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THE TOASTMASTER Magazine (ISSN 00408263) is published monthly by Toastmasters International, Inc., 23182 Arroyo Vista, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688, U.S.A. Periodicals postage paid at Mission Viejo, CA and additional mailing office. POSTMASTER: Send address change to THE TOASTMASTER Magazine, P.O. Box 9052, Mission Viejo, CA 92690, U.S.A.

Published to promote the ideas and goals of Toastmasters International, a non profit educational organization of clubs throughout the world dedicated to teaching skills in public speaking and leadership. Members' subscriptions are included in the \$27 semi annual dues.

The official publication of Toastmasters International carries authorized notices and articles regarding the activities and interests of the organization, but responsibility is not assumed for the opinions of the authors of other articles. THE TOASTMASTER magazine does not endorse or guarantee the products it advertises.

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## The Gifts of the Toastmasters Magi



It's December! I grew up feeling that there was a special magic in this month. That feeling had a lot to do with Christmas. Growing up in Sri Lanka, I had friends of several different religious backgrounds – Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu and Christian. Although Christmas is a celebration associated with the Christian faith, many of my non-Christian friends' families also delighted in the joy of the season and they exchanged gifts. The Scriptures tell us that Magi from the east presented to the baby Jesus three gifts – gold, frankincense and myrrh. This December consider this: We receive three priceless gifts from the Toastmasters Magi – courage, confidence and caring.

I see courage in action when a speaker who is nervous volunteers for a Table Topic, when a speech contestant competes against more skilled speakers, and when leaders in the districts affected by hurricanes rally their members and rebuild clubs and members' morale. Every time you challenge yourself to stretch, every time you risk failure in your quest for improvement, you demonstrate courage. Your club's supportive and positive environment encourages you to dare to be great. This is the first of the gifts of the Toastmasters Magi – the courage to stretch.

Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "Once stretched by a new idea, the human mind never reverts to its original dimensions." That happens when we embrace the **courage to stretch**. Your skills increase, your self-image improves, and you begin to find your voice. Then you receive the second gift of the Toastmasters Magi – the **confidence to achieve**. This confidence impels you to test yourself and take on tough challenges. Examples of opportunities for achievement include striving for educational awards, competing in speech contests, running for office and chairing a conference. Achievement feeds your self-esteem. It fuels your desire to accomplish bigger and better things, and you realize that all things are possible to the person who dares to dream and take action.

Courage and confidence lead to the third gift – **caring to build**. As you develop yourself on the Toastmasters journey, your confidence allows you to think beyond yourself and start focusing on the well-being of others. Signs of this gift include the desire to mentor a new member, sponsor or mentor a new club, and nurture new leaders. The practical application of caring is to serve your world.

What are you doing with these gifts? Apply the gifts to your life and then become a Toastmasters Magi yourself! Help others discover the precious gifts: the courage to stretch, the confidence to achieve, the caring to build.

Create that special feeling in your heart, in your club and in your district. Then you will have the magic of December with you always!

Season's Greetings!

*Dilip R. Abayasekara*  
 Dilip Abayasekara, DTM  
 International President



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Give verbal life to your speeches.

By Paula Syptak Price, ATM

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#### *The Toastmasters Vision:*

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

#### *The Toastmasters Mission:*

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

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

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

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### Motherhood and Toastmasters

Kudos to Shelly Felt for her October article, "Involve Your Child in the Toastmasters Experience," and for having the guts to include her daughters in her Toastmasters experience. So many mothers I've met in Toastmasters say they took a sabbatical from Toastmasters to raise their children, and I always thought that was a shame.

Motherhood and Toastmasters membership need not be exclusive of each other. In fact, when I found out I was pregnant, I immediately looked for ways to continue my Toastmasters leadership. My daughter visited her first Toastmasters meeting at seven weeks old and has been a regular ever since. The more parents who heed Shelly's advice and encourage their child's participation in their Toastmasters experience, the less likely new mothers will feel they have to put aside their personal growth and membership in Toastmasters to be a mom. Thanks, Shelly, for telling the world that it's great to be a mom and a Toastmaster!

Elizabeth Sprecher, DTM • Highroller Club 3730 • Pflugerville, TX

### A Religious Turnoff

I like to read the Letters in this magazine; I like opinions. Two letters in the October 2005 issue caught my attention: "Avoid Political Turnoffs" and "What to Say When."

I agree that avoiding political turnoffs is essential if one is to communicate to a group with varied political opinions. But I also feel, after reading "What to Say When," that religious turnoffs should also be avoided. I belonged to a Toastmasters club in the '60s and recently joined one in Allentown, Pennsylvania. When I want to hear about God, I go to church. If I attended a Toastmasters group that had an invocation and then the Pledge of Allegiance, I would not attend again.

If that group wants to be a religious group, that is fine, but it would not be for me. Too many groups include pseudo religious openings that have nothing to do with the rest of the agenda. This means that the group is not really open to all. Groups could include all liberals, or all conservatives, but if they laugh at Bush or Kerry, or have a religious agenda, then that is not my idea of a Toastmaster club that is open to all. It is an exclusive club.

Rev. D. Björn Olson, Ph.D.  
Sunrise Toastmasters Club 8388 • Allentown, PA.

### Talking About Politicians

I agree with Tom Barnhart's statement that John Kerry should not have been used as an example in "Beyond the Bullet Point" in the July issue.

It is difficult, however, to know who to discuss in order to avoid politically charged examples, except to avoid political figures completely. After all, George Washington was subject to incredibly scurrilous attacks from his political opponents. And, appalling as it may seem, Abraham Lincoln, a hero to most Americans, is still subject to such attacks in certain parts of this country.

Karen Burr, ATM • Long Distance Member of Sunrise Club 74  
Phoenix, AZ

### Cross-cultural Miscommunication?

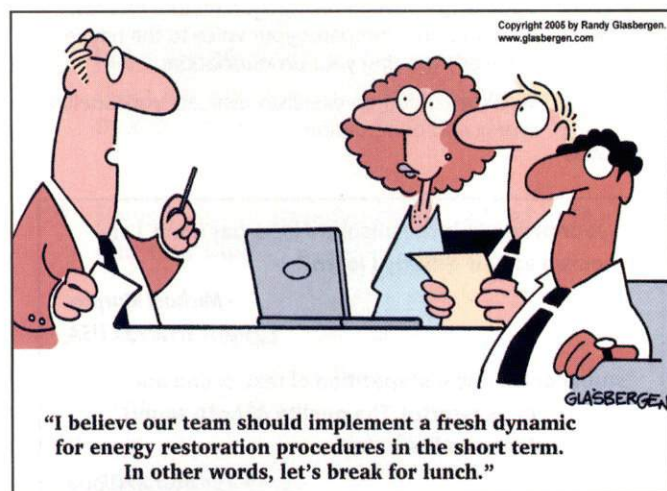
I read with curiosity the articles on cross-cultural communication in the October issue. As a Toastmaster in Canada, I frequently find the Americanized slant to articles and what is chosen to be published in our magazine odd for

an organization that is truly international. Both articles, although well written, were tainted with this tone, for example inferring that Americans were better equipped to understand regional accents. But what really caught my eye was the letter to the editor titled "What to say when."

Its appearance and the opinion expressed denotes an endorsement by the magazine. I vehemently disagreed with the advice given! Although outburst comments by guests are not appropriate, the firm tone and school-teacher manner of the club president toward the guest questioning "one nation under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance does not cross cultural boundaries.

I bristled at the president's comment and the tone it was delivered in. Although I would have never made that type of insensitive comment as a guest, as a non-American I agree with their comments, and had I been the receiver of the president's reply, I would have left the meeting promptly. I suspect their guest never returned. That's a shame. This is a great example of how their president failed at cross-cultural communication.

Mary Charleson, CTM • Logos Toastmasters 9412  
West Vancouver, Canada





After 45 years in Toastmasters, I'm a 'lifer.'

## My Memories of Dr. Smedley

I had been a Toastmaster for only a few months when our club had a special meeting at the Newport Beach Yacht Club in Newport Beach, California. I was standing near the doorway when a gentleman approached. He wasn't very tall, had a rather prominent nose and a large lock of hair falling on his forehead. He asked if this was the Toastmasters meeting. I replied that it was. He stuck out his hand and introduced himself as Ralph Smedley. Not to be outdone, I held out my hand and said, "I'm Dave Gardner," because the name Ralph Smedley meant nothing to me. It was April 1951. I was 21 years old.

I learned later that evening that he was the founder of Toastmasters International and that he was going to favor us with a few remarks that meeting. The founder rose and started speaking. His gestures and eye contact were average, his vocal variety limited. People asked me why the founder of the world's largest non-profit public speaking organization was just an average speaker. My answer was that Dr. Smedley understood the most important part of public speaking – content. At that, he was a master. Dr. Smedley periodically visited our meetings over the years. I grew to know and love the man.

Three years later, our club chartered a club in Costa Mesa, a town next to Newport Beach. One evening the two clubs had a joint meeting. We were honored to have the founder as a guest. I was on the speaking program. I gave it my all. I saw Dr. Smedley lean across the table and say to the person across from him, "My, hasn't Dave improved?" I cherish this memory and I carry it in my heart to this day.

