, they will only want more.”

A Helping of Hospitality
First impressions count at Toastmasters meetings. How you greet guests speaks volumes about your club and its culture. Do you shake hands, invite visitors to sign your guest register, issue them a nametag and introduce them to club leaders and other members?

Friendly and inviting clubs seat guests next to veteran members who then explain meeting procedures. Introductions are made early and guests are formally welcomed with applause. Gina Cefalu, ACG, of Danville Toastmasters club in Danville, California, relates a best practice from her club: “At the beginning of meetings, we engage in round-table introductions—everyone present, including guests, announces their name, where they live, how long they’ve been in Toastmasters. They also answer a question related to the theme of the day—for instance, a favorite vacation spot or a New Year’s resolution.”

Time should also be allotted at the meeting’s end to answer guests’ questions and gain feedback about the club. A culture of caring is critical to the success of any club.

Do Your Evaluations Elevate or Deflate?
One telltale indicator of a club’s culture is the way evaluations are handled. If speech evaluations are negative, destructive or mean-spirited, guests and members alike will feel uncomfortable. They are less likely to take risks and try new approaches for fear of exposing themselves to criticism. When evaluations are supportive and encouraging, speakers are more inclined to
experiment. This doesn’t mean telling a lie or giving only positive feedback, it means tempering the negative with positives and making sure critiques are constructive, with an eye toward helping speakers improve.

The Role of Club Officers
Officers are the leaders of Toastmasters meetings—they set the tone and establish the practices that define the club experience. Are your leaders professional? Are they personable? Do they work well together as a governing body? Teamwork bodes well for the entire club. When club officers show a genuine interest in visitors, these potential members feel valued and are more likely to join the club. Officers who model hospitality, generosity and friendliness set the best tone for a club, and all members can follow suit.

Good Will to All
Most clubs comprise a mix of men and women of different ages, professions, backgrounds and beliefs, yet the members all come together to improve communication and leadership skills. Each club is a treasure trove—all members have stories, experiences and special skills to share. All clubs can embrace membership diversity and prosper by celebrating the different styles, backgrounds and sensibilities of its members. When recognition and appreciation are lavished on members for their achievements and contributions, more achievements ensue! Everyone wants to get into the act. Clubs that mute differences, overlook members and play favorites ultimately lose out.

Odile Petillot, DTM, past District 59 governor for continental Europe (which encompasses 17 countries and 10 distinct languages) well understands the value of diversity. A Toastmaster for 24 years, she views district conferences, speech contests and clubs with cultural diversity as opportunities to mingle with people from many different backgrounds, cultures and religions.

“These are laboratories where we can practice empathy and understanding,” says Petillot, “and where members can open up, share their opinions, listen to other viewpoints, and discover other habits, traditions and ways of thinking and behaving.”

Tales of Two Tongues
A vast amount of clubs are bilingual today. Many divide each meeting’s time between English and another language, whether it’s French or German, Japanese or Spanish, Tamil or Afrikaans, Mandarin or Cantonese Chinese. In the San Francisco Bay Area, District 4 hosts one division-level speech contest where members compete in one of three rooms, speaking in Vietnamese, Japanese or Mandarin Chinese. At the district level the following month, the winner’s speech is given in English.

Petillot is a founding member of the first bilingual English-French club in Paris. The club’s eclectic mix—with French residents wanting to learn “the American way,” English speakers improving their French, expatriates and immigrants—fosters an environment for learning about other cultures.

For Canadian David Rowley, ACB, of Montreal’s HEC Toastmasters club, diversity is also the order of the day. “Our club was founded by MBA students who come to study at HEC Montreal business school from around the globe,” he says. “Last year’s club president was from Austria, and is now working in Italy.” Its membership also includes French Canadians, English Canadians, Americans and immigrants from Africa and Asia. As such, says Rowley, “We are lucky, because there is no single dominant culture.” Together the members are forging their own club culture, whether they are speaking English or French.
It was interesting to experience how the working with an interpreter, “Heilbut says. Our school, but also the complexities of the language diversity of our club and other languages. “We not only highlighted in English and interpreted into the four their evaluators. All evaluations were given previously interpreted into and out of Mandarin, Mandarin). All speeches were simultane-
sium had seven speeches delivered in four languages (Russian, Spanish, English and Spanish). The club invited other clubs in the community to participate, and recruited their evaluators. All evaluations were given in English and interpreted into the four other languages. “We not only highlighted the language diversity of our club and our school, but also the complexities of working with an interpreter,” Heilbut says. “It was interesting to experience how the communication process changes when a speaker’s vocal variety and body language does not match with the speech content and vocal variety coming through the headsets. It challenged our evaluators in a completely new way.”

