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December 2008

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Officer Training – Again!
**What's In It
For You?**



The Courage to Conquer Requires Responsibility!

✦ When I was a candidate for Third Vice President, I remember being asked the question, "What is one of the biggest leadership lessons you have learned?" My response was that as a leader, you couldn't be everyone's friend. I went on to explain that as leaders, you have the ultimate responsibility of doing what is right for the organization. Sometimes doing what is right is not always what is popular. And that is not easy.

Now here I am as your President, writing this December message. Anyone who knows me would expect me to be writing about the holidays. It is my favorite time of year. Others might expect me to be directing you to take a close look at where you stand at this halfway point of the year.

Instead, I am conveying a recent decision by the organization's leaders. In February 2007, the Board selected Sydney, Australia, as the site of the 2010 International Convention. At the time, it was believed this was the right thing to do. As anyone reading this knows, however, our world is very different today from when that decision was made. The global economic downturn, along with unstable fuel prices and a volatile airline industry, have had a huge negative impact on our ability to uphold that decision without major financial burden to the organization. As a result, the venue of the 2010 convention has been changed to the Desert Springs JW Marriott Resort and Spa in Palm Desert, California. We have held conventions at this popular site twice before, with great reviews.

When the Board presented preliminary considerations for the new governance proposal, the question members asked repeatedly was, "How much will this cost?" With extensive financial analysis available, it became evident that implementing the entire scope of the plan would be impossible. As a result, responsible changes were made. This is a very similar situation.

The plan of taking the Convention outside North America at this time is simply not financially responsible. So in order to uphold our fiduciary responsibility to you, the member, the organization had to make a change. I invite you to read the announcement on page 28. While we fully acknowledge that many of our members will be disappointed, we could not ignore our primary responsibility to be prudent with your funds.

I so appreciate the efforts of Host District 70 Chair Elizabeth Wilson and her team to support the Convention in Sydney. I hope they, and all of our members, understand this was not an easy decision. It was never about not wanting to go to Australia. It was about doing the right thing. For all of you serving in leadership roles, there will be times when you are called upon to make tough decisions. I wish you the ability to do the right thing...to have the awareness that the Courage to Conquer requires responsibility!

Jana Barnhill

Jana Barnhill, DTM, Accredited Speaker
International President

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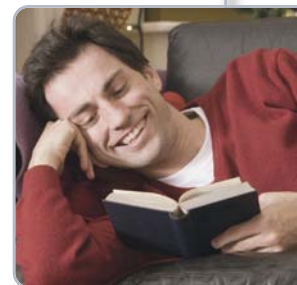


The Art of Bookmanship

Toastmasters, get thee a tome that fires your imagination and creativity.

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Officer Training – Again! What's In It For You?

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By Jennifer L. Blanck, ACS, AL

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The Toastmasters Vision:

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

The Toastmasters Mission:

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

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

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

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

Congratulations to District 67!

I want to point out a mistake in your October 2008 issue: on the Convention pictures section on page 31, the photo caption for photo #15 says "members from District 85" while it should be "members from District 67 Taiwan."

Rebecca Hong, DTM • Shanghai Leadership Toastmasters Club
Shanghai, China

Editor's Note: *Several members caught this error and wrote to us. We apologize for the mistake and congratulate District 67 for its success.*

A Winner in Many Ways

Congratulations again to LaShunda Rundles, Toastmaster International's 2008 World Champion of Public Speaking. Thank you for featuring the article about her in the October magazine. It was very encouraging and motivating for me personally. In addition to the ongoing support [I receive] from my fellow club members, reading the article helped reinforce my desire to continue moving toward higher goals within our club. I believe this article illustrates the key force behind Toastmasters: *the members*.

Knowing that the members are willing to give of themselves for the benefit of another is always noteworthy.

Ariys C. Dalton • J-Talkers • Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Listening and Leading With Love

I have been a high school and college teacher; a coach; a broker, owner and operator of a real estate franchise; an investor and entrepreneur; a commercial landlord; a candidate for political office – and the list could continue. But during all of these careers, I have never learned and shared as much about leader-

ship and mentoring as I have in my 14 years as a Toastmaster.

The article by Craig Harrison, DTM, about John Robert Wooden (I am also a basketball referee) underscored the wonderful simplicity of leadership, something that all too often eludes us – Listen and Lead with Love. This, in a nutshell, is what my mentors in Toastmasters do. And for that I thank them.

People who think that you need to hire coaches and pay big dollars to tell them how to be a leader are mistaken. Nothing anywhere compares to the mentoring program that Toastmasters offers everyone, at an astonishing bargain.

Sharon MacLise, DTM • Excell Orators and All Weather Toastmasters
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Politically Incorrect

The October issue of the *Toastmaster* magazine was very disappointing. The articles by Linda McGurk, Bob Katz and Paul Sterman were most inappropriate. Toastmasters should not be playing the political game. Are we going to analyze the candidates for office in other countries as well? I am sure the non-American Toastmasters were totally bored with these articles that have little to do with the Toastmasters program. Now, after a president is elected, if you choose to analyze his communication skills – fine, if it is in the best interest of the Toastmasters program. Otherwise, keep the politics out of the TM program.

Barbara Barger, DTM • Sooner Toastmasters • Norman, Oklahoma

Editor's Note: *The Toastmaster magazine welcomes article submissions regarding the communication skills of political candidates around the world.*

Watch Those OGUACVUs!

The funniest part of John Cadley's "A Jargon of Our Own" (October) is his inability to see Toastmasters as the jargon-heavy organization it already is. CC, DTM, ALB, ACG: these acronyms mean nothing to people outside of Toastmasters, yet we Toastmasters bandy them about repeatedly in front of befuddled guests and new members without explanation.

Perhaps instead of asking readers to add to the glut of impenetrable jargon out there, better advice would be for Toastmasters members to look closely at their own speech patterns and not use so many OGUACVUs (Out-Group Unfriendly Abbreviated Consonant Vowel Units).

William A. Henehan • Transmasters • Brooklyn, New York

A Political Plus

I've enjoyed and appreciated your recent articles about the candidates. I did want to point out that March 16-28, 2007, were officially proclaimed Toastmasters Days by recent vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin, governor of the state of Alaska.

Maybe other states have done this. I hadn't heard of it. Regardless, it's a great idea and thanks to "whoever" in Alaska put this idea in motion.

Phyllis May, DTM • Key West Toastmasters • Key West, Florida

Call for stories: In this time of financial uncertainty, how have your Toastmasters skills helped you in business, your profession or other areas of life? Send your story to submissions@toastmasters.org.

Lessons from General Electric CEO Jack Welch.

What Will They Walk Away With?

I've been a speechwriter and speechmaker for 30 years and an admirer of Toastmasters for all that time. As CEO Jack Welch's speechwriter at General Electric for 20 years, I often heard about Toastmasters International, and in particular, the club meetings attended by my fellow employees at GE. At company meetings, I used to hear my colleagues – from administrative assistants to executives – ask each other, “You coming tonight?” followed usually by, “Yeah, and I have to talk, but I'm not sure I'm ready.” Then the reassuring “Ah, you'll be fine. You were great last time.” There was a camaraderie and mutual support among these Toastmasters members that I envied and a desire to improve oneself that I admired.

Jack Welch told me, on many occasions, that self-confidence was the absolutely indispensable attribute of a leader; you could not be an effective shaper and mover of people without it. I don't believe you can be an effective public speaker without it, either, and I will tell you my (and Welch's) theory as to a major source of this elusive intellectual and character attribute.

Years ago, Welch and I were sitting in his conference room, putting together a lineup of speakers for one of our major company meetings and routinely adding names of executives who had especially good runs in their businesses, so they could “tell their stories” (meaning strut and preen and brag). Then Jack stopped in mid-sentence, and after 20 or 30 seconds of scowling meditation directed at the conference room table, he said, loudly and decisively,

“No, no, no! No more *reports*. We're sick of reports. The only pitches that are worth anything are when you tell people what they ought to do. Otherwise it's just a waste.”

That changed *everything* in GE communications for decades. From then on, if you didn't have a learning, a warning, an insight, a technique or something otherwise useful to share with your colleagues, you were not “on the program” to speak. We called this policy various things; one was “the bore test.”