The editor of *The Toastmaster* magazine at the time, Wayland A. Dunham, came to me one evening and said that he had checked the records and, at the age of 24, I was the youngest Toastmasters club president in the world. My chest swelled with pride.

After 10 years in Toastmasters, I dropped out. Ten years later, I ran into an old friend from the former club. He invited me to a new club, as the former one had gone out of existence. I became re-interested in the organization. Moving along, I became a club president, area governor and even served as district governor in 1992. Being an area governor in the early days was a challenge. My area had seven clubs and covered one-fourth of Orange County, California. There were no divisions at that time in Toastmasters. The district consisted of four California counties: Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino and Orange County.

Toastmasters has made tremendous changes in my life. According to surveys of why people join Toastmasters, the number one reason is to gain self-confidence, which is what happened to me. When I first joined the organization, I was very shy, but thanks to Toastmasters I was able to become successfully self-employed for many years in the commercial printing business. In printing our district's newsletter, plus fulfilling other printing needs for the organization, I was able to help pay back what Toastmasters had done

for me by saving the district about \$25,000 on their printing costs. Thanks to Toastmasters training, I have done various things in the community, including, at the present, being a five-time president of the Costa Mesa Historical Society. I'm in my third year as chair of a city sub-committee.

Having received numerous comments on my leadership ability, I reply, "I owe it all to Toastmasters." One of the most rewarding experiences I have had

in Toastmasters is serving on the district demonstration team, starting new clubs for the last 15 years. It is very gratifying to meet a group of 20 strangers whose lives will be changed by starting a new club. I estimate that I have had the pleasure of directly and indirectly bringing more than 2,000 people into Toastmasters. I am indeed a "lifer."

I close this article with the following story: When I visit the graves of my parents at Pacific View Memorial Park in Corona del Mar, I see another special gravesite. Close by, Dr. Ralph C. Smedley is also laid to rest. I always leave flowers at his gravesite in remembrance. I step back and say silently to him, "So far, you have changed the lives of over 4 million people, and who knows how many more in the future. You have indeed earned your eternal rest." ■

**Dave Gardner, DTM**, is a member of Newport Beach Club 1300 in Newport Beach, California.



Dr. Ralph Smedley



# Persuasive Speaking

How to talk  
your audience  
into a whole  
new point  
of view.

By David Garfinkel

**M**any speakers become skilled at giving a talk to inform an audience, and of course they learn to entertain their listeners along the way. But when you are faced with the task of **persuading** a group to see things in a new light, or to do something you want them to do, then the job becomes a little tougher and you need additional skills.

In this article, I'm going to share three of the most powerful techniques for persuading your audience. Each technique can be used for any of the following three primary types of persuasion:

1. To get your audience to embrace a new point of view.
2. To motivate your audience to do something.
3. To reinforce the marketing message of your business.

## Mistakes Speakers Make

Often, in an effort to come across as honest as opposed to manipulative, speakers attempting to persuade an audience might say something like this:

"I'm not going to give you a sales pitch. I'm simply going to ask you to cut back on newspaper and Yellow Pages advertising by 85 percent, and start using the Internet instead. Now let me tell you about the program."

High marks for honesty! But very low marks for effectiveness. Let's consider an alternative approach for the very same point of persuasion. But first, allow me to review why the "bare honesty" approach is not only ineffective, but actually quite selfish and inconsiderate of your listeners.

## The Two Minds of Every Listener

As you know, we have essentially two minds: One is the reasoning, logical, rational mind – popularly known as

"the left brain." The second is the imaginative, emotional mind – known as "the right brain."

The point of importance for a persuasive speaker is that you must appeal to the imaginative, emotional mind *first* – because the decision process (especially when it's a decision to make a change) – relies primarily on emotions; logic is secondary.

The "honest" speaker disregards all that and just blurts out his or her idea. One problem with this approach is that it is very comfortable to the speaker, because he or she *has already come to the conclusion he or she wants to lead the audience to*. But it is jarring to anyone in the audience who doesn't already agree with the speaker. The second problem is that most listeners are far more receptive to a slow, gradual approach than an all-at-once proposition (see sidebar).

While your audience does want to hear the truth, they first need to be prepared to hear it. So what can you do to prepare them, without coming across like a high-pressure salesperson? That's what the rest of this article is about.

**1 Paint a picture of the future.** With this technique, you create a word-picture of a future situation and bring your audience there with you. Then your listeners will want to know how they can get there and are ready to hear your idea.





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Suppose you were a marketing executive at the headquarters of a national chain of piano stores, and you had some very exciting test results of a new program. You want to get approval from senior executives and staff members to expand the program company-wide.

Your presentation starts like this:

"Let's imagine for just a moment it's a year from now. Over the past year, we've had a 25 percent increase in all sales. Profits by store are up, ranging from 15 percent to 75 percent, depending on location.

"But the best news is that our marketing costs have gone *down* by 85 percent. All the increases in sales can be traced to using the Internet to get pre-educated, highly motivated customers to walk into the store."

Then you continue, "This is a proven system that we've already implemented and measured at our Raleigh store. That's right, in Raleigh marketing expenses are down by 85 percent and sales are up by 25 percent. I guess you could say that everybody in Raleigh is happy, except the people we're no longer advertising with!"

It's at this point that you go on to explain the factual details of the program.

Instead of facing a skeptical audience who's resisting your every word, suddenly you would be in the position of finding your listeners fighting to see who can take credit for your brilliant idea... and all the hard work you have done piloting this program! And that's an enviable position to be in.

- Using this technique, your first step is to decide what are the primary benefits to your audience of accepting your idea. Reduced marketing expenses will clearly appeal to financial executives. Increased profits will get a big smile from the CEO. More active use of the Internet will get a stamp of approval from the IT department. Notice how all of those benefits are woven into the scenario described above.
- Your second step is to write down the benefits.
- Third, include those benefits in your picture of the future. And finally, put that picture into your talk *before* you describe the details of your proposal.

**2 Use Hypnotic Language.** By this, I'm not talking about hypnotism, but the use of *hypnotic stems*... phrases skilled hypnotists use to unobtrusively plant suggestions in the minds of their clients.

Hypnotic stems (in *italics* in the following example) sound like ordinary speech. In fact, they are parts of ordinary speech. But each one has been found to be very effective in bypassing the logical, rational mind and communicating directly with the imaginative, emotional mind. You can use these phrases to do the same thing in a speech.

Let's say you've written a book on public speaking and it's a big hit – all the clubs in your district, and some others as well, are standing in line waiting to get you to speak about it. You begin your talk:

"*Have you ever* wanted to get better at something you really enjoy doing, and the only thing standing in your way is a lack of knowledge of what to do and how to do it? *Think of a time when* you suddenly found the answer you were looking for, and the difference it made in your life!

"Maybe you wanted to get better at public speaking. So you joined Toastmasters, and sure enough, look at how much more confident and skilled you are today.

"*Imagine what it would be like* if you could make even greater gains simply by learning a few special techniques and ideas that would take you to the next level as a presenter. *I'll bet that feels* pretty good, doesn't it?

"Today you're going to learn some of those techniques, because I have discovered them through research and experience, and it is my pleasure to share them with you..."

From there, you would share some of the ideas and techniques from your book and invite people to get more detail on those techniques – as well as additional ideas

## A Master Secret of Persuasion

**P**ersuasion and negotiation are cousins in the real world. Best-selling author Herb Cohn writes these timeless words of wisdom that persuaders can live by in *You Can Negotiate Anything* (Bantam, 1982):

*"Remember that change and new ideas are acceptable only when presented slowly in bite-size fragments. Keep that in mind when trying to alter someone's viewpoint, thinking, perceptions and expectations. For most people, it's easier and more comfortable to stay in the groove. The fact that the difference between a rut and a groove is just a matter of degree doesn't seem to bother them. Only through perseverance can you hope to change them and implement your goal."*

I call this The Theory of Small Steps. Keep it in mind as you progress on your path as a skilled persuader.



and techniques - by buying a copy of your book after the presentation.

Here, make a list of your audience's needs, and the benefits they will enjoy by owning your book - or whatever it is that you want to sell.

The next step is to put that list in a logical, chronological order that mirrors the audience's experience. First, there's a desire (wanting to get better at something), then there's a frustration blocking attainment of that desire (not having the knowledge of what to do and how to do it) and finally, there's the solution. (You found the answer; it made a difference; you could make even greater gains.)

The last step is to use hypnotic stems at the front of your sentences. Here are some you can use:

- *Have you ever...?*
- *Think of a time when...*
- *Imagine what it would be like if...*
- *I bet that feels...*

**3 Use A Metaphor.** One of my clients provides credit-card processing services to businesses. His company's marketing message is: "Unlike with other processors, you don't get locked-in contracts. We give you free, state-of-the-art equipment. And there are no hidden fees."

That's a powerful message, but starting like that in a speech would be far too blatant. However, if my client were speaking to a group of merchants, he could start like this:

"I used to travel in upstate New York. As you know, there's a New York Thruway, and from time to time I used this toll road. The convenience made up for the fees.

"When I started examining the business practices of my own industry, I realized that many of you, as merchants, are in a position I would never want to be in. What if I *had* to use the Thruway and pay the toll, by law, every month, even if I had other options? And further, suppose I had to pay extra tolls besides the ones that were listed on the signs?