The event was enriching for members and guests, and it had great public relations value too, as it coincided with the club’s 25-year anniversary.

Milestones, Rules and Rituals
The Toastmasters experience is full of milestones to celebrate, and rituals to observe. Many clubs decide that each member who completes an Ice Breaker speech receives a membership pin to acknowledge their achievement. Similarly, a ribbon and short ceremony celebrate members’ achievements after giving their 10th speech.

All clubs have anniversaries of their formation. Are you celebrating yours? Reach back and invite charter members to return. Invite spouses, partners and loved ones to join in the festivities surrounding your club’s anniversary or its achievement of President’s Select, Select or Distinguished status each year. These events build pride, boost member’s self-esteem and show the power and glory of the Toastmasters

Accent-uating Native Tongues
Last year, the MIIS Toastmasters club at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, in Monterey, California, held a speech symposium to showcase the diverse languages spoken by members. The club’s hosting institute is ranked as one of the best translation and interpretation programs in the United States. District 4 Public Relations Officer Will Heilbut, CC, CL, a student at the institute, says, “The speech symposium had seven speeches delivered in four languages (Russian, Spanish, English and Mandarin). All speeches were simultaneously interpreted into and out of Mandarin, English, Japanese, French and Spanish.”

The club invited other clubs in the community to participate, and recruited their evaluators. All evaluations were given in English and interpreted into the four other languages. “We not only highlighted the language diversity of our club and our school, but also the complexities of working with an interpreter,” Heilbut says. “It was interesting to experience how the

Culture is the magnet that attracts guests to come back and join.

The Toastmasters Promise aloud, followed by other club members from Japan, Korea, India, the United States and other countries who also read it out loud. This sharing of vows, not unlike in a marriage, bodes well for all parties.

Winners of the Best Table Topics or Best Speaker contests are sometimes awarded a club trophy for the duration of the event, but some clubs give them the option of bringing the trophy to work for the week—or until the next meeting—to showcase a member’s success to co-workers. This practice also ensures the member’s return to the next meeting, if only to return the trophy, or perhaps to defend his victory! It offers recognition for a job well done, and helps the recipient feel valued.

Tools
How can you assess your club’s culture? Among the best resources to guide you is the Moments of Truth self-evaluation tool. Use this tool (Item 290 in the Toastmasters Online Store) to work through a checklist of features to determine your club’s performance and practices. It will help you identify areas for improvement in operations and efficiency, and even in friendliness—all key elements of a club’s culture.

The late New York City Mayor Ed Koch was known to always ask his constituents, “How am I doing?” You, too, should be asking this question about your club. Ask new Toastmasters and veteran members about their experiences. And don’t underestimate the value of your guests’ observations. Visitors arrive with fresh eyes, and it’s essential to your club’s future to appeal to these guests. Welcome them and meld your club culture with what’s important to them—not just to sustain your club, but to grow it too.

Craig Harrison, DTM, PDG, of Evening Stars club in San Francisco, has founded a variety of specialty and advanced clubs in his 21 years of membership. Find free resources at his website, www. SpeakAndLeadWithConfidence.com.
Flubs, Flops and Solutions
What to do when the unexpected happens.

BY COLLEEN PLIMPTON, ACB, CL

It wasn’t his first speech to our club. The middle-aged media consultant had given his Ice Breaker and had done well, but this time he was clearly struggling. While speaking, he lost his train of thought and apologized. His voice dropped as notes slipped from his fingers. In a failed attempt to open his laptop and read from there, he apologized again. His words grew disjointed as his face turned red.

We in the audience squirmed in empathy. What could we do? What should we do? The speaker mumbled a final apology and left the room. The Toastmaster of the meeting followed and gently encouraged the individual to take the floor and start over. The speaker agreed and was applauded loudly as he re-entered the room. After a second introduction he completed the speech. During the evaluation, kudos were awarded for his persistence. The member went on to earn a Competent Communicator award.

