

The TOASTMASTER®

FEBRUARY 2003

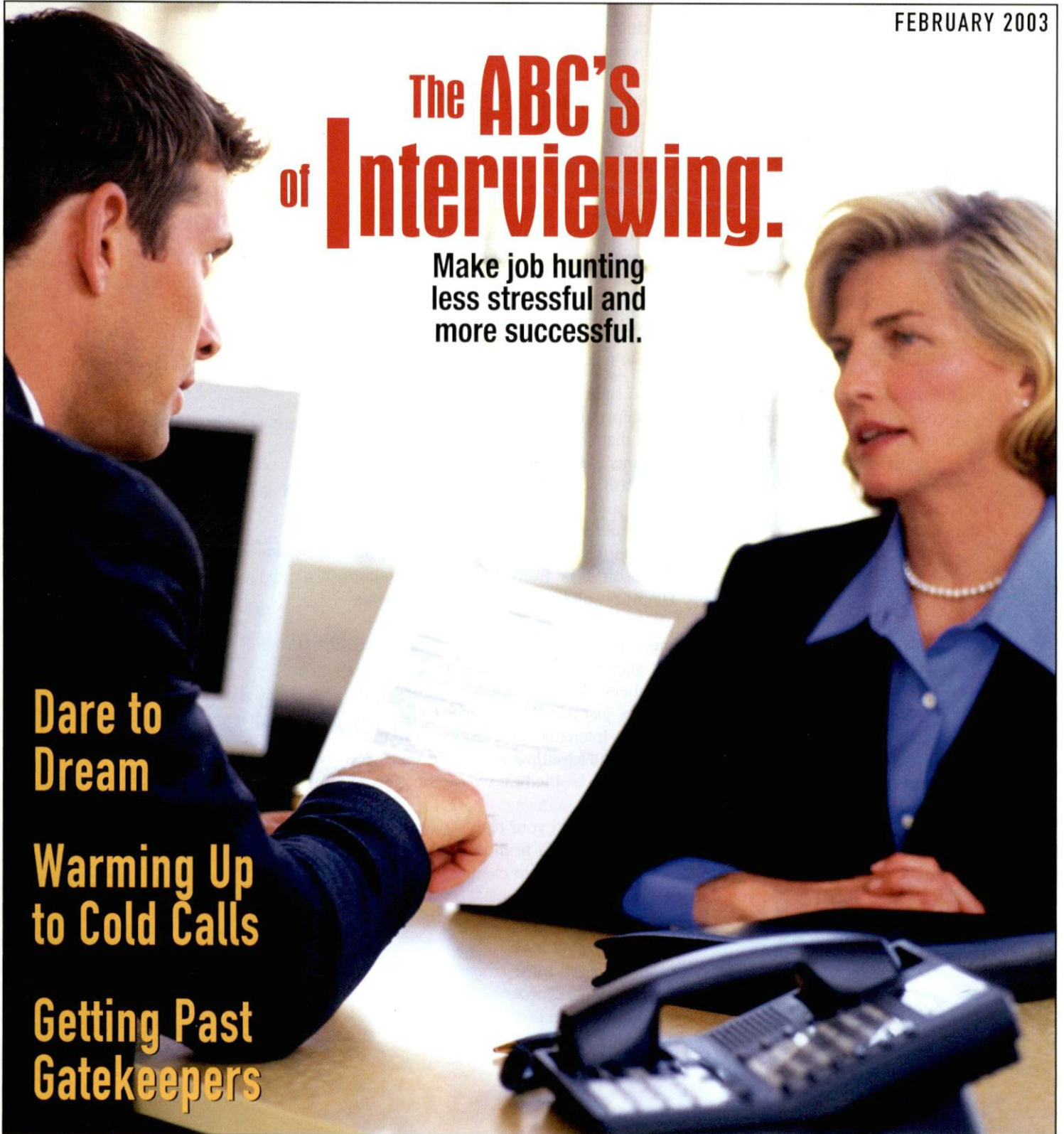
The ABC's of Interviewing:

Make job hunting
less stressful and
more successful.

Dare to
Dream

Warming Up
to Cold Calls

Getting Past
Gatekeepers





VIEWPOINT

Friends Helping Friends Succeed

◆ While most people join a Toastmasters club to improve their confidence and speaking ability, they stay in Toastmasters because of the people – they like the members in their club.