"To make matters worse, what if I found that I would be given a huge fine by the state of New York if I decided to stop using the Thruway for any reason - even if I moved to another state?

"The scenario I described may sound preposterous to you, but unfortunately it describes exactly the situation many of you are currently in with your merchant account provider. It's outrageous, isn't it? I was so outraged that I founded a new company based on one promise: I would *never* do to merchants what almost everyone else has been doing to them for as long as anyone can remember."

Believe me, that opening to a speech would get the listeners' attention and put them in a very receptive frame



of mind to hear more about his company and what he has to offer.

Certainly he could start his talk with a more direct recitation of the facts, as he sees them: "You're being overcharged on your merchant account. You're being treated unfairly. I have a better way." But it would not be nearly as effective. Why? Because using the metaphor of the New York Thruway *engages the imagination*.

To create an effective persuasive metaphor, start by making a list of the key points of your marketing message (forced fees, hidden fees, huge fine charged by competitors). Then, create a story about a seemingly unrelated subject (driving on the New York Thruway). Finally, relate the points in your story to the key elements of your marketing message (no hidden fees, no locked-in contract).

### **Persuasion: "Let Them Have Your Way"**

I selected the three techniques in this article from dozens that are effective, because these three are among the most "user-friendly" - you can use them for almost any persuasion result.

A wise veteran of spoken-word wars once told me that the best persuasion is when you let others "have your way." That is, give people everything they need to own the idea you want to sell them, and then show them how to achieve that idea. Ultimately, your persuasion efforts will be most successful when people believe your suggestions are in their best interest. Best of luck in winning them over and reaching your goals! **T**

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# Dazzling Speech Openers

By Anne Miller

**Metaphors make great openers, because metaphors surprise, conjure images and appeal to emotions.**

Speaking without metaphors is like running a marathon barefoot. Yes, you can finish the race, but not without a certain amount of pain. Nowhere is the potential for speaking pain greater than in the opening of a talk, when you have only a few seconds to win or lose your audience's attention. Metaphors are the solution to that problem.

Here is an example of how one speaker used a metaphor in his opening remarks to deal painlessly with a very painful topic for his audience. After he acknowledged the group, he began: "Flying in for this meeting, I sat next to a woman with a very unusual ring on the middle finger of her left hand. When I commented on it, she said it was her wedding ring. I asked, 'Why do you have it on the wrong finger?' Replied the woman, 'I married the wrong guy.'"

After the laughter died down, the speaker then metaphorically linked the story to his point. "Given the disappointing results we have all been experiencing in the market lately, it is fair to ask, 'Are we married to the wrong guy – the wrong strategy? I believe so.'" Having eased his group into his topic and totally captured them with his off-beat opening, he then went on to present his arguments and alternative marketing strategy ideas.

## Why Do Metaphors Work?

Metaphors surprise your audience because by definition, a metaphor is something other than what is expected. It's a stand-in for the obvious. I use the term "metaphors" to include analogies and similes as well. The statements "John is a pig" (metaphor), "John eats like a pig" (simile), or "John is a pig; he has all the etiquette of a pig at a trough" (analogy) all engage much more than the statement, "John is messy." Metaphor, simile or analogy, they all conjure images and emotions and, as if by magic, draw us into a speaker's narrative.

## Fours Steps to a Winning Opening

Ask yourself:

- **What is your audience's conceptual blind spot?** In the example above, the blind spot was the group's expected resistance to being told by an outsider to change strategies.

**Note:** Other common blind-spots are fear, indifference, skepticism, hostility, confusion or various pre-conceived notions.

- **What do I know about this audience from which I can draw my metaphor?**

Our speaker knew this was a creative, sophisticated group of senior marketers, well-traveled, likely to be married with children, aware of news



events, and all a little skeptical of his reputation as a marketing rebel.

**Note:** There is always a point of common ground you can find with an audience, even when you have little advance information. The worlds of sports, current events, family, travel, business, entertainment, history, nature, childhood, school and celebrities, to name a few, are common to most people and rich in metaphoric possibilities.

■ **What metaphor would most effectively pierce their resistance?** The anecdote (which the speaker had heard elsewhere) was the perfect opener for this group. As frequent business travelers, the audience could instantly identify with a story about flying. The story was appropriate both in tone and content to a sophisticated audience. It was easy to understand and it made the point.

**Note:** You will likely reject several metaphors before you hit on just the right one for any group. Be sensitive to generational, cultural and value differences. Frank Sinatra references may go over the heads of Eminem fans. Analogies about the Chicago Bulls may fall flat or arouse animosity if used in Los Angeles or New York or anywhere outside the U.S.

■ **How will I link the metaphor to the issue at hand?** The speaker seamlessly made the link to his topic with the single line that began, "Given the disappointing results..."

**Note:** Make sure you can relate the story back to your topic: An unrelated joke may work for Jay Leno, but as openers for speeches, they usually backfire, making your audience more, not less, uncomfortable.

### K.I.S.S.

Some openings may be quite short – a question, a startling image, a funny reference. Stories or metaphors that build an image can take longer. But for the opening to work, the metaphor must not ramble; it must offer only enough detail to set up your linking statement.

Imagine you are promoting investment in public education to a group of executives whose children attend private school. They're not likely to identify with the problem of underfunded public schools. Competition, however, is something this group can relate to. Here's how one speaker

## **"A metaphor is something other than what is expected. It's a stand-in for the obvious."**

opened her plea, standing in front of a huge number "14" projected on the wall behind her:

"Good morning, everyone. Let me ask you a question. How would you feel if the U.S. were No. 14 in the world in Olympic hockey?" She pointed to the wall. "How would you feel if your favorite baseball team was No. 14 in its league? How would you feel if you were No. 14 on a standby list to get on a flight? Not too happy, I suspect."

"Yet 14 is where the U.S. ranks in the world in math among 13-year-olds. That is behind Slovenia, Korea, Hungary and France. If we want to stay competitive in the global market, we clearly cannot have our workforce finishing 14th in math. We can remedy this situation, but we're going to need your help."

### **No Topic Off-Limits for Metaphors**

Metaphors can make even highly technical material easy for the layman to grasp, provided you keep the metaphor itself simple. Imagine that your topic was the Automated Payment Transaction tax (the brainchild of Edgar L. Feige, a retired economist from the University of Wisconsin). Look at how this opening metaphor pulls people into a potentially deadly topic:

"Think of your economic life as a highway. It's decently paved. But thanks to the tax

system, there are toll booths all over, with rates so high you need someone along to help you find ways to pay them or plain get around them.

Now imagine that a sort of tax-system E-ZPASS comes along, enabling you to whiz through


the booths without digging in your pockets or consulting a guide. Suddenly, the highways are opened up and you're no longer wasting time or energy.

The Automated Tax System is the E-ZPASS solution to our complicated tax system..."

### **Become a Metaphorian**

The best talks dazzle with metaphors and reflect Aristotle's observation that to be master of metaphor is everything. Remember:

- Metaphors make great openers, because metaphors surprise, conjure images and appeal to emotions.
- Opening metaphors must be appropriate in tone and content for the audience and the setting.
- Effective openers include only enough detail to set up your point.
- Link your metaphoric opener to your message.

Have a marathon (speech) coming up? Be sure you've got your sneakers on (a strong opening metaphor), to set a racing record with your audience (to instantly win their interest and attention). 

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## Your Speech's Closing:

# How Far Will You Go?

By Craig Harrison, DTM

**Don't limp to the end of your speech. Seal the deal!**

In my 13 years as a Toastmaster, I must have heard over 2,000 speeches: Ice Breakers, contest winners and every other variety of speech from our Communication and Leadership and advanced speech manuals. They've covered myriad topics and encompassed a slew of styles. And yet most of them contain a common trait, and it isn't the presence of um's and ah's. It's that they didn't go far enough! They went plenty long, but most didn't go far enough. They closed with a whimper, not a bang!

When an attorney tries a case, it culminates in a powerful closing argument. When an opera ends, it usually does so with fanfare. Yet many speeches just quietly fade away. They limp to an end. They leave us wanting more. They often miss an opportunity to drive their points home emphatically. Why don't they "seal the deal"? Are speakers afraid? Unsure? Are

they uncomfortable coming on too strong? Or is it that they just don't realize how powerful they truly are?

## A Four-Part Equation

In any speech there are four components: the speaker, the audience, the speech and its result.

The speaker has a point of view, an opinion or a belief he or she endeavors to express. There's a purpose for the presentation.

The audience is usually open to hearing from the speaker. Audiences are willing to listen to the speaker's arguments, his or her reasoning and the expression of thought processes. Most audiences are both receptive and pliable.

The speech makes the speaker's case:

- The introduction by the Toastmaster establishes credibility.
- The speech title frames the topic to be discussed.
- The speaker's own introduction sets expectations or announces attentions.
- The speech's main body provides evidence or supporting arguments.
- Their speech's closing usually summarizes or ties together the topic and, ideally, capitalizes on the case that's been made.

**The Result:** Despite speakers investing so much time and preparation in their speeches, there's often a lack of fol-





low-through at their speeches' end. Speakers have generated momentum as they built their case within their speech, only to shy away from pressing their conclusion forcefully. And it's their loss. What, if anything, happens as a result of an audience having heard the speech? Are hearts swayed? Are people moved to action? Most times the answer, sadly, is no. Yet these results are true measures of a speech's success.