Stage Fright
Eileen Palsson, CC, ALB, a member of ReadSoft Toastmasters in Kista, Sweden, recalls an incident in which a member was unable to continue with his speech and left the room. The Toastmaster of the meeting followed and gently encouraged the individual to take the floor and start over. The speaker agreed and was applauded loudly as he re-entered the room. After a second introduction he completed the speech. During the evaluation, kudos were awarded for his persistence. The member went on to earn a Competent Communicator award.

Palsson was impressed and inspired by how the Toastmaster saved the day. “As far as I could tell, she didn’t use words to encourage the speaker to start over—she just gently coaxed him back to the door using a calm hand signal, and started the introduction from the beginning.” With graceful actions, she demonstrated how Toastmasters is a safe place to fail. There is much to be learned from that type of leadership. “I thought about how I wanted to be able to project that reassuring presence—with my fellow Toastmasters, my kids, and with anyone who is panicked or upset,” Palsson says.

Bruce Cornwell, CL, a member of two clubs in Connecticut, relates a similar episode, although the speaker did not leave the room after abandoning her speech. The member sat back down and Cornwell, the Toastmaster of the meeting, thanked her for her efforts and reassured her there would be no evaluation for her incomplete speech. During a break, members expressed empathy to help the
speaker feel supported. Weeks later she successfully delivered her speech.

**Unfilled Roles at Meeting Time**

Sometimes, for whatever reason, one or more roles don’t get filled at a club meeting. It’s good practice for the vice president education to send a reminder to members with a role to play several days prior to the meeting, along with a request for confirmation. It’s important that the Toastmaster arrive early to the meeting, with a completed agenda in hand, to allow time to arrange replacements if roles remain unfilled.

**Timing Errors**

To avoid this situation, speakers should confirm their speech length with the timer. I once failed to do this. As I swung into the heart of my keynote address (from the Professional Speaker advanced manual), I glanced at the timer and in disbelief saw she thought I had only 30 seconds left to speak. This miscommunication could have been avoided. I could have interrupted my speech to correct the timer or I could have skipped a portion of my speech and gone directly to the conclusion (which I did). I later spoke with the timer so we both understood what had gone wrong. As always, a little communication goes a long way. Consult the Toastmasters website (www.toastmasters.org) for easy-to-follow explanations of all roles.

**Inappropriate Presentations**

Mentors, or the vice president education, can help new members determine what types of topics are appropriate for that particular club. While each club can determine what is considered appropriate, the particular ethos of the group must be respected. It must be made clear to speakers that disrespectful, off-color or offensive speech is unacceptable. Toastmasters International is a professional organization and ill-mannered material is never appropriate.

Whew! Thankfully, most of these mishaps aren’t common in Toastmasters meetings. But, like a Boy Scout, it’s good to be prepared with good organization and leadership.

As for the distressed individual of the first paragraph, I’m happy to report that subsequent to his failed speech he received much support from fellow club members and was able to deliver his speech a month later. He eventually completed the Competent Communication manual and is now a source of support for newer members. Another Toastmasters success story!

**COLLEEN PLIMPTON, ACB, CL,** is a member of Barnum Square Toastmasters in Bethel, Connecticut. Her most recent article for the Toastmaster was “Lessons from a Garden Speaker” in the August 2013 issue. Visit her website at www.colleenplimpton.com.

**With graceful actions, she demonstrated how Toastmasters is a safe place to fail.**

However, all club members should be prepared to assume any role appropriate for their level of expertise. In smaller clubs, members may need to take on multiple roles. The Toastmasters website has software to assist with this (www.toastmasters.org/software).

**Hostile Evaluations**

A key aspect of the Toastmasters program is the no-pressure atmosphere of club meetings, and effective evaluation is at the heart of the learning experience. This demands positive, constructive assessments of a speaker’s ability. Most evaluations are just that. However, in rare cases, an evaluator can deliver destructive and harmful comments rather than encouraging and positive feedback. If this happens, the General Evaluator or Toastmaster can soften the criticism. After the meeting, a club leader should approach the evaluator to discuss the issue. If a pattern of negativity develops, the individual must be redirected and re-educated.