My first job after graduating from university was in Townsville, North Queensland, where I didn't know many people. Fortunately, one of my colleagues, Doug, put a poster on the bulletin board advertising Toastmasters membership. By joining the Tropic City Toastmasters Club, I not only learned communication and leadership skills, I also met a whole new group of people who became my friends. We attended club meetings, social events and area, division and district conferences together. I'll bet many of your friends are Toastmasters as well.

Emma, a Toastmaster for three years, volunteered to mentor a club at our workplace, the Brisbane City Council. She told me she found the mentoring role a wonderful opportunity to help others, and that by helping the club to charter at her work she instantly met 35 more colleagues who became both a professional network and a circle of friends.

Penne and I worked together a few years ago. I told her about Toastmasters, so she decided to join. I am proud to tell you she now is a Toastmasters division governor. She has blossomed in her leadership roles. One of the reasons she is such an enthusiastic and dedicated leader is that she considers the Toastmasters in her division to be her friends, and she wants to help them be successful.

When Bea and I were walking past the Washington Monument while visiting Washington, D.C., a gentleman approached and said to me, "Are you Gavin Blakey from Toastmasters?" He recognized me from the video of the World Championship of Public Speaking competition that I had the honor of chairing in Anaheim, California, two years ago. Scott was from Ohio and visiting Washington for the day on business. He was walking between appointments when he saw me.

I was – and still am – amazed that a member from the other side of the world from where I live would recognize me. It goes to show what a wonderful network Toastmasters creates for us as members. We have friends all over the world. There are no strangers in Toastmasters, just friends we haven't met.

When I served as second vice president, International President Jo Anna McWilliams' theme was "Toastmasters: Friends Helping Friends Succeed." Jo Anna inspired us to reach out and help each other be the best we can be. This is true friendship.

You can help someone else by inviting them to join your club – or even better, to start a new club so at least 20 people can benefit from our proven communication and leadership program. Not only will you help change their life for the better, you will increase your circle of friends.

Gavin Blakey
Gavin Blakey, DTM
International President

The TOASTMASTER

Publisher DONNA H. GROH
Editor SUZANNE FREY
Associate Editor KELLY ANN LACASCIA
Copy Editor MADGE HAMMOND
Graphic Design SUSAN CAMPBELL

TI OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Founder DR. RALPH C. SMEDLEY (1878-1965)

2003 OFFICERS

International President GAVIN BLAKEY, DTM
Ashgrove, Queensland, Australia
Senior Vice President TED CORCORAN, DTM
Baldyle, Dublin, Ireland
Second Vice President JON GREINER, DTM
Dunlap, Illinois
Third Vice President DILIP ABAYASEKARA, DTM
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania
Immediate Past President ALFRED R. HERZING, DTM
Yorba Linda, California
Executive Director DONNA H. GROH
Mission Viejo, California
Secretary-Treasurer MARCIE POWERS
Mission Viejo, California

2002-2003 DIRECTORS

JANA BARNHILL, DTM Lubbock, Texas	JIM KOKOCKI, DTM Saint John, NB, Canada
DAN BLANEY, DTM Florence, Kentucky	JUDY LAYTHORPE, DTM Fort St. John, BC, Canada
CHUCK CARPENTER, DTM St. Louis, Missouri	PAUL MEUNIER, DTM Orlando, Florida
ROBERT COCKBURN, DTM Luxembourg	NILA JUNE MILLER, DTM Louisville, KY
FRANK CONNELLY, DTM Powhatan, Virginia	CINDY PAVELLA, DTM Grand Blanc, Michigan
RICHARD DANZEY, DTM Victorville, California	RANDY PRIER, DTM Papillon, NE
BETTY EISENZIMMER, DTM Edmonds, Washington	GEORGE SCOTT JR., DTM Fairfax, Virginia
LINDA HAWK, DTM Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada	CHRISTINE TEMBLIQUE, DTM Meycauayan, Bulacan, Philippines
JENNIFER O. JOHNSON, DTM Overland Park, KS	MARY JONES WILLIAMS, DTM Port Hueneue, California

For information on joining or building a club, call:
1-800-9WE-SPEAK • Or email: clubs@toastmasters.org

To submit articles, contact:

TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL
PUBLICATIONS DEPARTMENT:
P.O. BOX 9052 • MISSION VIEJO, CA 92690 USA
(949) 858-8255 • FAX: (949) 858-1207

VOICEMAIL: (949) 858-2865

email: pubs@toastmasters.org

TO CHANGE MAILING ADDRESS:
www.toastmasters.org

ADVERTISING SALES REPRESENTATIVES
NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL

KGB Media
Tel: (760) 632-8280
Fax: (760) 632-8323

Lisa Ryan - ext 206
lryan@kgbmedia.net

Marc Baker - ext. 203
mbaker@kgbmedia.net

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 offices. 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 \$18 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.