### A Sample Speech

Consider the Toastmaster who wants to give a persuasive speech on the importance of exercise. First the speaker researches the topic and then outlines the speech.

#### Outline

**Title:** Exercise Your Rights!

**Introduction:** Introduce topic and scope of speech: the importance of exercising as preventive medicine to increase life expectancy and improve quality of life.

#### Trends compromising our health:

- Technology is replacing the manual labor we used to gain from exercise.
- Our lifestyle is more sedentary.
- Advent of fast food's popularity has added more calories to our diet.

**Benefits of exercise:** As little as 30 minutes a day of exercise reaps the following benefits:

- Strengthens cardio-vascular system – staves off heart attacks.
- Strengthens immune system – helps ward off illness.
- Provides mental stimulation.
- Lowers our cholesterol levels.
- Relieves high blood pressure.
- Reduces stress.
- Aids in weight control.
- Improves our memory.

**Close:** "So get out there and exercise your rights."

A speech using this structure would likely be met with agreement by many, if not most, listeners. But it could be more persuasive, powerful and impactful if the speaker chose to capitalize on the case made with a more compelling conclusion.

### Where to Go From Here?

Audiences listen politely to speakers as they state their case. At speech's end, audiences must form an opinion about the speech topic and content, if they haven't already. Some might agree, others disagree. Others still may be undecided or feel neutral about the topic, due to content, construction or delivery. Yet they look to the speaker for cues about where to go and what to do next. They ask themselves: "Now what?" And unfortunately, speakers often don't lead them to an answer or action.

### Take Your Listeners One Step Beyond

Powerful speakers know they can take license with audiences at the end of their speeches. Since speakers are leaders, they can lead their audience to more than just applause. How would you take this speech on exercise further? How would you mobilize your audience to action with a more powerful closing?

Here are six ways to close this and other speeches with power.

At the end of your speech:

1. **Tell them what you will do.**  
*"When this speech is over, I am going to my local track for 40 minutes of walking around the track."*
2. **Issue a call to action.** Challenge your listeners to do something:  
*"I challenge you to schedule in two hours for exercise before our meeting next week."* (Hold up your daily calendar as a visual cue.)
3. **Ask your audience to take an oath.** Ask them to raise their right hand

and repeat after you:

*"I hereby promise to ..."*

4. **Lead them (you do it!):**

*"Join me in a short stretching interlude: Please stand and we'll do this exercise together."*

5. **Give them the tools to take the next step:**

*"Here's a list of local gyms and health clubs to choose from, as well as exercise classes at the local adult school."*

6. **Put it in writing!** Invite your audience to write down their next action step, goals or plans as a result of hearing your speech. Whether they turn it in to you or post it for themselves, you've built in some accountability for them.

*"Fill out this piece of paper with your action step. Write it on the top and bottom, date it, sign it and put a due date on it, and tear off the bottom and return to me. I will contact you on that date to confirm your accomplishment!"*

### It's Closing Time

The next time you listen to speeches in your Toastmasters club, see how far other speakers go in their closing. While not every speech is intended to be persuasive, inspirational or motivational, many are. For each of those, identify ways they can close with power, leading their audiences to action. And the next time you give a persuasive speech, be more than just a speaker, be a leader too. Whether you're speaking in a contest or in your home club, close with power and extend your sphere of influence accordingly. ■

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**The Seven  
Habits of**

# **Persuasive Speakers**

By John William Coleman



**“If a speaker  
doesn’t show the  
audience how they  
can make a difference,  
there may be little  
point in their  
delivering the  
speech.”**



**A**ristotle believed that one of the keys to human excellence is habituation: Force yourself to do something the right way long enough and it becomes second nature. Today, this is not a novel concept.

Business consultant and self-help guru Stephen R. Covey made a small fortune with his how-to book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. My high school basketball coach made our team fast-break kings by running monotonous half-hour lay-up drills. And Toastmasters is founded on the premise that there is nothing more powerful than real-world speaking experience, constructive criticism and practice.

In college, I learned the benefits of habituation on the Berry College Forensics Team. (Forensics is the term college speech programs use to refer to competitive intercollegiate speech.) Under the tutelage of Dr. Randy Richardson, I had the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to travel across the country and compete against the hottest young speakers in the United States. With no prior experience I went from utter novice to National Forensics Association (NFA) national champion. Along the way I learned a fundamental lesson from my coaches, competitors and friends: Speech is a complex activity founded on a few fundamental principles. Finding the right strategies and making them habits is the first step to rhetorical success.

What follows are the seven basic persuasive speech strategies that I accumulated over four years of competition. Three are structural, three are content-based, and one is an overarching concept designed to bind and reframe the previous six. They apply specifically to the art of persuasion. While none is sufficient for success, once combined and internalized, they can make you a more consistent and effective persuasive speaker.

### The Structure of Persuasion: Problem, Cause, Solution

There is no universal chronology to persuasive speech; however, there are certain structural elements that are almost always necessary – elements that prove even more essential when formulating a speech quickly or with little prior speaking experience. This structure is called the “problem, cause, solution” paradigm.

**1 Isolate the Problem(s).** If you are to persuade an audience, your first task is to demonstrate, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that a verifiable problem exists. As

George Rodman and Ronald B. Adler note in their seminal text *Understanding Human Communication*, “If your listeners don’t recognize the problem, they won’t find your arguments for a solution very important.”

You can establish an effective problem in a few basic steps: isolate it, limit its scope, underline its urgency and severity, and sell its audience significance.

First, isolate the problem and limit its scope. Set boundaries. For example, it would be hard to address the topic of worldwide domestic violence in a 10-15 minute speech. But limiting the scope of the problem to something like “violence against women in the state of Georgia” could make it both manageable and actionable.

Second, underline the problem’s urgency and severity. At any given moment there are millions of problems in the world. Why is yours important enough for the audience to act? Use examples and statistical evidence to show the recent escalation of the problem or, as with violence against women, its severity.

And finally, show why *your* problem is significant to *your* audience. As Rodman and Adler comment, “It’s not enough to prove that a problem exists. Your next challenge is to show your listeners that it affects them in some way.” How might violence against women affect your audience? Is it happening in their communities? Could it impact their sisters, friends or children? Who is your audience, and why should they care?

**2 Identify the Cause(s).** Next, identify the problem’s causes. People love to affix blame, and whether a cause is human, circumstantial or environmental, it must be clearly identified, logically connected to the problem, argued with sensitivity and delivered with passion.

First, limit your causes and logically connect them to the problem. When I delivered my 2002-2003 speech on post-9/11 immigrant detention policies in the U.S., the causes of abuse were numerous, ranging from a generally unfriendly cultural climate to a lack of clearly defined judicial rights. But amidst a sea of obvious and not-so-obvious reasons for the abuse I had to ascertain the primary drivers

**A U.S. national forensics champion shares fundamental strategies for influencing an audience.**



and, through logic and reliable evidence, link them to the problems I described. This rhetorical “connective tissue” is important. If the audience doesn’t buy the connection between problem and cause, it is less likely to act.

Second, argue the causes with sensitivity. The chances are high that all or part of your audience, through negligence or action, is at least a small part of the cause you describe. In my current profession, I must sometimes confront very able and intelligent people and inform them that their business problems are at least partially a result of their own actions. This is never an easy task, but it is easier when you find common ground. Most people share the same basic goals: to live comfortably, to help others, to love, to protect their families, to adhere to a certain moral code, and to succeed at their jobs. Find this common ground and communicate the ways in which you can collectively reach those goals.

Finally, keep the causes compelling. While it is easy to exude energy when describing the horrors of a problem or the actionable ways in which your audience can confront them, many speakers let the “causes” portion of a speech slip into a dry rhythm. Don’t let that happen. Personalize the causes. Don’t let them lag in enthusiasm or style.

**3 Formulate Workable Solutions.** Once you have clearly presented the problem and persuaded the audience of its causes, you must formulate solutions that are actionable, personal and immediate.

First, make your solutions actionable. There are a lot of problems – hurricanes, volcanoes, halitosis – but not all of them can be solved. Select topics that can be addressed by your audience, and then get creative. Find solutions to your problem that will work and allow your audience to act with a reasonable chance of success.

Second, make solutions personal. Anyone can write to her local political representative, and no one does. Anyone can sign a petition, but admonishing an audience member to do so rarely moves her to more substantive action. For your solutions to work, audience members must feel as if they are helping “hands on” and that their actions will have a direct and lasting effect. As Carson Newman college professor Chip Hall says, “If a speaker doesn’t show the audience how they can make a difference, there may be little point in their hearing the speech.”

Third, give your solutions immediacy. If your audience needs to mail in money, bring the stamped and addressed envelopes with you. If they need to read further information, distribute pamphlets. Solutions are best served hot – get the audience to act as soon as possible.

### The Content of Persuasion: Logos, Pathos and Ethos

Aristotle’s *On Rhetoric* has been the essential guide for public speakers since the middle of the fourth century B.C., and with regards to persuasion, it focuses on three

key concepts: *logos*, *pathos* and *ethos*. Use these concepts well, and you can flesh out your structure and win over hearts and minds

**4 Speak with Logic (logos).** Primary to Aristotle’s framework is logic (*logos*). “Persuasion occurs through the arguments when we show the truth or apparent truth from whatever is persuasive in each case,” wrote the philosopher. And his appeal to *logos* can be achieved in at least two ways: clear, linear reasoning and fact-based thinking.