If your speech would be boring or useless to anyone in the room – sorry, come back when you have something useful to share.

And we found that when you knew you had something worth sharing with your colleagues and friends, it produced self-confidence as you ascended the podium to speak. On more than one occasion Welch said to me, “Bill, I can't *wait* to do this speech. It will blow them away. It's so good and will be so useful to these people.”

This from a guy who long ago *hated* to speak because of a horrible stutter and shyness.

Is that how *you* feel when you walk up to the stage, or to the front of the room, to speak? Can't *wait* to do it? Or are you just a little nervous and eager to “get it over with”?

Here's a suggestion for your consideration: Next time you are scheduled to speak, go into a quiet room with a pad and pen (avoid the computer!) and ask yourself, What do I know, or what have I seen, in my life or on my job, that might be of use to these people – my friends and colleagues?

Maybe you'll come up with something along these lines:

- We learned a couple of painful lessons when we blew that deal with Acme because of quality flaws last year.
- How did we get this lost customer back and what did we learn from doing it?
- What can I share about our fall and rise that may be of use to my audience some day? If we did some dumb stuff, I'll tell them about it. If we did a couple of smart things, I'll modestly recount them if they contain lessons that the audience can use.

I hope you get the idea. Toastmasters are intelligent and observant; they understand how crucial the ability to stand up there and interest, or even mesmerize, an audience is to a career. And they all have useful observations that people will walk out of the room grateful for having heard.

So give such audiences the very best of your thinking; give them those “gifts” of learning that you possess; teach them, advise them, share with them. Help them. And if you do – if you forsake the self-serving reports, they will love you and the time they spend listening to you, and there will be a spring in your step as you walk to the front of that room.

Bill Lane is the author of *Jacked Up: The Inside Story of How Jack Welch Talked GE Into Becoming the World's Greatest Company* (McGraw-Hill, 2008).

With the help of a mentor, a disabled Toastmaster achieves Competent Communicator Award – after four years.

Paulette's Path

In March of this year, High Noon Toastmasters honored member Paulette Bass. She had earned her Competent Communicator award, and the club in Peachtree City, Georgia, held a celebration to mark this accomplishment. Many Toastmasters reach this milestone. Paulette's journey, however, is of special note: She is developmentally disabled.

Paulette joined High Noon Toastmasters in April 2004. Nearly 35 years earlier, after she graduated high school at age 24, she had been enrolled in a Georgia program that helped her learn job skills. And after that, she worked as a teacher's aide for the severely developmentally disabled, in the same school system where I taught special-needs students. Upon joining the High Noon group years later, Paulette recognized me and asked me to be her mentor.

Having taught special-needs students for more than 28 years, I felt the exposure to the club environment would be excellent "social practice" for her. Paulette had different ideas.

She listened to others present prepared speeches. She applauded when someone gave an Ice Breaker or received one of the ribbons during a meeting. She cheered along with the rest of the club when a member was presented with a badge. She learned to count votes and count Ah's, read out Table Topics questions, called on

individual members to answer them, and volunteered to create a club scrapbook. She was happy and involved.

Or so I thought. After being a "watcher" for about six months, she turned to me and asked, "*When do I give my first speech?*" The rest, you could say, is history.

It took four years for Paulette to achieve Competent Communicator status. Sometimes High Noon members said they thought that I, as Paulette's mentor, wrote her speeches and she just delivered them. Yes and no. Paulette, who is now 62, has speech and language difficulties. She often struggles to retrieve the correct word for what she's trying to say, and she can't pronounce words with multiple syllables.

So, being a trained special-needs instructor, I employed the "Language Experience" approach when we worked on her speeches together. The process is simple though time-consuming. First, we would discuss the speech project being considered. When she did not understand the language, I would re-phrase the information into language she could understand. The process followed a

question-and-answer format: I asked something like, "Paulette, what do you want to talk about?" She answered and I wrote the response in sentence form.

Then came the hard part: "Paulette, what information do you want to tell the members about (the chosen topic)? Name at least three things, please." Paulette would answer and I'd write the information down. Next, I would read the information to her and she'd tell me if she was comfortable with the vocabulary. If she wasn't, we'd choose different wording. Following this format, we cobbled together a Toastmasters speech that worked for Paulette.



▲ Paulette Bass (left) receives her Competent Communicator badge from High Noon VPE J.D. Dirkschneider.

She memorized the beginning of every speech: *Mr. Toastmaster, fellow Toastmasters, guests – good afternoon!* Paulette was so adamant about having the phrasing exactly right that she'd ask who the Toastmaster of the meeting was so she could practice saying either "Mr. Toastmaster" or "Madame Toastmaster."

When Paulette gave her 10th speech to earn her CC award, she was so happy and proud. She told everyone she knew that she was reaching the CC level – and invited almost 50 people to come hear that speech. (Paulette works at a program run by Georgia's Department of Human Resources to provide services for the developmentally disabled. On weekends, she is a greeter for a local event facility when needed.)

Members of the High Noon club, proud of her as well, invited friends of their own to the talk, which was given March 25 at the Fayette County Public Library. Mayor Harold Logsdon of Peachtree City, a former Toastmaster himself, learned of the celebration and came to make a presentation to Paulette. He read a proclamation designating that day to be Paulette Bass Day in Peachtree

City, and he bestowed upon her "Honorary Lifetime Residency in Peachtree City." In addition, the Fayette County Commissioners Office presented a Certificate of Achievement to her.

She had family members drive from South Carolina for the occasion. The local media was present –

tors all give Toastmasters tremendous credit for her personal growth.

And she's not finished. Since earning her CC, Paulette has become a member of Westpark Toastmasters – also in Peachtree City – and her dream is to become an Advanced Communicator. She's already delivered three


"High Noon thought ahead and had her Competent Communicator badge ready for presentation."

and an online newspaper videotaped her speech and uploaded it onto YouTube (Search videos on YouTube.com for "Paulette Bass").

But best of all, in Paulette's eyes, High Noon thought ahead and had her Competent Communicator badge ready for presentation.

Paulette is a challenge, she is a joy, and she is a friend. She's also a big cheerleader for Toastmasters, and recently she gave a presentation to the board of directors that oversees the program where she works; she described her success and what Toastmasters is all about. Her caregivers, family members and instruc-

speeches toward her Advanced Communicator Bronze.

In the speech Paulette gave to earn her CC award, her conclusion asked us all, "What are you waiting for? Confidence? Being artistic with words? Toastmasters helped me with both; it can help you too. What are you waiting for?" 

Carol Lunsford, M.Ed, DTM, is vice president education of Westpark Toastmasters club and a member of High Noon Toastmasters club, both of which are in Peachtree City, Georgia. She can be reached at clunsfor@bellsouth.net.

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You can win the
self-publishing game!

Authoring Your Success

By Patricia Fry, ATMS

Do you have an amazing life story to tell? Have you always dreamed of writing a novel? Would you like to write a book reflecting your passion – you know, that subject you speak about over and over at Toastmasters meetings?

When asked, most people will say they have a book in them. And technology has made it possible for more of us to actually write and produce our books. Sadly, most authors fail. Why? Because they approach the publishing industry all wrong.

If you have already started writing a book, you may know something about the process. But the first thing you'll learn upon entering the publishing field is that publishing is not an extension of your writing. While writing is a craft, publishing is a business, and once your wonderful manuscript is produced and available for public consumption, it becomes a product. Just as there are techniques and protocol in public speaking, publishing has its own procedures, rules and etiquette. To succeed in this business, one must understand his options, the consequences of his decisions and his responsibility as a published author.

So how does one learn what is necessary in order to succeed? There are two basic steps:

Step One: Study the Publishing Industry

- Read books by publishing professionals such as Dan Poynter, Brian Jud, Marilyn Ross and myself.
- Read magazines about the industry – in particular, *Publisher's Weekly* (you can subscribe to its free ezine, www.publishersweekly.com). I am the president of SPAWN (Small Publishers, Artists and Writers Network) and our Web site, www.spawn.org, provides a great deal of helpful information.
- Attend writing and publishing conferences. (Locate conferences at <http://writing.shawguides.com/> and by doing a Google search to find writers' conferences in your area.)
- Join publishers' organizations, such as SPAWN, PMA – The Independent Book Publishers Association and SPAN (Small Publishers Association of North America).