Copyright 2002 by Toastmasters International, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited. Not responsible for unsolicited material.

Toastmasters International, THE TOASTMASTER, and the Toastmaster International Emblem are trademarks of Toastmaster International registered in the United States, Canada, and many other countries. Marca registrada en Mexico. Printed in U.S.A.



Printed on Recycled Paper

Contents

Departments

- 2 **Viewpoint: Friends Helping Friends Succeed**
By International President Gavin Blakey, DTM
- 4 **Letters**
- 5 **My Turn: The Best One-Dollar Investment I Ever Made!**
By Randy Conley, DTM
- 6 **How To: Overwhelmed? Just Say Yes to Less**
By Marilyn Sherman
- 14 **Laugh Lines: The Humor in Laughter**
By Martin Siegel, ATM-B
- 20 **Can We Talk? Evaluating Poor Job Performance**
By Renee Evenson
- 22 **For the Novice: The Power of Acceptance**
By Michele LeBien, CTM
- 23 **Manner of Speaking: In Praise of the Amateur Speech**
By Ken Askew
- 28 **Leadership: Lessons from a Pro**
By Rosemarie Fennell
- 29 **Idea Corner: Try Brainstorming!**
By Stan Holden
- 31 **Toastmaster Tribute: In Memory of Past International President David A. Corey, 1918-2002**

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.

February 2003
Volume 69, no. 2

Features

- 8 **The ABC's of Interviewing**
How to make interviews less stressful and more successful.
By Shelia Spencer, DTM



- 12 **Dare to Dream**
Listening to your heart, even when it flies in the face of conventional wisdom, can lead you to your Holy Grail.
By Rob Walsh, ATM

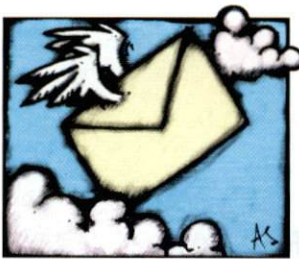
- 16 **Warming Up to Cold Calls**
Apply your communication skills to obtain job interviews and client appointments.
By Craig Harrison, DTM



- 18 **Getting Past Gatekeepers**
The do's and don'ts of handling handlers.
By Craig Harrison, DTM

- 24 **Audience Analysis from the Experts!**
Know what type of speech you are giving and analyze your audience accordingly.
By Judith E. Pearson, Ph.D., DTM





LETTERS

Tongue In Cheek

Perhaps Kim Svoboda (Letters, December 2002) in commenting adversely on John Cadley's "Why People Read the Newspaper" is too close to the issue and might profit from being a little more objective. Her grievance fails to recognize the mature age of his readership and his tongue-in-cheek, Cervantes-like tilt at windmills.

As a diligent newspaper reader I, like many journalists, would admit that much of inconsequence and a lot of opinion, expert and otherwise, is published. But be serious – isn't a lot of newspaper reading habituated?

Luckily humor has many forms, and it can draw attention to the many sacred cows we unknowingly live with. Thank goodness that I can report that Australian Toastmasters are rarely averse to some outrageous leg pull, and don't mind a little bit of bull!

Jack Bacchus, ATM-S ■ Bathurst Club 4613-70 ■ Bathurst, NSW, Australia

Hidden Treasure

I had a chance to conduct a two-day workshop on presentation and platform skills for a group of business leaders from across Asia. I introduced them to Toastmasters and asked them to read selected articles from past issues of *The Toastmaster* magazine. As I shared my Toastmasters experiences with them, they were impressed by the quality of the magazine and intrigued by what Toastmasters could do for their professional development. Unfortunately, only 10 percent of the class had heard of Toastmasters, and none had attended a meeting. I look forward to increasing Toastmasters awareness in Asia so it doesn't remain a hidden treasure here!

Philip Lai, ATM-B ■ T.G.I.T. 7196-51 ■ Hong Kong

Doing Evaluations Right

I was pleased to see the November issue highlighting evaluations. This is a very important part of our program and can always be improved upon.