First, logical argumentation must be a product of clear, fair reasoning. While its structure can take many forms, it is often easiest and most effective to lay out a number of independent pieces of the problem and then link them to their respective causes and solutions. Think of this as a series of five to six parallel chains holding your speech together. If one of the chains breaks or is unpersuasive to a given listener, the other four may hold and thus inspire that listener to action. In building the chains, however, each must link through the entire speech – problem to cause, cause to solution and solution back to problem. While they run in parallel, they must all support the same basic structure.

Second, persuasion should rely on fact-based thinking. Mix individual stories with statistics and incorporate hard, verifiable facts. One of the best ways to ensure that your thinking and your speech are “fact-based” is to cite credible sources for your assertions, particularly those assertions that may be unfamiliar to the listener. Utilizing sources effectively can buffer your fact-base and cement your credibility. Do your research, and the effort will shine through.

**5 Speak to the Heart (pathos).** Complement this logic with an appeal to the emotions, Aristotle’s *pathos*. Its fair and effective incorporation is often the difference between a compelling speech and a forgettable one. As Aristotle noted, “[There is persuasion] through the hearers when they are led to feel emotion [*pathos*] by the speech.” And it is the emotional appeal in persuasion that prepares listeners to accept your message and compels them to act.

Structurally, *pathos* and *logos* work in tandem. It is often advisable to start a speech with a funny or heart-warming story or emotional appeal and follow with logic and fact; the same structure is useful within the speech. Long stretches of emotional material drain and desensitize listeners. Likewise, endless chains of logic may bore them or exhaust their mental capacities; intersplicing the two creates balance, touching listeners’ hearts and engaging their minds.

In coordinating these appeals, however, conscientious speakers must refrain from manipulation or attempts to obscure rather than complement logic. As professor Chip Hall says, “While it’s morally repugnant to manipulate the emotions of your audience, making them feel, in a responsible way, can open their eyes to the plight of those affected by your speech topic.” Never blind your listeners with emotion – use *pathos* to open their eyes.



Finally, remember that emotion works both ways – just as you can inspire empathy for a problem or victim, you can also evoke antipathy toward the cause or root of that problem. There is room for both when the rhetoric is handled carefully and responsibly. If someone or something deserves censure, there is nothing wrong with pointing that out, but handle accusatory rhetoric with caution – the last thing you want is to arouse negativity where none is necessary or useful.

**6 Speak from Authority (ethos).** Finally, the capstone of Aristotle's rhetorical triad is the appeal of credibility (or from authority), *ethos*. For the most part, you can create this appeal in two ways: use external sources and your own history and character.

First, you can generate authority quickly and effectively through the use of credible external sources – the same sources used to build a fact-base and satisfy the appeal to logic. Cite organizations or individuals that carry intellectual weight, and rely on the statistics and stories of those with a history of neutrality and accuracy.

Second, generate authority through your own experience and character. "Since rhetoric is concerned with making a judgment," wrote Aristotle, "it is necessary not only to look to the argument, that it may be demonstrative and persuasive but also [for the speaker] to construct a view of himself as a certain kind of person and to prepare the judge." If you are an expert, let your reputation precede you. If you are a generally honest and fair person, your reliability may be the only credibility you need. Work hard to build a solid reputation, and it will enhance your performance at the podium.

Finally, you have to care about your topic if you want your audience to do so. In the words of two-time NFA persuasion finalist Alex Brown, "Speaking with passion is most important. You may have a well researched, intelligently crafted script, but the audience must see that your words come from your heart or true persuasion is all but impossible." When you believe, others will follow.

## The Art of Persuasion: Identification

Incorporating the above strategies into a persuasive speech can help you cover the basics, but even with all the right structure and content it is easy to lose an audience's support or attention. That's why it is important to view persuasion not only as "persuasion" (talking to your audience) but as identification (talking with them or as one of them). This is where persuasive speech transitions from exercise to art.

**7 Overcome Division:** In 1950, theorist Kenneth Burke formalized his conception of "identification" in the book, *A Rhetoric of Motives*. He noted that in order to

persuade an audience, you have to overcome the natural human divisions that separate them and find common ground. Writing *A Rhetoric of Motives* he commented:

*As for the relation between 'identification' and 'persuasion': We might well keep it in mind that a speaker persuades an audience by use of stylistic identifications. His act of persuasion may be for the purpose of causing the audience to identify itself with the speaker's interests, and the speaker draws on identification of interests to establish rapport between himself and his audience.*

There is a lot of subtlety here, but at base, the message is clear. There can be no persuasion without groups. You must build a community with your audience – conquering divisions – before you can persuade them. This can be done through the formulation of sensitive causes, the effective use of pathos, empathetic non-verbals or carefully crafted credibility, but it will flow naturally when you learn to focus on the community in the room. To quote nationally acclaimed speech professor and Burke scholar Dr. Randy Richardson, "The concept of identification directs the critical thinking process of the speaker from the beginning of the research process through the completion of the public speech act. Everything from a speaker's language choices to her wardrobe preferences possesses the potential to enhance or destroy audience identification." By keeping "identification" as the end-goal of your speech, you are almost certain to find more empathy on both the giving and receiving ends.

## Conclusion

For all its complications there is a structure to persuasion; there are specific ways to enhance that structure with logic, emotion, and credibility; and there is a mode of thought that can help you put the audience first and reframe the very way in which you view persuasion and influence.

When I entered college I knew next to nothing about effective persuasive speech; but by habituating myself to the fundamental strategies of persuasion, I was able to guide my thoughts, train my mind, and structure my communications in a way that allowed the humanity of my topics to shine through. The implementation of these concepts may not make you a master persuasive speaker, but it is certain to give you a head start. And by training yourself in the basics, you can add confidence and effectiveness to your speech. Don't be overwhelmed. Get the basics right, practice ceaselessly, and everything else will follow. ■

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# Overcoming Stuttering

By Julie Bawden Davis

**How Bob Brousseau gained fluency and confidence in Toastmasters.**

**Editor's Note:** Do you (or any Toastmaster you know) have an inspiring story of how the Toastmasters program has helped you overcome challenges in your life? Please contact this magazine at [letters@toastmasters.org](mailto:letters@toastmasters.org) or write to us at: Toastmasters International, Attn: Publications Dept., P.O. Box 9052 Mission Viejo, CA 92688

If anyone had told Bob Brousseau 10 years ago that he would one day receive his DTM, the Canadian native would have laughed. Before joining Toastmasters, Brousseau spoke only when absolutely necessary. As a result of a bicycle accident at age eight, he stutters. Years of taunting and teasing from other children scarred him, and he remained silent most of his life until he found Toastmasters.

"Before joining Toastmasters I was painfully shy and unable to speak very much," says Brousseau, who joined the Miramichi club in New Brunswick in November, 1997, and transferred to the Ottawa Hospital club in 1999. "If I went to a party, I'd sit in the corner and not talk. Worse still, I couldn't speak up at work, and it affected my career. I was in a self-created shell."

That shell started to crack as soon as Brousseau joined Toastmasters. While working in sales following a 22-year career with the Canadian Armed Forces, Brousseau heard a radio announcement for Toastmasters.

"I had been missing sales contracts, and I knew I needed help," he says. "I thought that things like impromptu speaking would help in



**Bob Brousseau**

reaping the benefits. "The more speeches I signed up for, the better I became," says Brousseau, who earned his DTM in August 2004 and has served as an area governor twice. He is presently serving as governor of Area 6 in District 61. "I've achieved goals that I never dreamed possible," he says. "Now I can speak to anyone, anywhere, about any subject."

David Farris, ATM Silver and past president of the Ottawa Hospital club where he met Brousseau, says he's seen a major transformation in his friend. "In terms of speech and presentation, Bob is a completely different person," he says. "When he first joined the club, Bob stuttered and his gestures and body language needed improvement. Now his speech is generally smooth and he exudes self-assurance. While speaking, he easily moves around the room and pulls in the audience."

As Brousseau sees it, one of the best parts of his Toastmasters mem-



bership is how it has improved his self-esteem. "Before Toastmasters I had very little self-confidence, but once I joined and experienced how accepting of differences and encouraging members are, I developed a new faith in myself."

Jim McClure is media relations director for the National Stuttering Association in the U.S. ([www.westutter.org](http://www.westutter.org)), a

volunteer group that has support groups for stutterers throughout the U.S. "Many of our members are also in Toastmasters and have found that the organization is a great supplement to being in an active stuttering support group," McClure says. "Toastmasters provides a safe environment for people who stutter where they can speak and be supported, which is critical to increasing fluency. Once someone takes advantage of Toastmasters, their stuttering often diminishes in severity."

A National Stuttering Association survey found that fluency is increased when those who stutter seek out therapy that changes their attitudes toward speaking and stuttering and focuses on fluency-shaping skills, rather than just the latter.

"Many of the difficulties experienced by people who stutter are a result of limitations we impose on ourselves," says McClure, who stutters.