The first thing you will learn as a result of studying the publishing industry is that you have options. Here are the most common three:

1 You can contract with a **fee-based, print-on-demand “self-publishing” company** (such as AuthorHouse, iUniverse, Infinity, etc.). I have no quarrel with this, if you do the following:

- Explore all of your options first.
- Know your responsibilities as a published author.
- Before signing a contract, consult with an intellectual properties attorney.
- Read *The Fine Print of Self-Publishing* by Mark Levine. He rates and ranks the major fee-based self-publishing services.

2 You can **self-publish** (establish your own publishing company). Self-publishing means that you put up the money, you make all of the decisions and you keep all of the profits.

I generally recommend self-publishing over using a self-publishing company. Why? I believe that when you are involved in all aspects of preparation and production, you maintain a more intimate relationship with your book, and thus it has a greater chance for success.

3 You can land a **traditional royalty publisher**. There are hundreds of publishers out there eager to invest in good books that will make them some money. And only a small number of them work through agents. Here's how to locate appropriate publishers for your particular book:

- Study *Writer's Market* (published by Writer's Digest Books).
- Look at books like yours in bookstores. Find out who published them and contact those publishers.
- Always study the publishers' Submission Guidelines (usually posted at their Web sites) and adhere to them when approaching a particular publisher.

Step Two: Write a Book Proposal

We've established that publishing is a business and a book is a product. A book proposal, then, is a business plan for your book.

Almost all publishers today require a book proposal for nonfiction, and many publishers of fiction want to see one as well. The most valid reason for writing a book proposal, however, is to help the author.

Think about it: You wouldn't go into any other business without first studying the industry and learning something about the product, the competition, the manufacturers, the suppliers and the customers. A well-developed, well-organized, well-writ-

ten, complete book proposal will answer the following questions:

- Why do I want to write this book – what is the purpose?
- Do I have a book at all?
- Who is my target audience?
- What books out there compete with mine?
- How will I reach my audience?
- Why am I the best person to write this book?
- How will I promote this book?

When Should I Write a Book Proposal?

I suggest preparing a proposal *before* writing the book. Why? A thorough book proposal will actually help you to write the right book for the right audience. I've met many a disgruntled author who is sitting on boxes and boxes of books that will probably never sell, because he did not consider his audience before he wrote the book. On the other hand, I know some highly successful authors who, during the book-proposal process, decided to change the focus and/or the slant of their books to address a larger, more realistic audience.

A student in one of my online book-proposal classes changed the whole focus of her book. During the proposal process, she realized that she was writing the wrong book for the wrong audience. She presented her new concept to Houghton Mifflin and immediately landed a contract.

Do You Have a Book at All?

One step in preparing a book proposal is the Market Analysis. How many books are there on your topic? Is there room for another fitness book, for example? If there are a number of books on your topic, how can you make yours different so it will stand out?

If you study the fitness-book market before writing your work, you might discover that, while there are numerous books on the subject, there are few or none focusing on a fitness program for the recovering cancer patient or on how to keep fit while traveling. Has anyone written a book telling how to romance your pounds away?

What if you discover there are no books on your topic? Wow, this sounds like an opportunity, right? Maybe not. Further research might show that there are no books on that topic because there is no market for it.

What is Your Responsibility as a Published Author?

It used to be that after a publisher produced a book, the author did a few book signings and then went back to work writing her next book. Today's reality dictates that the author is responsible for promoting his or her own book. And this is true whether you self-publish, go with

a fee-based publishing service or land a traditional royalty publisher.

Thus, in the book proposal, you will address all of your abilities, skills, talents, interests, connections and so forth that compute into the major task of book promotion and marketing.

If you self-publish, you are responsible for locating and working with a wholesaler and/or distributors who, in turn, serve the retail and library markets. It is your job to approach bookstores, specialty stores and other outlets for your book. You'll be sending out press releases; setting up speaking gigs, radio interviews and book signings; reserving space at book fairs; possibly approaching corporate leaders to suggest premium or incentive agreements; putting your book on amazon.com and arranging for book reviews. You will also need to set up a Web site storefront for selling books. As a self-published author (you establish the publishing company), you have complete control of marketing and promotion and you also have total responsibility.


There are somewhere around 80 publishing services eager to produce your book for a fee. Before signing with one, make sure you understand the contract. For example, will the book's ISBN (International Standard Book Number) be in your name? If not, you may have difficulty getting a book wholesaler or distributor to work with you directly. But know that, no matter what the people at the publishing service tell you and no matter what sort of promotions package you pay for, you are still the primary person in charge of marketing and promotion for your book.

If you're thinking that you can launch your book with a lick and a promise, think again. In today's competitive publishing climate, your book will sell for as long as you are willing to promote it.

Build a Platform

Your platform is your reach, your following, your ability to attract readers. High-profile politicians and actors have platforms for their memoirs—or practically any book they want to write. They have large followings of admirers, supporters and curiosity seekers. The Food Network's Paula Deen has a solid platform for her books on cooking. Michael Aun's platform for his books and audio tapes on public speaking revolve around his expertise and experience with this subject.

Do you have a platform for your nonfiction book? If you've earned several DTMs and you frequently present training workshops internationally, you have a built-in platform for a book on speaking in other countries. Your platform includes your experience and



“Publishing is not an extension of your writing. While writing is a craft, publishing is a business, and once your wonderful manuscript is produced and available for public consumption, it becomes a product.”

expertise in your field and, of course, your Toastmasters achievements. If you produce a highly popular newsletter that goes out to thousands of Toastmasters, frequently attend club meetings in the cities you visit and enter Toastmasters speech competitions, all of this is also part of your platform.

Build a platform for your fiction book by building your reputation as a published author of short fiction. If you haven't developed a platform for your nonfiction or fiction book, you may want to do so before you try to publish it. How? If your book is geared toward presentations or workshops, start doing some now. This is an excellent way to start building your platform.

Toward that same end, here are three other things you can do:

- Establish and constantly build on your mailing list.
- Submit articles or stories to numerous publications. (Get your name out there.)
- Remain active in Toastmasters and work hard at honing your public speaking and communication skills. (You'll need these skills when you begin promoting your book.)

There are more opportunities for hopeful authors today than ever before, but there are also more pitfalls and increased competition. If you want to experience success as a published author, it is imperative that you enter into this field armed with knowledge and embracing realistic expectations. **T**

Patricia Fry, ATMS, is an author and lecturer in the area of publishing. She has written *The Right Way to Write*, *Publish and Sell Your Book* and the companion *Author's Workbook* (Matilija Press, 2007). Visit Patricia's Web site at www.matilijapress.com, where she also writes a blog about publishing and writing.

Congratulations!
You've written a book.
Now what?

Tips on Getting Your Book Published

I remember the exact moment I held the first copy of my first published book. I'd rushed home from my office, unzipped the FedEx package, then slowly – so as not to scuff the cover – extracted the smooth, dazzling result of four years of work. Out of habit, I first checked the spelling of my name. Then, I whooped loud enough to freak the cat.

That was seven years ago. Since then, I've had a second book published. In addition, as the writer-in-residence at a community literary

2. Why am I the best person to write it?
3. Why would somebody who doesn't know me plunk down \$24.95 to buy it?

If none of these questions daunts you, then you are probably ready to begin moving toward publishing your book. And by "publishing," I mean traditional publishing – when a company pays the upfront costs of editing, designing and printing your book. You may even be paid an "advance,"

Then examine each book in that section to see what else has been written on the topic. Ask yourself if the world really needs your book. And be honest with yourself. Because a book that's not needed rarely finds a publisher.

2 Write a book proposal. A book proposal is a business pitch (usually between 10 and 25 pages double-spaced) that summarizes what your book is about, why there is a market for it, what the book's competition is and why you are the best person to write it. The proposal usually includes a tentative table of contents for your book, and a sample chapter or two. This document is required by virtually every reputable literary agent and publisher. (Check out the book *How To Write A Book Proposal*, by Michael Larsen, for valuable help on this task.)

"Traditional publishing is different from self-publishing or 'vanity' publishing, in which you pay a company to print copies of your book."

center, I've worked with dozens of people who have brought me a manuscript and asked for help getting it published.