During each club visit I made as area and division governor, I stressed (with little success at times) the importance of making the evaluator and the speaker a team. Assigning a member to evaluate a speech on the same day as it is given is unfair to the speaker and almost useless to the audience. The speaker has prepared the speech; shouldn't the evaluator be prepared too? For example, in speech No. 8, the evaluator has 11 comments to make. It's

hard to listen to a speech and keep in mind the 11 points to be evaluated. If the evaluator is prepared in advance, the evaluation will be better. We owe this to the speaker.

Let's get back to the basics. Make the speaker and evaluator a team, so they can both prepare. It's a better way to benefit from our program.

Francis Pelletier, CTM ■ Northshore Club 3908-31 ■ Peabody, Massachusetts

Mushy Contest Speeches

I totally agree with Tom Ware (Letters, November 2002). If you want to win Toastmasters speech contests, forget about content. In Toastmasters we learn to give speeches on subjects that matter, and members regularly give such speeches within their clubs. But to win contests, just give the judges mush and more mush: the soppiest, the more touchy-feely the better. Do not frighten judges with content.

Michael W. Bowles, CTM ■ Advance Club 3050-69 ■ Brisbane, QLD, Australia

Never Too Late

Being a new Toastmaster, I am pleased to have joined an organization dedicated to helping people realize their dreams of improved communication and leadership skills. I commend Craig Harrison for his November article "Finding Confidence." I have found my path to confidence: Toastmasters. I also learned so much from "Audience Etiquette" by Patricia L. Fry. From now on, I will listen and be attentive to every person who speaks before me, so that I may have the benefit of that same support from them.

I am looking forward to learning more great tips so I can use them in my future speeches. I only wish I had found Toastmasters sooner!

Melrose S. Lunn ■ Bacolod Square/Compass Club 7474-75 ■ Bacolod City, Philippines

Stories Link Hearts Together

I joined Toastmasters to help face my fears and reach my goal of being a motivational speaker for women. I've given approximately 15 speeches and earned my CTM. I plan to be a member for as long as I can speak! I look forward to every issue of *The Toastmaster* and read it cover to cover, highlighting everything that speaks to me. I want to thank you for linking so many hearts together through the many wonderful pages of inspiring, motivating, fun stories that strengthen us all as speakers.

Donna Goldberg, CTM ■ Lodi Club 4299-39 ■ Lodi, California



The Best One-Dollar Investment I Ever Made!

◆ WHAT WAS THE BEST DOLLAR INVESTMENT I EVER MADE? A lottery ticket? An ice cream cone on a hot day? A movie ticket? (OK, I'm dating myself). No, it was for something you can buy today (and should already have). I'm talking about a copy of Toastmaster International's Supply Catalog (#1205, \$1 USD).

I stumbled across this 68-page treasure trove of resources after being a Toastmaster for two years. Where else can you find a single source for reasonably priced self-development materials on communication and leadership? How to build a new club? Improve the one you are in? The current catalog has three pages of speech manuals, a page of evaluation aids and seven pages of skill-building programs! There are six pages of reference materials, three pages filled with materials for running a successful club and three pages on marketing Toastmasters. The catalog also offers a plethora of name badges, trophies, plaques, ribbons, certificates, pins, shirts, hats and miscellaneous gifts. The material in this catalog is time-tested and consistent with the Toastmasters goal of developing our communication and leadership skills.

Pull out your copy and let's leaf through it together. As you can see, the catalog is divided into seven major categories. The first section contains speech manuals. Here you will find basic and advanced Communication and Leadership manuals, Table Topics/Word of the Day resources and new-member orientation supplies. The mentoring materials in this section (p. 6, #1163, Club Mentor Program Kit) gives a club everything it needs to establish and maintain a strong mentor program – vital for member retention and educational growth.

The next category is Evaluation materials. This section includes two different evaluation forms as well as a brochure and video explaining Effective Evaluations. I've found that showing the Effective Evaluations video (p. 7 and 19, #4008-V) during a club meeting makes for an excellent educational session. Properly conducted evaluations are a critical element in strengthening our speaking skills.

The third section offers skill-building materials. This section is a comprehensive collection of resources to improve a speaker (*Better Speaker Series*) and club (*Successful Club Series*). A new offering is the *Leadership Excellence Series*. Other offerings include material on speechcraft, listening, evaluation, training, and improving management skills. Leadership and management skills are in demand in almost every vocation. The materials from this section are sure to help you improve your performance in both areas.