"As a society we have attached such awful guilt and shame to stuttering, when it shouldn't be that big of a deal. People are nearsighted and hard of hearing, and no one would think of making fun of a child in a wheelchair these days, but kids still

**"I would recommend Toastmasters to anyone who has a speech impediment."**

tease those children who stutter. Adults who stutter are often carrying baggage from childhood, and bringing it out in the open is difficult."

Brousseau's childhood experience with stuttering was especially painful. "During class I hid behind my textbooks praying that I would not be asked a question or to read aloud," he says. "When I did try to speak, it took forever to say certain words and my lips would swell up from biting them and bleed. I was also made to repeat certain grades because I would not read in class."

Years later Brousseau's silence and speaking difficulty also affected his career and personal relationships. He was not able to join the Royal Canadian Mounted Police force because of the hesitancy in his speech. And though he did serve as a member of the Canadian Armed Forces, his superiors commented on his lack of communication skills. When he met

his future wife, Pat, in the early 1990s, she found it difficult to get to know him.

It wasn't until Brousseau was in his mid-forties in 1997 and visited the safe environment of Toastmasters that he was finally able to speak

freely. He continues to improve since that first club visit.

"As a Toastmaster for 14 years, I've seen a lot of members come through," says Farris. "Bob is definitely exceptional. He's achieved his speech goals in good timing and his speeches always inspire. One year our club membership was low and he helped to get it back up."

Brousseau has no doubt that the confidence he's garnered through Toastmasters has greatly improved his speech and outlook on life.

"I would recommend Toastmasters to anyone who has a speech impediment," he says. "Have the courage to make a commitment to improve your speech, and you will be successful." **T**

**Julie Bawden Davis** is a freelance writer and longtime contributor to this magazine. She lives in Southern California.

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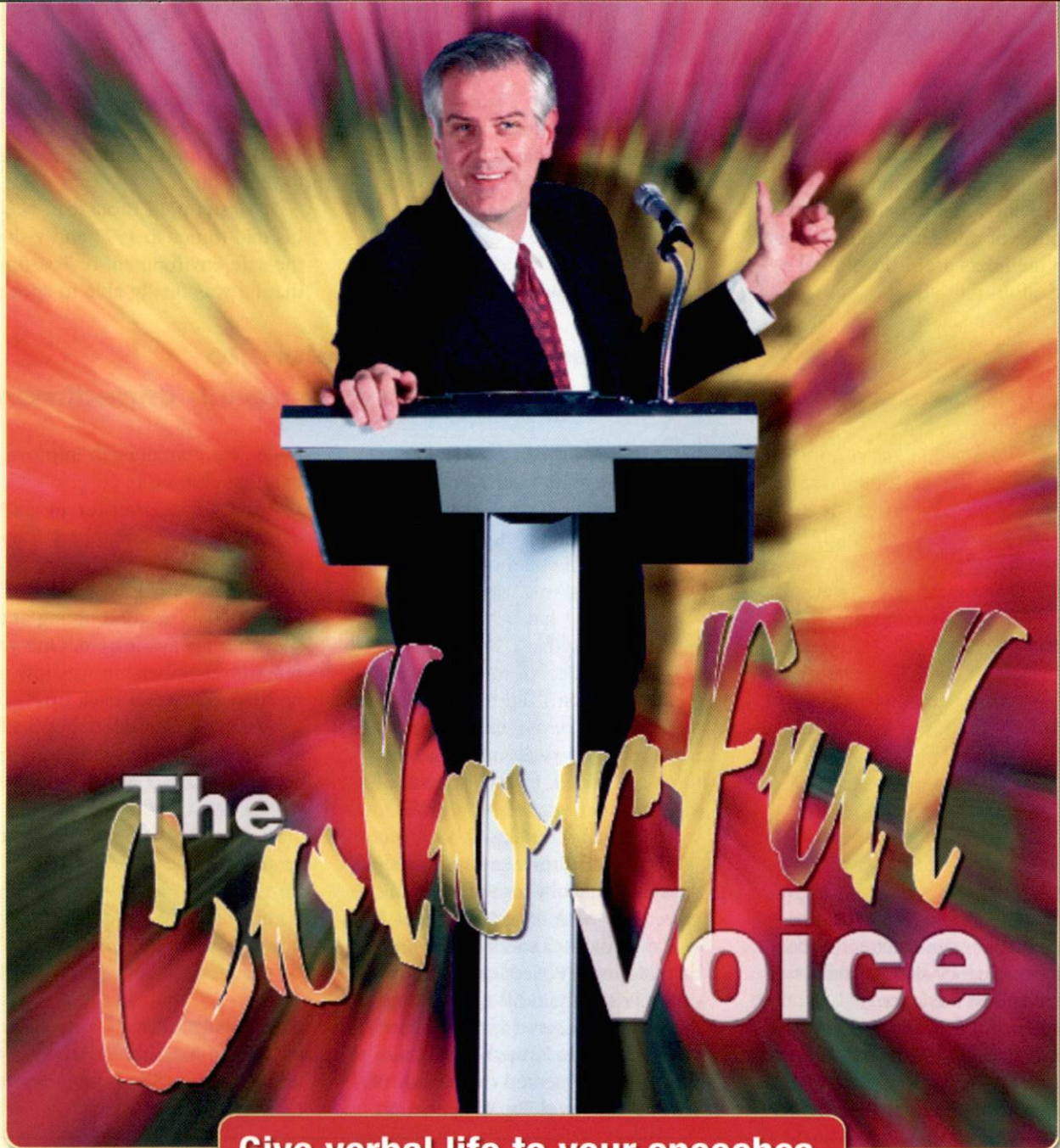
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**Give verbal life to your speeches.**

By Paula Syptak Price, ATM

*I love to listen to my club's long-time member, Don, when he speaks. The rich timbre of his voice feels like a warm blanket around me. I'd love to have such a deep, rich voice too.*

Wait a minute. For me, a 5-foot tall, 110-pound woman, such a deep, rich voice would be bizarre. "Remember to be true to your essential uniqueness," Max Dixon, professional speaker and speaking coach, reminds me. To be unique, I only need to speak with an interesting voice. An interesting voice, intertwined with a dynamic message, leaves an audience enthralled.

What makes a voice interesting? Variety.

#### **Adding the Right Touch**

Acting teacher and speech coach Janice Dean says vocal variety doesn't start in the throat. "The voice is linked to the body. To activate the voice, use the body."

Steve Webb, ATM, recently illustrated how the body activates the voice. In his talk on chocolate, he explained why people add chili peppers to a chocolate drink. At one point, he squinted his eyes, pulled his mouth into



a smile, and raised the tone of his voice. As he bobbed his head forward, he threw out the words "CHEE-LEE peppers!" He electrified the room, stimulating their interest in this "hot" chocolate.

Now you try it: Say "no" without expression or movement. Now scrunch your eyes half closed, jerk your head, and with exasperation say "NO!" Did the sound of your No change? (It should!)

If you get the chance, sit at the feet of professional storytellers. Notice their voice inflections and how much the inflections affect the story. You might even eavesdrop on people whose voices attract your attention. Listen to learn what makes their voices so appealing.

### A Variety of Techniques

"The human voice is the most amazing instrument ever created," says sound effects specialist Fred Newman. Once the sound designer for movies such as *Gremlins I & II* and *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*, Newman is now heard weekly on the U.S. public radio program *A Prairie Home Companion* and daily on the PBS Television reading series *Between the Lions*. "No synthesizer, no computer can come close to the subtlety and range of the human voice. The expressiveness of anyone's voice is astounding."

Where do you start?

"Be loose and playful," suggests Newman.

Here is a partial list of techniques to play with when preparing your next speech:

- **Vary the pace:** Try speaking faster or slower.
- **Speak:** Speak louder, softer or with a whisper (projecting to the back of the room).
- **Add enthusiasm!**
- **Show emotions,** such as exasperation or fatigue.
- **Be soulful.**
- **Draw ... ouutt ... your ... worrrrrdddsss!**
- **Speak with a regional accent.**
- **Lower the pitch, without dropping your chin.**
- **Speak with a falsetto voice.**

"Take into consideration the subject matter," advises Morgan McArthur, Toastmasters' 1994 International Speech Contest winner, a self-described "hired tongue" and speech coach. "The pace of the piece should be congruent with the message – slow for cautious and considerate, fast for high energy or urgency, loud or soft to punctuate the points. And the most powerful technique of all can be ... a strategic ... and effective ... pause."

### Vocal Variety that Annoys

Too much vocal variety, like too much gesturing, gets in the way of the speech – yet just enough gives it life! Not all variations are appreciated, of course. McArthur says the unappreciated ones fall into two categories: intentional and unintentional. The intentional variety may be underdone or overdone.

- McArthur says "underdone" occurs when "someone leaves a monotone delivery to give an occasional spike of volume or pausation – enough to be considered different but not enough to be considered 'interesting.' The audience soon gets bored and goes back on mental vacation."
- "Overdone" is easy to understand.

"I used to be a shouter in my early days as a Toastmaster," says McArthur. "I had too much volume and energy coming at the audience. By the time I finished, we were both exhausted. And my voice was trashed.

"Quite frankly, I can't watch my winning Toastmasters [championship] speech today," he reflects. "My style has evolved into a natural 'enhanced conversation' rather than the oratory that won the contest for me in 1994."