Consider presenting evaluation learning sessions and encourage attendance at evaluation contests. Emphasis should be placed on evaluations given by experienced Toastmasters and the message in Effective Evaluation (Item 202, available at the Toastmasters Online Store).

**Space Not Available**

Despite a club’s best efforts, a meeting room may become unavailable at the last minute and an executive decision needs to be made. This is an opportunity for leadership. Every club should have a backup plan, but all a Toastmasters meeting really needs is a place for people to stand and sit. An adjoining room, cafeteria, or even a wide space in the hall can be used. And consider the outdoors, weather permitting, as an interesting option.

**Interruptions**

Occasionally, guests or new members speak out of turn. It is incumbent on the meeting’s Toastmaster to gently redirect the individual to the appropriate manner of address. This takes confidence and tact. The Toastmaster, for example, could say: Thank you for your thoughts, Kevin. There will be an opportunity after the meeting to ask further questions. As for right now, we are under time constraints and need to allow the meeting to progress. After the meeting, a club executive committee member should spend a few minutes with the questioner to answer his queries or comments.
Do You Dread Receiving an Evaluation?

Don’t fear the feedback you get — it’s only meant to help.

BY JAMES CLARK, DTM

Why do prospective members hesitate to join a Toastmaster club, and why do some new members drop out early? My guess is many of them worry about how their communication skills are received by other club members.

After all, people usually join with the hope of making a good impression on others and building friendships, as well as gaining professional development. Those who become discouraged in the early stages of their membership may not have been adequately prepared to receive feedback on their communication skills. New members are generally the most sensitive to constructive comments and the least familiar with the kind of feedback to expect.

If an evaluation is given in accordance with Toastmasters guidelines, receiving it is generally a positive experience. Club members know just how difficult it can be to speak before an audience, and they empathize with the new member’s nervousness. Ideally the evaluator should consider the speaker’s sensitivity level and provide feedback that praises strengths and offers suggestions for improvement. A properly delivered evaluation leaves the speaker feeling encouraged and aware of his or her assets as a communicator.

To help the evaluation process go smoothly, review these points with new members—and evaluators:

- **Toastsmasters evaluators always offer suggestions for improvement.** In other words, speakers should never expect to receive only praise during an evaluation. The Toastmasters philosophy is, “No speech is perfect.” With so many key issues involved

## Tips for Improvement

To avoid making some common speaking errors—and hearing about them in the evaluations you receive—follow these basic do’s and don’ts.

**Don’t:**

- Begin your speech with any kind of apology (e.g., “Sorry I’m late/unprepared”) or any other expressions of humility (“I’m really nervous,” “I’m not a good speaker,” etc.).
- Include lengthy introductory material in your speech. Any information regarding the history of the speech or why you are giving it—unless it contributes to the entertainment value or primary objective of your project—should be given to the Toastmaster of the meeting for his or her introduction of your speech.
- Wear noisy jewelry or a badge during your speech. These items are distractions for the audience.
- Disrespect a fellow member or any group (religious, ethnic or otherwise) audience members may be part of.
- Leave the lectern unattended. At the conclusion of your speech, wait for the Toastmaster to come up to you, shake her hand, pass behind her and take your seat.

**Do:**

- Read your manual carefully before preparing the speech. It tells you what aspects of your speech the evaluator will be primarily focused on.
- Talk to your evaluator. Let him know if you do not want feedback on specific aspects of your presentation and what you may want to discuss privately. You might tell the evaluator something like, “Yes I know I have a problem with _____, but let’s discuss it after the meeting, OK?”
- Time your speech before giving it. The few minutes you have to fill will go faster than you probably realize, and you will likely need to trim less important material. Your primary goal is to fulfill your project objectives without going overtime.
- Remember not to be offended by any feedback. Comments to you sometimes serve as reminders to all Toastmasters of mistakes we routinely need to avoid.
- Be creative. This is your opportunity to try ideas before a friendly audience. Many evaluators appreciate speakers who take risks.
- Enjoy giving the speech. This is how you set a positive tone and increase the audience’s enjoyment of your presentation. As the late Helen Blanchard, DTM, PIP, once said, “If you’re not having fun, you’re not doing it right.”

— James Clark
in the art of public speaking, no speaker is expected to master them all at once.