My first response is always to congratulate them. Writing a book is a fabulous accomplishment. But being a writer and being an author are two very different things. To become an author, you must be willing to answer – honestly and compellingly – three pointed questions:

1. Why is my book unique?

or a guaranteed sum of money based on potential sales. Traditional publishing is different from self-publishing or "vanity" publishing, in which you pay a company to print copies of your book.

To secure a traditional publisher, here's the process I recommend:

1 Investigate the books that have already been written on your topic. Go to a bookstore and visit the shelf where your book would – if it *were* published – be displayed.

3 Decide whether you need an agent. You need a literary agent only if you plan to go to one of the 25 or so largest publishers: Random House, Simon & Schuster, Knopf, to name a few. These publishers won't look at book proposals sent to them directly by most authors. You have to go through an agent. If you're seeking publication at a small or medium-sized publisher (or a university press), you can usually send your book proposal directly to the publisher.



4 If you need an agent, choose carefully. Literary agents are like real-estate agents. They agree in writing to *try* to sell your property – in the case of a manuscript, your intellectual property. They approach potential buyers (publishers) and make a pitch on your behalf. If they close the sale, they get a commission, usually 15 percent of your cut. If they fail, they get nothing. So they're going to be careful choosing you. And you should be careful choosing them. If you're going to sign with an agent, make sure you trust that the person will work with you and for you. (You can find a

list of agents in the book *Writer's Market*, which is usually in your library's reference section.)

5 Write a personalized query letter to each publisher or agent.

A query (or cover) letter is a personal letter to an agent or publisher designed to create interest in your book idea. You send it along with your book proposal and a sample chapter or two. The goal of the query letter is to so dazzle the agent or publisher that he or she must read your book proposal, and ultimately, your manuscript. Aim to be personal, upbeat and realistic in

the letter. And don't misspell the person's name!

6 Don't sign anything without your lawyer's OK. If an agent or publisher tells you that he or she would like to represent your book proposal, or publish your book, bless them. Then have a lawyer look over the terms. I have known authors who signed too quickly and made little or no money even when their books sold well. Remember: Agents and publishers know the book business. You need a knowledgeable lawyer to level the playing field.

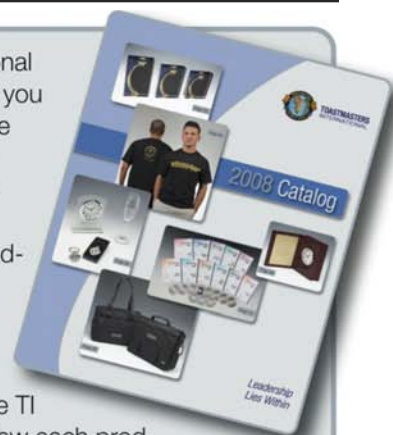
As you can see, writing and authoring are different skills. Writers tend to enjoy solitude. Authors are salespeople; they must be willing to make cold calls, pitch ideas, negotiate terms, withstand rejection and admit defeat when necessary. When one person can balance these two very different sets of personality traits within himself or herself – watch out, John Grisham! **T**

Neil Chethik, author of *FatherLoss* and *VoiceMale*, is a member of the Downtown Lunch Bunch Toastmasters, in Lexington, Kentucky.

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Tricks of the trade that help writers sell books.

How to Do a Book Reading

At the Happy Ending Bar on New York City's Lower East Side, authors are invited twice a month to read from their work. There's a catch: Anyone who reads must take a "public risk" before they start. Joshua Henkin, author of the novel *Matrimony*, recalls his moment on the Happy Ending stage: "I danced. I did the Time Warp from the movie *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. I must say, the books sold well that night."

Not every author is willing to boogie for book sales. But Henkin is certainly among the majority who knows that the traditional book reading – an author dryly intoning from his or her manuscript – doesn't cut it anymore. With hundreds of thousands of new books published around the world each year, authors who want to sell their books have to seek out their audiences and make a memorable impression.

"People don't come to hear a lecture from me," says Jonathan Eig, author of *Opening Day: The Story of Jackie Robinson's First Season*.

"They want to connect with me as a person. They want to know: How did he decide to write this book? How did he go about writing it? What surprised him most? A great way of selling a product is to give people a look behind the scenes of how it was made."

I recently interviewed Henkin, Eig, and a half-dozen other well-respected writers to find out whether it's still worthwhile for authors to do readings and signings, and if so, how best to conduct these kinds of events. Here is their consensus:

■ Limit bookstore signings.

Almost every author has a story of a bookstore signing where a couple of people – or none at all –

showed up. Michele Weldon, author of *Everyman News: The Changing American Front Page*, recalls one bookstore event: "There had been no publicity; there were no ads or signs in the store. One guy showed up. We ended up talking face-to-face for a while." Weldon says she's had much more success speaking at conferences or seminars attended by

people with a specific interest in her subject.

Nancy Redd, author of *Body Drama*, also is leery of bookstore signings. She suggests that authors do such signings only in their hometown. Hometown newspapers will proudly announce the event, and authors can stack the audience with friends and family. But unless you're a celebrity, she says, forget about bookstore events in distant cities. "You've got to put pride aside and go for the targeted audience; surround yourself with people who appreciate your topic," she says.

■ **Talk more, read less.** It's very difficult to read aloud without putting an audience to sleep, says Dan Millman, author of more than a dozen books, including *Way of the Peaceful Warrior*. He is most successful, Millman says, when he focuses his presentations on his personal story or philosophy. "I may be in the minority in that I never use notes," he says. "I find that it breaks the connection [with the audience]. I just try to open myself to my audience, and then I open my mouth."

And, Millman adds, he tries to close his mouth sooner than later. Authors tend to agree that unless a speaker has committed to a long presentation, 20 minutes is long enough for author remarks. "Short is sweet," Millman says. "Better to have the audience wanting more than looking at their watches."



■ **If you must read aloud from your book, choose your excerpt carefully.**

"I always read the most personal stuff," Redd says. "The more that people see you're keeping it real, the more connection you create." In *Body Drama*, Redd takes a candid look at women's bodies; the author says she usually reads an excerpt about how she has struggled to come to terms with her own body.

Nate Kenyon, author of *Bloodstone*, a horror/thriller novel, says he chooses his reading passages for maximum impact. "What I like to do is start off with some lighthearted discussion," he says. Then, "I'll dive into [an excerpt that's] really creepy. There's something about loosening up a crowd and getting them laughing, and then hitting them with a really intense scene, that just seems to work."

Lauren Fox, who wrote the novel *Still Life with Husband*, said she likes to read "short, self-enclosed scenes. It helps if they're near the beginning of the book so they set up the main conflicts in the novel...I think if you can find a way to underscore the most compelling hook in your book's plot, you'll have the most success."

■ **Use vocal variety.** *Matrimony* author Henkin says he finds that a "deadpan voice" works best for his readings, but he's the exception. Other authors say they choose excerpts where they can express their vocal range.

"Tap into the emotion of the reading," advises Anne Louise Bannon, who is a speaking coach in addition to being the author of the mystery *Tyger, Tyger*. "Audiences aren't affected by reasoned discourse," Bannon contends. "They're affected when they're hit in the

gut. Find the emotional elements in your book, and read them aloud with passion."

■ **Take questions from the audience.**

"Q-and-A is by far the most interesting part" of any reading, Henkin says. "Audiences want to know about your process. It's voyeuristic – in a good way."

"People don't come to hear a lecture from me, they want to connect with me as a person."

– Author Jonathan Eig

Virtually all of the other authors agreed. For *Bloodstone* author Kenyon, the question-and-response session "is the time to really shine. Stay light and fun, laugh a lot, be as relaxed as possible."

■ **Consider these guerilla sales tactics.**

Most authors, after many readings and presentations, tend to develop unique book-selling techniques. Kenyon, for example, says that when he's at a book table after a presentation, he'll often engage in small talk with people who stop to take a look. Then, while opening

a copy of his book to the title page, he'll ask, "Who can I make it out to?" He observes: "It's like the decision has been taken out of their hands, and they simply give you a name and end up buying the book!"

Millman, meanwhile, who writes fiction and nonfiction, notices that it helps his sales when he holds

up a copy of his book during his talk and then circulates it through the audience. "If they've touched the book, looked at its cover, held it in their hands," they're often moved to buy it, he says.