Remember, variety is supposed to be only an enhancement. Unintentional variety has to do with distracting habits or speech patterns, such as:

- Diction challenges, including lisping, strong accents or stuttering.
- Not enunciating clearly the beginning and ending sounds of words.
- Starting out loud enough and fading to too soft.
- Making a clicking noise with the tongue when you begin to speak.
- The uhs and ums.
- Excessive nasality.
- Dry mouth sounds.
- Constant coughing, or clearing the throat.

### Cures?

Speech coach Janice Dean says the cure for numbers seven and eight above is to hydrate your body. This means drinking 6-8 glasses of plain water daily, two to three days before your speech. Also during this time, avoid foods that produce mucus. Dairy products do that for many people; citrus juice does it for others. Eating an apple in the morning before you speak will clear your throat for morning talks.

Cures for items number one through six? McArthur favors frank evaluation, backed by motivation to improve, as a valuable combination. Concerning his own loudness, he remembers no one was willing to tell him to tone down his voice and just vary his volume.

"Go one step beyond making the speaker aware of the vocal variety challenge by offering suggestions of how he/she might fix it," he suggests. "The speaker then has to be motivated to do some hard work on changing those habits and asking for feedback on their progress."

Dean also suggests using vocal variety while reading out loud, 10 minutes a day. Tape the reading so you can evaluate yourself.



## Do I Have To?

...use vocal variety? Read the quotes below and then decide.

- The way Max Dixon sees it, one of the most important techniques for establishing confidence is one of the most ignored – focus on improving the voice. “The majority of speakers are insufficiently aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their voices,” he says. “Speak too slowly and you won’t inspire confidence. Speak too fast and you are less likely to land the substance of your message. Balance and variety are goals to work on with a good voice coach who is used to working with speakers or actors.”
- “While some cultures don’t appreciate excessive body movements, vocal variety still makes the speech more appealing, even lyrical,” says globe-trotting DTM Larry Welch, who has visited Toastmasters clubs in nine countries.
- “For today’s audience, attention spans are becoming shorter,” says McArthur. “Unless our messages are stimulating, our audiences will go elsewhere in their mind and we won’t reach them. Vocal variety is one element that makes a speech interesting.”
- “Your voice wrinkles like your face,” says Newman. “Move your voice up and down in your range; sing with the radio. Anything that exercises your voice with high and low, soft and loud – all that is good and makes your voice younger.”

Newman says that singing is the single best exercise for the voice. “When you sing, you’re constantly adjusting to the pitch – that’s why it’s such a good exercise. It’s like yoga for the voice.

“Never, ever scream,” he adds. “It ages the voice.”

## Just for Fun

Try adding sound effects. “All the ridiculous sounds I do are to show the possibilities of your own voice,” says Newman.

Sounds amplify a story or a point. “When words give out, sounds describe things much better,” insists Newman. “You get a better image. There are things you can describe with just little sounds, that helps the image.” Such as saying “v-r-r-p” for “fast.”

“Just that little sound kicks up the energy and life in a simple sentence,” he says.

Yet before you get sound effects out, you have to take them in. “I keep waving this flag,” says Newman. “Listen. I’m always listening for sound effects.”

Unscientifically, I’ve observed an innate ability toward vocalization in boys at young ages. The lads are more prone than girls to make noises (like a full-bodied belch) as a source of entertainment, self-expression and male-bonding.

No innate ability? Or are you female? Try a simple GRRR, or ahhhh!, a whistle or woo woo! Clicking the tongue is a sound effect too.

For those wanting to learn more sounds, secure a copy of Fred Newman’s new book and CD, *MouthSounds*. In it, Newman explains how to do more than 200 vocal effects, from water drips to a New Years’ champagne pop. Or explore Newman’s website at [www.mouthsound.info](http://www.mouthsound.info).

Newman also values sounds from his listeners.

“What people really love is to know that the speaker is linked to the audience,” he says. “So anything that personalizes, like responding to a cough in the audience – they know you are there with them – you went through it together. Find the opportunity to be loose with the audience and relate to them directly.”

Never underestimate the value of the voice, yours or theirs. Neither you nor I have to sound like my club member Don to make our speeches more vocally pleasing. **T**

**Paula Syptak Price, ATM**, is a member of San Antonio’s Talk of the Tower TM club, 4601-55, in San Antonio, Texas. Contact her at [paulaisright@sbcglobal.net](mailto:paulaisright@sbcglobal.net).

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# Put a Breath of Life Into Your Voice

Have you updated your voice lately?

By Kelly L. Stone

To become a persuasive and effective communicator, proper training of the voice is a crucial but often overlooked component of image creation and presentation. "Everybody gives you advice on how to be successful," says Margie Stogsdill, President of Speaking Well, a communications company in Atlanta, Georgia. "You need to get a new suit, get a new haircut, and update your resumé. But does anyone tell you to update your voice?"

Updating and improving your voice requires a general knowledge of how the voice works and a little practice to eliminate annoying speech patterns and replace them with pleasant ones. The primary tool for using your voice effectively is learning to

breathe properly. The breathing required to sustain life is different from the breathing required to speak and articulate well. "Breathing to speak requires that you not only take in air, but you must control the exhalation as well," says Stogsdill.

In addition to proper breathing, other skills necessary to update your voice include practicing use of inflection and pitch and eliminating poor speech habits.

The amount of air you inhale and how effectively you exhale that air is what creates either a pleasant voice or a nasal, grating, strident one. Learning to control your exhalation is one of the most important skills you can develop to maximize your voice's potential. Conceptualize your lips,

tongue, mouth and vocal chords as articulators. They form the sound, but adequate exhalation creates it. This is an important distinction to understand. Proper breathing enables your articulators to create a rich and pleasant speaking voice.

## Proper Breathing

- **Control the inhalation.** Without a proper amount of air on the intake, you are at risk to run out of air before finishing your sentence, creating what is known as vocal fry. It's especially important to be aware of your breathing when you're nervous or stressed, since during those times muscles tense and breathing becomes shallow. With shallow breathing, the lungs do not take in enough air to



allow you to reach the end of your sentence, which can lead to raspiness, lack of projection and volume, and the inability to be clearly heard.

**The Solution:** Be aware of your posture. Stand or sit up straight. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth using your diaphragm, not your shoulders. Inhale between phrases.

■ **Control the exhalation.** Several common mistakes include releasing all the air in a single breath before starting to speak, releasing too much air at the beginning of a word, or running out of air mid-sentence. Effective speakers control their exhalation so that they still have breath at the end of their sentences. The breath and the voice should work in tandem, says Stogsdill, with the air flowing out in one smooth stream along with your words. Take care that you do not push or force the air out – doing so will create a punching quality to your voice.

**The Solution:** Increase your lung capacity. Practice saying the alphabet on a single exhalation and stop when you feel yourself running out of air. Strive to say the entire alphabet on a single exhalation with a small amount of air left at the end. A good ratio of inhalation to exhalation is one to five. In other words, for every one-second inhalation there is a five-second exhalation on which you speak.

■ **Proper Use of the Tongue.** Without enough air on the intake, the tongue has a tendency to bunch up at the back of the throat. This blocks the air from coming through your mouth and instead forces it to pass through your nose, which can lead to nasality. Only three sounds come through the nose: *m*, *n* and *ng*. Place your fingers on the side of your nose and say words without an *m*, *n* or *ng*. If you can feel

your nose vibrate, you aren't taking in enough air before you speak.

**The Solution:** Practice proper inhalation before speaking words without an *m*, *n* or *ng* until you no longer feel the vibration. Tape record yourself so that you can hear the before and after difference.

### Inflection and Pitch

After you have established proper breathing habits, the next step is to practice using your voice much like you would a musical instrument.

■ **Use of Inflection:** Inflection is where you place emphasis within the word itself. Different inflections are associated with different emotions and are critical to conveying the proper tone of your speech. A rising inflection – starting in a lower pitch and ending on a higher one – conveys suspense, uncertainty, surprise and hesitancy. A downward inflection – going from high pitch to low pitch within a word – indicates certainty, authority and confidence. A double inflection – going from high to low and back to high or vice versa, conveys sarcasm and innuendo.

**Practice exercise:** Tape record yourself using rising, falling and double inflections – use the same words but strive to convey different emotions using various inflections.

■ **Use of Pitch:** Related to inflection, pitch is the high versus low range of tones in the voice. Lack of vocal range can cause us to sound monotonous and boring.

**Practice exercise:** Read children's books out loud and use different voices for different characters to practice changing vocal patterns.

### Eliminating Poor Speech Habits

After becoming adept at controlling your inhalation/exhalation and use of inflection and pitch for emphasis and

variety, the last step in updating your voice is to eliminate poor speech habits, such as saying *um*, *ya know*, *like* and other words or phrases. "This is the most common problem I see," says Stogsdill. Using filler words and phrases detracts from a speaker's ability to come across as clear, confident and persuasive.

**The Solution:** Pause and breathe. Martha Lanier, a professional speaker and CEO of Ignite Your Potential, Inc., says that many people are afraid to pause because they think it makes them look like they don't know what's coming next. In reality, says Lanier, "a pause is great because it gives people a chance to digest what you're saying."