The fourth section contains reference materials. This includes books and videos on effective speaking, speech writing/presentation, humor, communication and self-enhancement. These are all quality materials that are consistent with the Toastmasters philosophy. The fifth section contains three pages of resources to help you run a successful club: club-officer supplies, club-meeting materials and member-progress charts.

The sixth area in the catalog includes name badges, speech contest materials, trophies and plaques, shirts, hats and other gifts, and ribbons, certificates and pins. This section of the catalog contains everything you need to hold successful contests and keep members motivated. For example, using the engraved badges (p. 25), color-coded for achievement level, is an effective way to award educational and leadership accomplishment. These distinctive badges are a constant reminder and incentive to all members to reach their next goal.

The final section of the catalog includes materials to market Toastmasters – such as community-service programs – and provides resources for visually impaired and non-English speaking members.

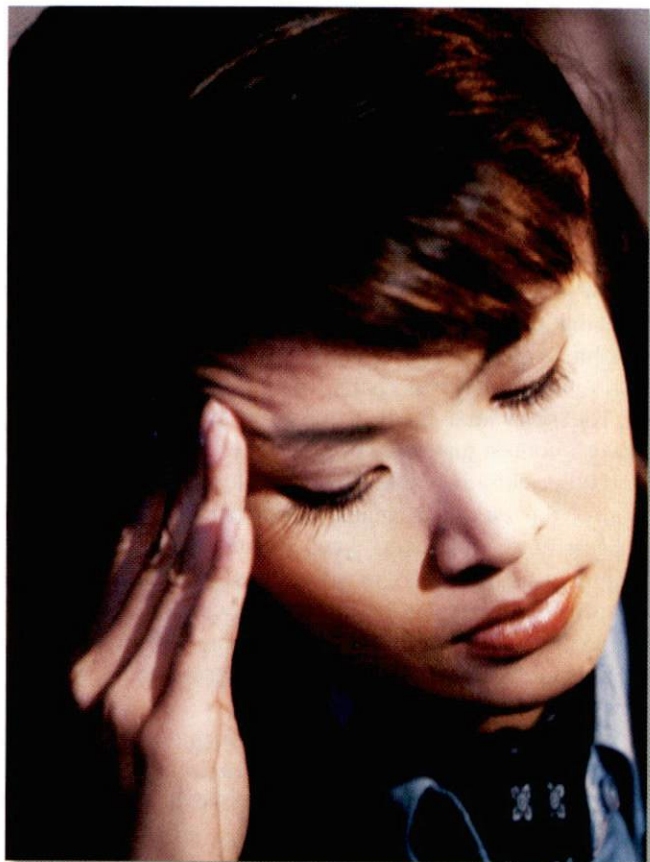
Of course, TI offers plenty of other material that I don't have room to mention here:

- Need some reasonably priced, ready-to-show television and radio spots to advertise your club? In the Supply Catalog, page 46!
- What about a portable lectern? Page 24! How about ordering and presenting an award to a prominent community leader who embodies the Toastmaster ideals? Page 32!
- Awards for those members who go the extra mile for the club? It's all here!

You don't have a current copy of the catalog? Order a copy (or better yet, several) from Toastmasters International's online store at www.toastmasters.org. Club Presidents: be sure every officer has his or her own copy, and have the catalog available to members at every meeting. Remember: The catalog is updated annually, so be sure yours is current.

Whatever your communication or leadership goals, you will find the resources you need to accomplish them in the latest edition of the Toastmaster International Supply Catalog. **T**

Randy Conley, DTM, is the District 68 LGM, and is a member of several clubs in Texas.



Three must-do's before answering one more request!

Overwhelmed? Just Say Yes to Less

Are you the type of person who ends up doing extra work because you have difficulty saying no? You're not alone. Most people today are already overwhelmed with projects, assignments, tasks, deadlines and responsibilities. So you'd think it would be easy to say "no" to extra work, to those small favors or little requests coming your way. Usually, these extras come right after someone enters your office saying, "Hey, got a minute?" Or, "Could you do me a favor; it's not much...."

Usually these favors, tasks and special projects have nothing to do with your job and won't move you closer to your goals. I'm not talking about your boss choosing you for a special assignment (that's a different subject); I am talking about those things that you say yes to and later regret – with a sense that you got "roped into" something. These are the things that take up valuable time and increase your stress and resentment toward the person asking for the favor. Before you say yes to one more request, do three things:

1 Ask clarifying questions. Before answering yes or no, practice saying "It depends" first. This way, you can gather more facts to see if this is something you real-

ly want to commit to. Try using one of these questions to get more clarity before answering:

- It depends. What's up?
- It depends. What's the scope of this project?
- It depends. What exactly do you need me to do?
- It depends. When does it need to be done?