"Ultimately, though, you can't make someone buy a book. Each book has to sell itself." **T**

Neil Chethik, author of *FatherLoss* and *VoiceMale*, is a member of the Downtown Lunch Bunch Toastmasters club in Lexington, Kentucky.

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PS Form 3526-A, September 2007 (Page 2 of 2)



The Art of

Bookmanship

Toastmasters, get thee
a tome that fires
your imagination
and creativity.

By Katherine Meeks

The written word has – or can have – a profound influence on the spoken word. We can only make so many Toastmasters speeches on our hobby of wine tasting, the annoyances of cell phones or a lasting memory of a bad day at the gym. A book, whether it's the latest Stephen Covey or a new biography on Abraham Lincoln, is always a source of fresh ideas

attend lectures, we can watch the History Channel and documentaries on TV, and we can use the Internet; however, with the exception of intense or prolonged personal experience,

and material to further stimulate and widen our own thinking. And though writing style and speaking style are always different, through reading we pick up interesting turns of phrases, euphonious combinations of words, and pithy observations that can serve us well in both public speaking and conversation.

the power of all of these is superficial compared to a book.

A familiarity with a master of words like George Bernard Shaw can lead us to express ourselves more interestingly. Which is more memorable when describing, say, the bureaucratic runaround: "I feel frustrated" or "I feel like a lion balked of its prey" (Shaw's *Arms and the Man*)? Shakespeare is another gold mine. Which phrase better captures the bane of early morning meetings: "Early morning meetings are always an annoyance" or "I feel *untimely ripped* from my bed" (*Macbeth*)?

Today, with more distractions than ever before, the number of people who read regularly is dwindling. Few know the art of what I call bookmanship. How do we keep a steady stream of interesting books passing through our hands – books that don't just provide an escape and a distraction, but rather build our minds as well as our communicative and linguistic powers?

In addition to sparking ideas and improving our style, reading is the primary and most effective way of increasing our vocabulary once we leave school. As a speech coach who often works with speechwriters, I've observed that the best of these writers are well-read individuals – that is how they have developed the depth of thought, excellence of style and precision of vocabulary that distinguish their speeches.

There's no gainsaying the importance of serious reading. We can travel, we can enjoy new experiences, we can

"Ay, there's the rub."
– Hamlet

It all begins with curiosity. As one wit put it, education unfortunately doesn't always scratch where it itches. Books can and do. Here are some ways to get started.

■ **Make it a point to ask other people, perhaps in your Toastmasters club, what they're reading.** In the social hour following a Toastmasters meeting, I once heard two club members weigh in with completely different opinions about *The Secret*, the book by Rhonda Byrne. After that, I *had* to read it. When you serve as Topicsmaster, you might even make books a topic for people to address: what is their favorite book and why, or who is



*“There is
no frigate
like a book.”*

- Emily Dickinson

their favorite character in a book and why, or what is the last book they read and what did they think of it.

■ **If a movie interests you, see if it was based on a book.**

Then get that book. If you enjoyed the movie *Pursuit of Happyness*, reading Chris Gardner’s memoir of the same title will provide a more in-depth and somewhat different look at the American dream. After seeing *The Prince of Tides*, I read Pat Conroy’s book on which it was based. While I thought the movie had improved on the book in some ways, the book provided a wealth of details and insights on relations between men and women that the movie could not.

■ **Read the book-review sections of newspapers and magazines.** Many review current books; others cite favorite books of celebrities and well-known people – check these out, too. If something sounds interesting, make a note of it. Be constantly building lists of books that sound intriguing.

■ **A visit to your local library can be productive.** Among the various sections, Biography is always a good bet, as old and new works can be equally fascinating. Also, look at the section called New Releases. In addition,

check the reshelving carts to see what others are reading and if any of those appeal.

■ **Keep an eye out for used-book sales.** Books come into your life in mysterious ways. I once found one of the most influential books of my life, an autobiography of the writer Marya Mannes, in a K-Mart close-out sale. Keep a special eye out for those books that come into your life serendipitously, i.e., those left behind by the previous tenant in a vacation cottage, or the ones among the magazines at the laundromat. Some people swear by this!

*“The books that come into your life at the
right time are also omens and indicators
of energy directions.”*

– Ed Buryn

■ **Get thee to a bookstore.** Sections are labeled with rubrics like Travel, Self-Improvement, Politics, World History, Biography, True Crime and Fiction. Wander around. Browse. What sections and books interest you the most? That is a clue to check out those sections on a regular basis. If possible, you might try exploring a few different bookstores. Sometimes the way a store

arranges its merchandise may make it more accessible to your interests. On one trip you may be able to find three or four promising leads.

The Art of Browsing

Scan the titles of books. Titles tell a lot; they have to. Does the title interest you? Is the book cover intriguing? What about the blurbs on the back and the inside flaps? A lot of useful information is condensed there.

The Page Test

OK, now for the acid test. Just open the book at random. Is the writing style boring to you, difficult or too scholarly for your taste, full of footnotes that don't interest you? Put it back. Is it full of lengthy descriptions that don't grab you, either? Put it back. Are the characters talking about something that doesn't engage you, or in a way that annoys you? Back it goes... Or has this page drawn you in, making you want to read further? Do the ideas, information, plot or characters intrigue you? Do you wonder how the events of the story came about? Can you relate somehow? You will soon know if this book is a keeper.

Myths About Reading

Many people believe you must start at the beginning of a book and continue to the end. Wrong, wrong, wrong. Start anywhere you like. That book isn't going anywhere, and you aren't going to miss anything. Your acid test may get you so interested, you have to continue reading from that point, then go back to find out how this plot point came about. If you get bogged down in a boring patch, just skip it and move to something more interesting. No bolt of lightning is going to target you if you jump ahead and read the end, either. If the book is any good, it will be satisfying to go back and see how the author got there.

In nonfiction, especially, there may be chapters that don't interest you. Skip them, and get on to the ones that do. In contrast to people, books are easy: Superficial, limited relationships are OK. You can use them and lose them. Love them and leave them. Dump them for a more attractive book. Throw them over and come back to them later.

"Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts, others to be read, but not curiously, and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention."

— Sir Francis Bacon

Getting the Book

If a book is on your list, you might want to first log on to the Web site of your local public library to see if the library has it. If so, you can place a hold on the book and the library will notify you as soon as it is ready to be picked up. If your local library doesn't own it, request it on interlibrary loan.

If bookstores are a convenient choice for you, keep in mind that many have special membership plans with sizable discounts. A large number also have a generous return policy.

Sometimes books are even cheaper online, at Web sites like **Amazon.com**, **half.com** or **Barnesandnoble.com**. If it's not a brand new release or a huge bestseller, you will probably be able to find a used edition of your chosen book – one still in great condition – at an excellent price through the same online bookstores. You can also resell books of your own there, too.

There's even a site called **Paperbackswap.com** (and it's not just for paperbacks), where visitors can acquire books for free (excluding the price of postage) by trading tomes with other readers.

Deeper and More Productive Reading

As you read, consider keeping what used to be called a "commonplace book" (which is anything but commonplace). Here you write down quotations or passages that strike you for whatever reason, and you can comment on them. You'd be surprised at how useful this can be in working up a speech of substance, as well as in preparing to speak off the cuff. The quotes that you collect and assimilate should not only be thought-provoking – they should also be accurate, correctly attributed, in their natural context and available when you need them.

Keep in mind that a book is not just a conversation between author and reader; it is even more richly enjoyed and profited from when it serves to elicit discussion among more people. Whenever people discuss books, whether it's students and teachers, parents and children, friends and family, a book club, or even readers sharing online book reviews, a literary community is created. Such communities make lives richer, and they can consist of as few as two people – say, you and your spouse, or you and your child. A man I know has an arrangement with his teenage son – his son chooses a book and his father pledges to read it and discuss it with him. Then it's the father's turn to choose.

Finding Your Next Book

No one likes to be between relationships, and book lovers don't like to be between books. As you consume a particular work, keep on the lookout for other books the author may refer to, and see what other books the

**“Education
unfortunately doesn’t
always scratch where
it itches. Books
can and do.”**

author has written. Also have a look at the authors who have written the blurbs for that book you’re reading: They are in the same field or write in the same genre, so their works may interest you as well.