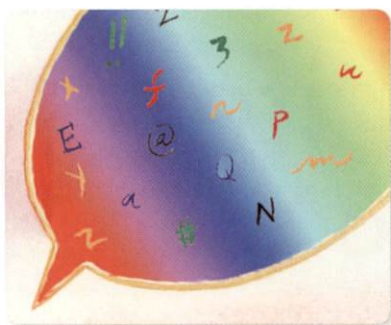
### Vocal Warm-ups

Before speaking, it's a good idea to get your mouth and voice warmed up. You wouldn't think of jogging without stretching first, and it's the same idea with your voice. Try these exercises (in private) to get your voice ready to speak:

- Open your mouth as wide as you can and then purse your lips like a fish. Repeat rapidly several times.
- Drop your jaw and slide it back and forth rapidly.
- Practice the "yawn/sigh." Open your mouth as if you were yawning and sigh. Let a long *ah* flow from the back of your throat. As you slowly exhale, control the amount of air you expel. Repeat several times.
- Drink plenty of water to clear your throat of phlegm.

Learning to become an effective and persuasive communicator is more than just what you say. It's how you say it. How you say it begins with how you breathe. By practicing these skills for updating and transforming your voice, you can be confident it will become one of your most powerful tools. **T**

**Kelly L. Stone** is a writer and licensed counselor in Georgia. Contact her at [www.kellylstone.com](http://www.kellylstone.com)





# How the New Leadership Manual Fits Your Club

Toastmasters International is making some exciting changes to its educational program (see "TI Introduces New Leadership Manual and Award," November 2005). Among other improvements, a new manual on leadership will be introduced. The 10-project *Competent Leadership* manual (Catalog # 265) will help members develop leadership skills while serving in various club meeting roles. Beginning in January 2006, everyone joining your club will receive the manual in the New Member Kit. Current members may purchase the manual for \$6 (U.S.) plus any applicable taxes and shipping.

The new manual strengthens the leadership training available in Toastmasters, giving members the opportunity to learn and practice leadership skills in a structured program, in the same way they learn speaking skills in the *Communication and Leadership Program* manual. The *Competent Leadership* manual also adds a new component to your club and its meetings. Now your club will have members working in both the leadership and speech manuals. The following tips will help your club to integrate the leadership manual into its meetings and culture:

▪ **Purchase a manual for display during meetings.** Devote time during several meetings to talk about the manual and encourage members to complete it. Make sure the vice president education is familiar with it, too, so he or she can talk about it with new members.

▪ **Discuss evaluations.** Members working in the communication rack receive a verbal evaluation during the meeting for each speech project they present. Members completing projects in the leadership manual serve as timer, ah counter, evaluator and in

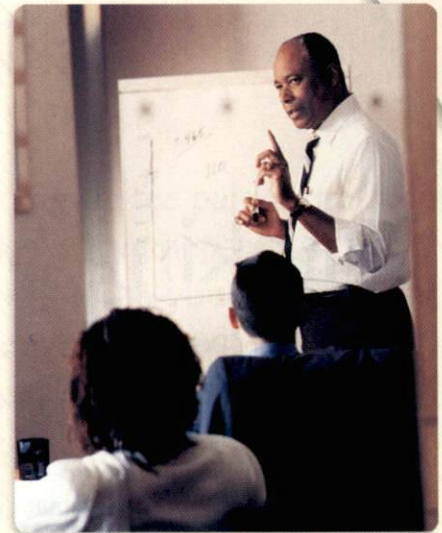
other meeting roles, and they may receive a written and verbal evaluation for each role. If many club members are working in the leadership manual, providing so many verbal evaluations during a club meeting will require much more time. If your club meets for only an hour or so, adding verbal evaluations for those serving in meeting roles may be difficult. Your club should discuss the matter now and make a decision. Possible options are to:

- a) provide verbal evaluations for leadership projects during meetings,
- b) provide verbal evaluations privately outside of the club meeting,
- c) provide only written evaluations for leadership projects
- d) provide verbal evaluations during meetings for both speech and leadership projects, but allow less time for each evaluation.

Whatever the club decides, you should make it known to those joining your club.

▪ **Educate mentors.** Your club should assign every new member a mentor. A mentor is an experienced member who helps the new member prepare the first few speech assignments. A mentor's role includes helping new members with the first few projects in the *Competent Leadership* manual. Make sure mentors are familiar with the manual and willing to assist members with its various projects.

▪ **Track progress.** World Headquarters will produce charts and forms that clubs and members can use to monitor progress in the manual. When members complete all 10 projects in the manual, they may apply for the *Competent Leader* award. They'll



receive a certificate and World Headquarters will send a letter to their employer about their accomplishment. Beginning in July 2006, this award will be incorporated into the 2006-07 Distinguished Club Program, so your club will receive credit toward goals number five and six when members achieve the award.

▪ **Include the manual in your "sales pitch."** When guests visit your club, most likely you emphasize how Toastmasters can help them improve their presentation skills. You may even show them the *Communication and Leadership Program* manual and discuss some of the projects in it. But many people are interested in improving their leadership skills as well. Explain that communication and leadership go hand in hand and promote the leadership training offered through Toastmasters. Show new members the *Competent Leadership* manual and explain how it will help them learn such valuable leadership skills as listening, critical thinking, planning, implementing and team building. You also can promote the manual in your community or company, emphasizing the leadership training available from your club.

The new *Competent Leadership* manual is a great opportunity for your club's members and a new marketing tool for your club. Make the most of it! **T**



# Thinking Strategically

The Board of Directors met in August during the International Convention in Toronto, Canada. The Board made the following decisions to ensure the continued progress and growth of the organization:

## BOARD ACTION

- Reviewed a proposal for a qualitative research project to explore opportunities for the youth market and recommended approval, with funding coming from the Smedley Memorial Fund.
- Received training on use of a Web-based knowledge network to facilitate Executive Committee discussion and exchange between formal meetings. The system will be piloted beginning in September 2005.
- Reviewed policy prohibiting districts from posting directory information on their Web sites and recommended no change to the policy. Because district officers are now able to receive membership information from World Headquarters at no cost, the Board encouraged districts to access those resources.
- Reviewed TI policy against video-conferencing or teleconferencing and recommended no change to policy. However, the Board recommended that a pilot study be conducted to evaluate the feasibility of video conferencing in the future. The pilot will be confined to district executive meetings, division and area council meetings.
- Approved changes to the titles of the CTM, ATM Bronze, ATM Silver, and ATM Gold awards, and announced



The 2005-2006 Board of Directors met in August.

changes to the leadership track, including the introduction of a new leadership award and renaming the current Competent Leader and Advanced Leader awards. The new system will go into effect on July 1, 2006. A grace period will be in effect from July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2008, during which members will have the option of earning their education awards under either the previous or the new system. The changes are part of the Board of Directors' strategic vision to make Toastmasters International as well known for leadership as for communication, and to make TI's educational designations clearer and more meaningful. (For more information, see article on page 27 in this issue.)

- Approved boundary changes between Districts 38 and 18 and Districts 62 and 60.
- Discussed marketing selected Toastmasters products to corporations to increase brand awareness and to foster membership and club growth. The board recommended that World Headquarters staff conduct a needs assessment to determine which products would be most beneficial to non-Toastmasters groups and which

marketing methods would be most successful.

- Changed disciplinary policies to ensure they are consistent with the proposal approved by the delegates at the 2005 Annual Business Meeting that added the disciplinary proceedings to the Bylaws of Toastmasters International.
- Reviewed the use of the word "chairman" in Toastmasters and officially adopted the explanation regarding the word "chairman" as set out in the 10th Edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*: "A person presiding at a meeting is addressed as Mr. or Madam Chairman by long established usage. Several variations of this form, such as 'chairperson' or 'chair,' are now frequently encountered, however, and may be in use as the general practice in particular assemblies."
- Initiated a brainstorming process to identify what changes need to be made to the organization's governing documents in order to enable progress toward TI's strategic objectives.

The Board will meet again in February 2006. **T**



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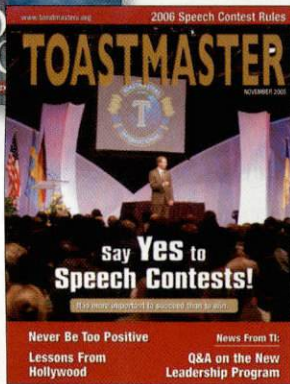
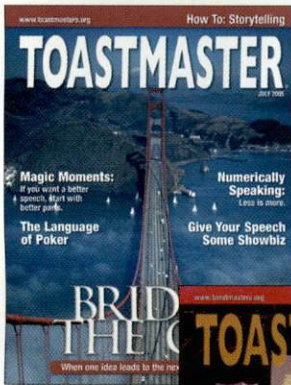
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**2005 Mailing Statement**

United States Post Office  
Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation  
POSTMASTER: RETURN TO THIS OFFICE IF CHANGES ARE NECESSARY

1. Publication Title: TOASTMASTER  
2. Issue Date: JULY 2006  
3. Issue Frequency: MONTHLY  
4. Annual Subscription Price: \$12.00  
5. Number of Issues Published Annually: 12  
6. Annual Subscription Price: \$12.00  
7. Title of Issue: JULY 2006  
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