**Evaluators are offering their own opinion about a speech.** Experienced evaluators will typically touch on common issues, but even so, evaluators often disagree in their reactions to a speaker. Because of that, they should remember to preface suggestions with phrases such as, “In my view ...” to remind the speaker that the evaluator’s comments are subjective. Members likely will benefit from carefully considered feedback, but none of us, no matter how experienced, is correct in presenting ourselves as an authority who speaks for the rest of the group. In my view, the more an evaluator forgets this rule, the more listeners may want to take his or her suggestions with a grain of salt.

**Giving an effective evaluation is probably the most challenging job at a club meeting.** Remember, an evaluation should be positive and acknowledge the speaker’s assets while at the same time tactfully suggesting improvements. So demanding is this task that new members are generally not asked to attempt an evaluation until after they have completed a number of their own manual speeches and have heard numerous evaluations.

Ideally, new members are evaluated by senior members who know how to be appropriately sensitive. Because no system is perfect, and because delivering a good, considerate evaluation is so tricky—even for experienced members—the goals of an ideal evaluation are rarely met. Maybe the evaluator finds it difficult to observe anything significant and resorts to nit-picking. Perhaps the evaluator is actually trying to be witty; the joke falls flat, and the speaker misinterprets a comment as ridicule.

For whatever reason, all of us from time to time can expect to feel some sting from feedback. Such is life. But in enduring even that, we benefit by developing a thicker skin, which is part of what we should be seeking anyway. 

**JAMES CLARK, DTM, is a member of Toastmasters of the Cove in La Jolla, California. He is a former division governor and has been a Toastmaster for 27 years.**

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**Can Your Club Beat the Clock?**

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I opened the window and in-flu-enza. Ha, ha. It’s an old joke and I laugh every time—until I have to get a flu shot. Then it’s not so funny. Influenza is serious business. It can make you feel like you’ve just been through the Battle of Stalingrad in your underwear. (Influenza comes from the Latin *influiere*, which means to flow in, specifically from the stars. It was thought ethereal liquid flowed from the heavens to influence human destiny. So when people say they’re inhabited by aliens, they probably have the flu.)

Anyway, the flu can kill you. So I get the shot. And then worry about getting killed. It’s all because of that handout I’m given while I’m waiting for the injection: *Influenza Vaccine: What You Need to Know*. I don’t need to know. I’m the kind of person into crippling anxiety mode waiting for “soon” to be over with. This could take several days.

Mind you, I’ve never had a reaction to a flu shot. So why do I continue to worry? Because they *change* it every year! “Flu viruses are always changing,” the CDC experts write. “Each year’s flu vaccine is made to protect you from viruses that are most likely to cause disease that year.” Translation: We’re taking another guess and you’re taking another chance. Have a nice day.

Of course, there are those who really shouldn’t get the injection, like people who have had a “life-threatening allergic reaction after a dose of flu vaccine.” If a person nearly died from his last shot and he’s coming back for another one, he doesn’t need a nurse; he needs a psychiatrist. You also shouldn’t get a flu shot if you’ve had Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS). I always ask what this is and they tell me, “If you have to ask, you’ve never had it. You’d know.” How would I know? Maybe I just got it this morning. Could they test me for it before I get my flu shot? Then I read a little further and see that there’s a slight possibility that the flu shot could actually *cause* GBS. Great—I can get the flu shot because I’ve never had GBS, but if I *would* like to get it, this is my chance.

Finally, “If you are not feeling well, you should wait until you feel better.” Does hyperventilating from fear that this might kill me qualify as not feeling well?

The CDC handout offers this final note: “It takes about two weeks for protection to develop after the vaccination.” Let me get this straight: I’ve just been sitting in a waiting room exposing myself to people who are sneezing, coughing and hacking because they already have the flu. I get a shot to prevent this from happening to me, but it won’t take effect for two weeks. So if I get the flu in the waiting room, the shot won’t do me any good. In fact, I shouldn’t be getting it at all because now I’m sick! I’m a dead man.

On the other hand, I did get the flu once and I wished I was dead. Maybe it’s me who needs a psychiatrist.

**JOHN CADLEY, a former advertising copywriter, is a freelance writer and musician living in Fayetteville, New York.**
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