If you’re reading a work of nonfiction, look at the bibliography, if there is one. Mark any interesting titles you see there. If you go to an online bookstore to check out a title, other suggested book titles will often appear onscreen on the same topic or a related one. Often these sites offer not only book reviews, but also a chance to see “inside” the book, i.e., the table of contents, the cover and perhaps a few pages.


Time to Read

How much of your time is spent waiting for something? Have a book with you at all times. When you’re at the doctor’s office, waiting for a haircut, on public transportation, waiting for delivery people to show up, standing in line at the DMV or at the supermarket checkout line – all these experiences can be improved if you’re engrossed in a good book. Right before going to sleep is a good time, too, as long as you don’t get

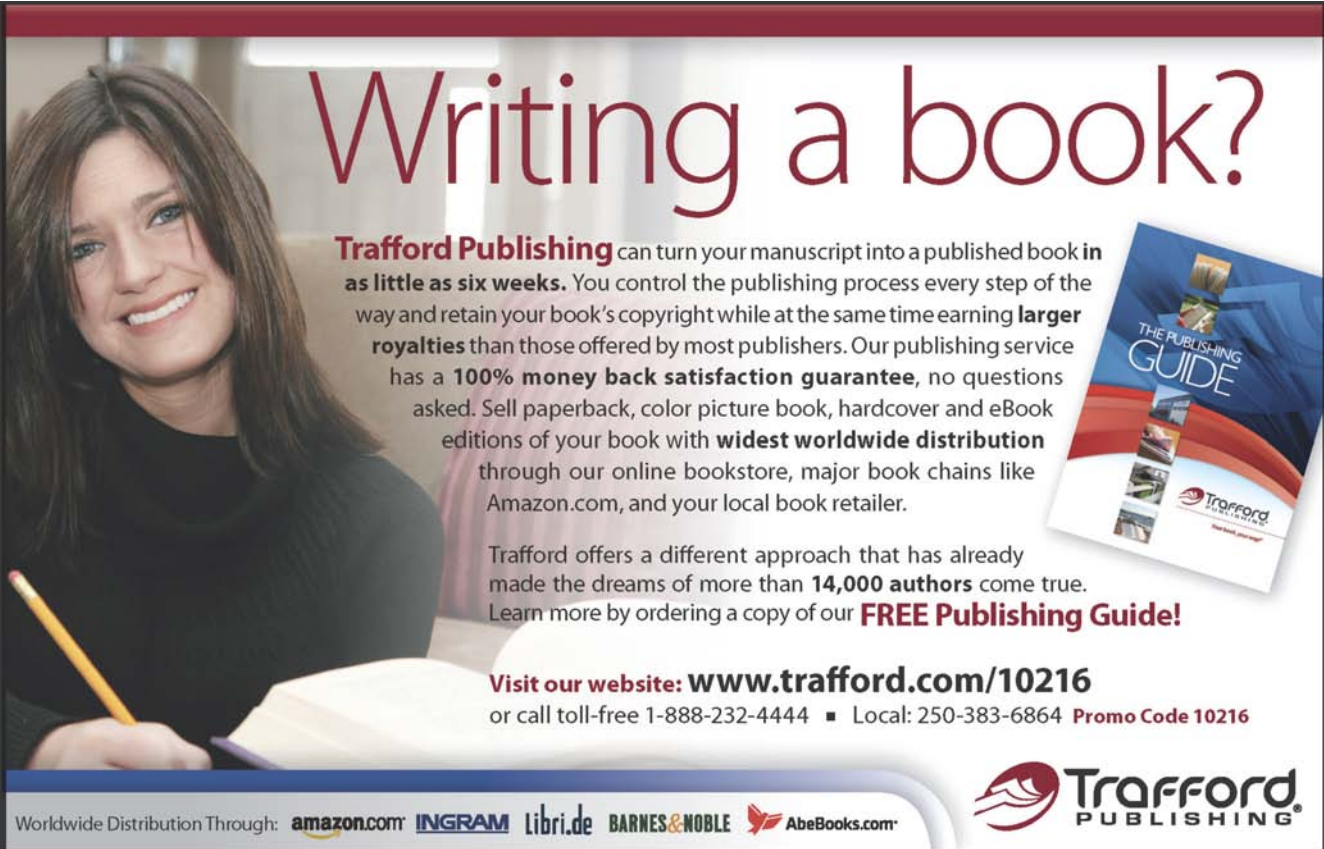
too engrossed and stay up half the night!

I certainly don’t recommend reading while driving, but audio books work great, especially if you have a long trip or commute. No time to hang out in bookstores?

OK, then how about at airports? You’ve typically got at least an hour to kill before your flight – get into the airport bookstore and check it out. If a book grabs you, buy it and read it on the flight. When flights are delayed (as they often are), you can look at it as a great opportunity, and if you have picked well, you may barely notice the extra time you are stuck.

Getting into the reading habit, and into an ongoing relationship with books, will improve the level of your speeches and enhance your enjoyment of your Toastmasters club. Go for it! It could be one of the best relationships of your life. 

Katherine Meeks, M.A., is a speech consultant and language coach based in New York City who works with diplomats and executives. She can be reached at katherine.meeks@verizon.net.



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Don't burn family, friends
with a shameful toast.

By Michael Varma, ATMG, ALB

Tips on Toasting Well

Two summers ago I witnessed a truly tragic toast – and as a professional entertainer with more than 25 years of experience, I know a train wreck when I see one.

The best man at a wedding, seemingly sober, grabbed the microphone and with a booming voice launched into a notably naughty limerick: “There once was a groom from Nantucket...” The guests were not amused. The newlyweds, their parents and *grandparents* were mortified by the off-color verse. This soon-to-be ex-friend thought his humor would be enjoyed by all, or perhaps he crumbled under the pressure of public speaking. Whatever the case, his major faux pas reinforced my resolve to provide practical tips on toasting etiquette.

Toasting Advice

The purpose of a toast is to shine a gentle spotlight and pay tribute to the honored guest or event. Toasts typically proffer well wishes, good fortune, long life, health, happiness, sage advice or other positive thoughts. Composing a toast that is eloquent, poignant, whimsical and witty can be a challenge but worth every effort.

Begin by introducing yourself, state your first and last name for non-family members, explain how you're related to the guest of honor, then present the toast. Follow the three Bs for delivering a successful toast – be brief, be bold, be done:

■ **Be Brief.** “No toast except his own should last longer than 60 seconds” was Mark Twain's golden rule. Keeping your remarks short gives your toast a greater impact and gets you on and off the stage more quickly. Well-crafted words and a succinct

delivery will be appreciated by your audience and make your tribute more likely remembered for years to come.

■ **Be Bold.** Stand proud and speak loud. Ensure that everyone in the room, including folks sitting in the back row, can hear your tasteful toast. Belting it out to the rafters may not be needed; a quick run-through before the crowd assembles in the room will help you gauge how far to project your voice. It can also help calm your frayed nerves and provide valuable practice time.

■ **Be Done.** When finished, sit down. Resist the urge to take a bow or return for an encore. Smile, nod and accept any applause or acknowledgements, then refocus the spotlight on the guest of honor.

A well-presented wedding toast will have every father of the bride raising his glass with glee and every mother dabbing her eyes – a true

“tissue moment.” The following toast, which I wrote for my brother's wedding, is simple yet heartfelt:

*Your marriage makes a
perfect start*

*For every life is a work of art
Paint a picture filled with bliss
Treasured in your lover's kiss
Wedding vows are truly strong
May yours last forever long*

Advanced speakers can add a humorous story about the guest of honor after they explain how they know the honoree and *before* the actual toast. I recommend avoiding dirty jokes and risqué stories. Veer toward the white wedding light with words that praise and inspire, and you'll never be seen in the Toasting Hall of Shame.

Michael Varma, ATMG, ALB, is a member of BergenMeisters Toastmasters club in Orange, California. He can be reached at www.michaelvarma.com.

Raising Your Glass in Rhyme

In his book *Tasteful Toasts*, Michael Varma writes 100 toasts to be used for a variety of occasions. They are written in the form of poems and limericks. The book can be purchased through the Toastmasters International Web site, at www.toastmasters.org/shop. Varma also has a Web site for the book: www.tastefultoasts.com.