Once you have a clear sense of what is being asked of you in terms of size and scope of the job, including projected timelines – then reply that you can't give an immediate answer; you first have to check out your schedule. You can say, "Before I give you an answer, let me consult my (calendar, staff, assistant, family, partner)." Or, you can try: "Wow, you caught me off guard. Let me get back to you. When do you need an answer?" Once you have bought yourself some time, move on to step number two.

2 Consult your other priorities. Over-commitment at any level of your organization can be disastrous. Not only for the people relying on you, but to yourself. When you say yes before checking out what else is on your plate, you're asking for unneeded stress. That stress carries

Options to consider instead of Yes or No:

- I would be willing to be a co-chair on this project. Is there anyone else we can get to share the responsibilities?
- I could do it if we had a team of experts on board. Is there access to other people for this?
- I could do it in exchange for your doing project X for me. That way, I'd be free to focus on this project for you.
- I could do part of, but I wouldn't be able to take on the whole thing.

over to your other responsibilities and creeps into your personal life. Pretty soon you'll feel overwhelmed and won't perform your regular duties as effectively. Therefore, consider your priorities, existing commitments, timelines and daily, weekly or monthly plans. Once you see what you've already committed to, you can weigh your options. Ask yourself:

- If I said yes, would it interfere with what I have going?
- If I took on this task, would it cause undue stress and overwhelm me?
- Do I really want to take on this task?

After answering these questions honestly and realizing that you just don't want to do it, don't hesitate another minute. Give an answer. If you need to, call a supportive friend first and run the situation by him or her. Tell your friend your gut wants to say no, but you're feeling guilty and tempted to say yes. Then practice saying no to get your confidence up. A true friend will remind you of your vision and goals, and encourage you to set boundaries. Gather your courage and move on to step number three.

3 Tell the favor-seeker "thanks, but no thanks." Maintaining harmonious work relationships is important, so you don't want to just flat-out say no. This may cause people to see you as too independent and earn you the reputation of not being a team player. However, you can say no and gain respect as someone who knows his boundaries. This is very helpful in weeding out all those people who pegged you as the go-to person for everything that they just didn't feel like doing themselves.

Depending on how big the favor is, you can first turn down the person by thanking him or her. Let them know you appreciate their confidence in you and thank them for thinking of you. You can even mention that you're flattered they thought you could take on such a task. However, (this is the hard part for most people) tell them no. Using non-threatening body language and an even tone of voice, simply say something along the lines of:

- Thanks. I wish I could, but I can't.
- I'm flattered you asked me. However, I have a commitment that is tying up all my extra time until next month.

- Gosh, I'm all tied up with another project. I can't take on anything else now.
- I would love to help, but I am in the middle of a deadline and can't do it.

As you can see, I don't believe in over-apologizing for not being able to do someone a favor. I also don't believe in apologizing for being able to determine what is truly a priority to you. I know this isn't easy; I am definitely asking you to get out of your comfort zone. But when you honor your boundaries, it will alleviate the stress that comes later. It is uncomfortable to say no to other people who have come to you for your time, energy or expertise. But it's time to be honest with people. If you don't want to do something, don't take it on now and resent it later. Don't say yes because you are afraid they will judge you. In fact, you may actually come across as more organized, efficient and responsible than if you said yes and didn't have your heart in it.

Recently, I had a chance to practice these must-do's myself. I was asked to chair an event committee after the chairperson had to drop out. Before I answered, I asked clarifying questions. "What exactly does this entail? What would I need to do by when?" My questions were specific, but the answers were vague. "Most of the work has been done. There is really not much left for you to do. So, let me know by the end of the day." After contemplating for an hour, I simply called back and said, "Thank you for the opportunity; however, I'm not able to commit. I will, however, be available on-site during the event, but cannot take on the chair position now." The person appreciated that I got back to her so quickly so she could find someone else for the job.