Following are a couple of the author's creations:

Birthday

*Tenderly we joke and tease
Candles blown out with a wheeze
Sharing in your birthday feast
We wish you 50* more –
at least!*

*Substitute 20, 30, 40, 60, 70, 80, 90

New Year's

*We greet the day with
cheers galore
For Father Time is at the door
Now we rejoice
In one clear voice
Shout Happy New Year
and many more*



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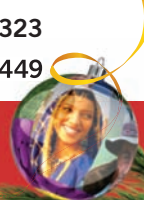
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FUNNY YOU SHOULD SAY THAT!

By John Cadley

Thanks, But No Thanks

† Anyone who doubts the evocative power of words should open a piece of junk mail and read the headline: ***Accidental Death and Dismemberment Insurance.***

If that doesn't ruin your day, nothing will.

I understand that we must all plan for the hour when we shuffle off this mortal coil. But do they have to be so graphic? It's like seeing lobster described on a menu as "innocent, law-abiding crustacean boiled alive for your dining pleasure."

Linguistically, it takes you from bad to really bad to just disgusting. *Accidents?* I try to avoid them. *Death?* Not right now, thanks. *Dismemberment?* Isn't that what they did to heretics in the Middle Ages?

Surely, there was a better way to get my attention. For starters, did they have to put "and" between the death and the dismemberment? Shouldn't it have been *Accidental Death or Dismemberment*? Can I at least have a choice? Does it have to be both? It makes me feel like even after I die there won't be enough left to bury.

Then there's "accidental." Is there any "accidental death" you can think of that you'd *want* to think of? I can only think of one and it can't be printed in a family magazine.

And that other word. I can hardly even write it. Dismemberment. Yuck! All I can think of is one of those grotesque, medieval here's-what-happens-to-bad-people paintings by Hieronymus Bosch.

Adding insult to injury, the letter is written with a warm, solicitous tone designed to make me feel like a group of actuarial wonks is getting

sentimental about all the horrific ways I could have a really, really bad day. They address me as a "valued customer" and offer to pay for a basic \$3,000 policy themselves. Excuse me? \$3,000?! That's how much I'm "valued"? In other words, they think compensating me for loss of life and/or limb is roughly equivalent to replacing a riding lawn mower. They even offer me family coverage. It isn't bad enough contemplating my own gruesome end. Now they've got my whole family going over a cliff.

Then there are the exclusions. One is "declared or undeclared war." The "declared" part I get. If you knowingly participate in war your death won't be an accident and dismemberment is pretty much a foregone conclusion. But if it's an undeclared war, how do you know it's even a war? Maybe it's just a "When Wives Meet Mistresses" segment on *The Jerry Springer Show*.

Participating in riots is out, too. So if I get caught in the parking lot at Wal-Mart during a two-for-one sale, I'm on my own. I also can't be drunk or flying an aircraft, and certainly not both at the same time.

Another exclusion is "sickness, including bacterial infection except through a wound accidentally sustained, or its medical or surgical treatment, including diagnosis."

If I understand that correctly – and that's a pretty big "if" – it means: I can't get sick and die because that wouldn't be considered accidental, although I don't know of too many people who get sick on purpose, especially *that* sick. If I get wounded accidentally

and the wound gets infected accidentally, it's not an accident. And if I die because my treatment was bad, or my wound was misdiagnosed, I apparently deserve what I get for choosing such bad medical care. Perhaps they assume I'll sue and get my money that way, but how can you sue when you're...never mind.

Oh yes – and in the small print at the bottom they add, "NOT FDIC INSURED. NOT INSURED BY ANY FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AGENCY. NOT GUARANTEED BY A BANK." Which seems to mean that even if I do meet their Rubik's cube of requirements, they may or may not have the money to pay up when the time comes. Is this an insurance policy or a ransom note?

I feel like writing to these people and saying, "I'm already covered for something like this. It's called *life* insurance. I like that word a whole lot better than 'death,' and way better than 'dismemberment.' The people who sold me that policy understand that nobody wants to think about The End, so they let me keep my precious illusion of immortality. You have failed to recognize this basic sales technique and have only succeeded in scaring me halfway to the place your policy assumes I'm going. And for that reason you will not get my business. Life insurance, yes. Accidental death and dismemberment? No, but thanks for the offer." †

John Cadley is an advertising copywriter for an agency in Syracuse, New York. Reach him at jcadley@mower.com.

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Officer Training – Again!

What's In It For You?

**Midyear session
educates, invigorates
Toastmasters
club leaders.**

By Jennifer L. Blanck, ACS, AL

***A**re you a club officer in Toastmasters? If so, are you planning to attend midyear officer training in January or February?*

No? Think the training won't benefit you? Please think again – and read on to see what unexpected benefits training can offer. Even for veteran officers, there are surprisingly numerous reasons to go.

And if you're already planning to be there – great! To help maximize your experience, read about what you can gain from this enlightening and helpful event.

Past International Director Tammy Miller leads a district officer training session at the 2008 International Convention in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.



Learn Something New

The initial benefits of midyear training – or “second training” to some – should be obvious to anyone assuming an officer role for the first time in January. You attend to learn about your role. Such training also provides a venue to learn about and understand any changes or new opportunities at the international or district level of Toastmasters. In addition, there’s the chance to discover how other clubs are handling changes and then to incorporate their methods into your own group.

Philani Ncube, past president of District 74’s Honeydew Toastmasters in Johannesburg, South Africa, notes that training provides “clarity on [the] role as a club officer, leadership, and [an] overall objective of what Toastmasters is all about and the benefits thereof.”

Clarity can be essential, especially for members who accept officer roles early on in their Toastmasters career.

Even for veteran members or those who have served in other officer roles, midyear training serves as a reminder of all the aspects involved in their current role.

As technology and resources change, officer roles can be affected. So even veterans of the same role might need to learn new procedures, functions or processes. For example, officers of clubs using **FreeToastHost.org** have seen their responsibilities adjust to the increasing functionality offered by the free online Web site. At times, Toastmasters International institutes new rules or processes, such as the updated and expanded Toastmasters education program, which includes the *Competent Leadership* manual.

Furthermore, an idea might not be new, but it could be new to you. While Toastmasters meetings share basic elements – prepared and extemporaneous speeches, and evaluations – each club structures its meetings differently; hearing inventive ideas from others can kick-start your own creative thinking.

Remember and Reflect

Officer roles are multifaceted. Many times, these positions involve behind-the-scenes work seldom realized or appreciated by members. Rarely do we do everything we’re supposed to during our first six months in a role – maybe not even in a whole year. Midyear training allows you to check in with others about *all* the duties involved in your position and to think about ways to handle them.

It can also be an opportunity to reflect on the first six months. How did you do? What went well, and what could be improved? Our lives are so busy – who isn’t multitasking these days? This session offers that time to focus on your officer contribution and process what’s happened so far.

Ann King, a member of Clonakilty Toastmasters in County Cork, Ireland, and Area 11 Governor in District 71, notes, “If a new officer is given certain information at the beginning of the year, it may or may not ‘take,’ as often he or she has not a solid base against which to apply it. By midyear, the officer likely has a strong need to clarify issues and methods. (Stated another way: You have to understand the system before you can ask questions about it.)”

Share Challenges and Successes

For club officers gathered at the training event, the group dynamic is very useful. Edward Chen, District 67 Parliamentarian in Taipei, Taiwan, says, “The main purpose is to share what they have experienced in the past half-year and find solutions for the problem or difficulties they are facing.”

What are some best practices employed by clubs? What activities or approaches have other clubs tried? What are some lessons learned that could benefit you or others? By hearing about best practices or activities that didn’t work, officers can quickly add to their portfolio of initiatives. And it’s nice to know that you’re not alone in some of the challenges you’re facing.

Debbie Roes, Area 8 Governor in District 5 and immediate past president of Pacific Beach Toastmasters in San Diego, California, notes that “meeting the other officers is one of the best parts of the training experience, as I learn from their experiences.”

Socialize and Network

Many people go for the social aspect of training. It’s an opportunity to meet new people or connect with other members in a new way.

When Ian Hamilton, immediate past president of District 73’s North Adelaide Toastmasters in South Australia, attends, he expects “to learn and to meet officers from other clubs, and to get answers to questions I might have.”

“Midyear training allows you to check in with others about all the duties involved in your position and to think about ways to handle them.”

King, the Irish Toastmaster, says, “Many of our clubs are in rural areas. Contact with other clubs may be limited due to distance, so training sessions may be eagerly attended as a means of obtaining support. For these same reasons, they may be seen as anticipated social occasions.”

In addition to socializing, you can also network to help recruit participants for your club meetings. Chen says, “Both the first and the second officer trainings also serve as fellowship meetings for district and club officers. The meetings offer them opportunities to make friends with the officers from all over the country. This is very helpful in fulfilling their jobs, as they may [then] know many capable and experienced Toastmasters from other clubs who they can invite to their clubs to serve...in the regular meetings or as judges in their speech contests.”

There are indeed many reasons why you should talk to the other members in your district. You might hear about other speaking opportunities or recruit speakers for meetings and contests. You might even learn about something beyond Toastmasters, such as a job opportunity.

Help Others

Is your club thriving? Do you have creative meetings or successful membership drives? Is your group on the cutting edge of technology? If so, you have a lot to share with other officers.

Some officers have attended trainings for years. Their institutional knowledge can be invaluable. If you're one of these veterans and feel like you've been at training more than necessary, remember that you might have a lot to offer new officers. Help them by sharing your experience and insights. Or maybe volunteer to be a trainer.

Review Materials

What advanced manual interests you? Are there club training modules that could benefit your fellow club members? What recognition items can you incorporate into your club program for speaking and leadership milestones? If your midyear training includes a “book-store” or any setup that offers the chance to buy new manuals or other Toastmasters items, you'll have the opportunity to review the materials before making a selection.

Re-energize

Midyear training also provides inspiration, as you hear about amazingly inventive and successful clubs and their leaders. When you are open to learning new things, it's hard not to be re-energized by the ideas, accomplishments and perseverance of others.

Get Credit

Like most officers, Hamilton, the Australian Toastmaster, attends midyear officer training “because it is of benefit to me and the club, and it counts toward the Distinguished Club awards.” While officers should attend training because of the value received, getting credit is an added bonus.


If DCP credit has been your main reason in the past, consider all the other benefits. It might make the time you invest in training more enjoyable, interesting and productive.

It's Up to the District

Not all midyear training sessions offer all these opportunities. Some might offer very few. In addition, as Debbie Roes points out, “The level of benefits gained varies widely depending upon the trainer.”

Not everyone believes that club officer training – or district officer training, either – is worthwhile. If your district doesn't provide the training you or your officers need, send the district officers some constructive feedback. *What would help?* Toastmasters are trained in evaluation; use those skills to let your district leadership know what you need to be successful. Share your ideas.

For example, Roes suggests, “Perhaps [Toastmasters International] could do ‘train the trainer’ sessions for officer trainers, or provide training materials so that the individual districts can put on more effective trainings... I find I learn a lot when I visit other clubs...so that type of experience could be leveraged in a sort of ‘advanced training’ for second-term (or however many terms beyond one) officers.”

A lot of time, energy and resources are put into organizing midyear training. The coordinators and trainers want to make training the best possible experience for all. Give them an opportunity to consider your needs and see what they can do. You may have something great to gain. As Ncube from South Africa notes, “Like anything else in life, you only get out of it as much as you put in.” 

Jennifer L. Blanck, ACS, AL, is a charter member and current officer of Georgetown Toastmasters in Washington, D.C. She has been a member of Toastmasters since 1995 and has served as a trainer for District 36 since 2003.

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***"Our responsibilities are defined
by our opportunities."***

– Ralph C. Smedley, Founder
Toastmasters International

New Convention Site for 2010!

✦ Nearly two years ago, in February 2007, Toastmasters International's Board of Directors selected Sydney, Australia, as the site of the 2010 International Convention. At that time, this was the right decision for the organization. However, the recent global financial crisis and economic downturn have caused the organization to re-evaluate that decision.

After extensive financial analysis, taking into consideration the negative impact these economic influences have on the meetings, convention and travel industries, Toastmasters International has determined that conducting an International Convention in Sydney, Australia, would not be financially responsible at this time. As a result, the venue of the 2010 International Convention has been changed to the Desert Springs JW Marriott Resort and Spa in Palm Desert, California – a property that has previously hosted two very successful Conventions, in 1989 and 1998.

What does this mean for future Conventions held outside North America? World Headquarters staff will continue to assess that possibility and will provide the Board of Directors information allowing them to make a decision that is right for the organization and right for its members.

International President Jana Barnhill, in her Viewpoint article in this month's issue, says, "While we fully acknowledge that many of our members will be disappointed, we could not ignore our primary




▲ Site of the August 11-14, 2010, International Convention: The Desert Springs JW Marriott Resort and Spa in Palm Desert, California.

responsibility to be prudent with your funds." In addition, she points out: "We appreciate all the efforts of Elizabeth Wilson, the Host District 70 Chair, and the work her team has already done to prepare for a Convention in Australia. I hope they, and all of our members, understand that this was not an easy decision."

"Toastmasters International's Board of Directors and World Headquarters staff care deeply about the needs of the organization's 235,000 members around the world and they take their responsibility toward them very seriously," says Toastmasters Executive Director Daniel Rex. "This was not an easy decision to make, but it is one that ultimately will benefit the interests of all members."

The Convention is an opportunity for men and women of all walks of life, career paths and educational interests to gather for an extraordinary experience. Meeting other Toastmasters from around the world, making new friends, reconnecting with existing friends and taking part in a superior educational program are hallmarks of a successful Convention.

With your understanding and support, we hope you will continue to make plans to join your fellow Toastmasters at the 79th Annual International Convention at Desert Springs JW Marriott Resort and Spa in Palm Desert, California – August 11-14, 2010. 

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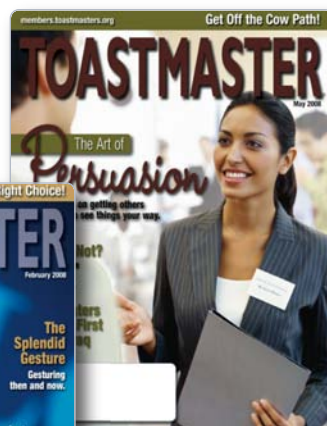
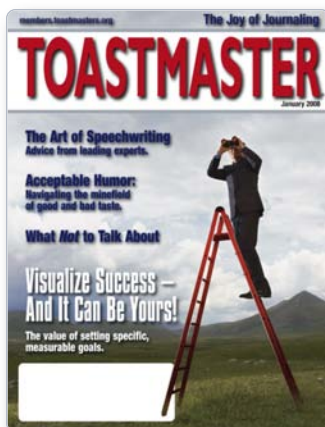


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Tips on Toasting Well	Michael Varma, ACG, ALB	Dec/20

Humor

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How to Make a Singaporean Laugh	Eric Feng, ACS	June/24
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Casualties of War	John Cadley	Nov/30
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Language/Speech Writing

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Leadership

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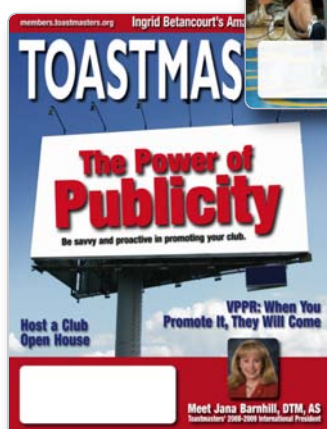
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Bob Hooley, DTM, AS July/28
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- The Wooden Way
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- Officer Training – Again!
 What's In It For You?
Jennifer Blanck, ACS, AL Dec/24

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- Toastmasters in Rural Areas
Mark Dykeman Feb/22
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Gwen Whipple, ACB Mar/28
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Michael Chan June/18
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Susanne Rieble, ACG, CL June/20
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Joe Cooke, ATMB Sept/16
- VPPR: When You Promote It, They Will Come!
Craig Harrison, DTM Sept/20
- Hosting a Club Open House
Lindy Sinclair, DTM Sept/23

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 a Daredevil Speaker!
David Dawson Jan/7



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Judy M. Bailey Jan/24
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Joy Lardner, DTM Jan/27
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Shawn Doyle, ACB Apr/10
- From Topeka with Hope
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Patricia Fry Dec/ 8
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Neil Chethik Dec/14

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