It's not easy saying no, but it does get easier with practice. People will start to appreciate and respect your boundaries. You will feel less resentment against others for "roping you into" something that you really didn't have your heart in. Practice the art of saying yes to less and soon, you will be reaping the benefits of knowing your boundaries. **T**

Marilyn Sherman is a professional speaker who inspires people to get out of their comfort zone and get a front-row seat in life. She can be reached at 1-800-32-FOCUS or www.ConflictExpert.com.

The ABC's of Interviewing

How to make
interviews
less stressful
and more
successful.

Most people consider job interviewing a very stressful experience. Unfortunately, the stress itself becomes our greatest enemy, preventing us from creating a positive connection with the interviewer. In this article, I'll show how creating a "less stressful – more successful" interview experience is as easy as A, B, C.

A IS FOR ATTITUDE

An interviewer wants to find an outstanding candidate as much as you want to find a fulfilling job. It helps to think of the process as one where both parties are hoping for a positive outcome. A positive attitude will enable you to project an image of energy and enthusiasm. If you are competing against a group of candidates with a similar background of skills and knowledge, enthusiasm might be the deciding factor.

Here are four attitude suggestions that will help you in many interview and job-related situations:

- **Never bad-mouth a current or former employer, co-worker or company.** It brands you as a "complainer," and no one wants a complainer on the team.
- **Nurture the ability to accept criticism gracefully.** All employers appreciate this quality in their workers. If anything said during the interview sounds like criticism, accept it with thanks, and treat it as helpful advice that may benefit you in the future.

■ **See any job that you hold as part of a larger picture.**

Expressing knowledge and interest in the corporate and industry environment where you work (or hope to work) is a big selling point in any job-related discussion, not just in the interview.

■ **Maintain a positive attitude** – from the moment you

wake up until the interview is over and you've sent a "thank you" note. Positive attitudes are catching, and you have a great deal of control over sustaining a positive atmosphere throughout the interview. Even if you are asked to describe a failure, weakness or negative experience, you can finish your response on an upbeat note by mentioning a lesson learned or strategies used to improve the situation.

Every interview is unique. Because interviewing is an unrehearsed conversation between two strangers, the discussion can take as many paths as there are people. For that reason, it helps to maintain an attitude of willingness, tolerance and flexibility. Learn to accept and participate in the unfolding of the process.

Attitude can save interviews from "going bad." Interviewers normally arrange to prevent calls or visitors from disrupting an interview. If a single brief-but-important interruption occurs, accept it gracefully and resume the discussion afterward. But if the situation is more severe (the interviewer, or the office, is in a crisis mode that creates ongoing distraction), offer to reschedule the appointment. Be sincere, and make it clear that your objective is to maintain a positive atmosphere that benefits both you and the interviewer.

Another situation where attitude can save the day is when an interviewer asks an illegal question. If you are asked to provide personal information (age, ethnic back-

ground, national origin, marital status, family planning, or sexual, religious, or political preference), don't panic. You have three valid options:

1 You may choose to answer honestly. It is possible that the truthful answer is the one they want to hear and will add to your desirability as a candidate. (However, you should carefully consider whether you want to work for this particular organization.)

2 You can refuse to answer the question and advise the interviewer that it is not appropriate for you to respond. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to maintain a positive interview environment afterward, and it is likely that you will be viewed as uncooperative or confrontational as a result.

3 You can assume the question was phrased poorly by accident. Put aside your negative reaction and focus on the job-related element that may have prompted the question.

Here are some ways to politely steer the conversation back where it belongs – your ability to perform the functions of the job:

If asked, "What country did you come from?" answer by confirming that you are eligible to work in this country. If asked, "What is your first language?" specify which languages you read or speak fluently. For questions such as "Are you married?" "Do you have children?" or "Do you have any physical handicaps?" answer by describing any limitations you have on physical activity, travel, overtime or relocation as part of the job.

If you do not see any relationship between the question and the position, it makes sense to ask: "Could you explain how this is relevant to the job we are discussing?" Most interviewers will appreciate your tact and your desire to get the interview back on track.

B IS FOR BEHAVIOR

Attitude drives the second factor, behavior. When you have a positive attitude and desire to perform well at the interview, you'll plan to get a good night's sleep, eat a nutritious breakfast, and allow plenty of travel time to get to the appointment. You won't schedule important activities following the interview, since you may be asked to stay and complete an application, take some tests or meet with another decision-maker.



Make an effort to arrive at the interview looking like the ideal job candidate. Have extra copies of your résumé, something to write on and something to write with. Bring any items you've produced that would support your presentation (writing samples, published articles, spreadsheets, software programs, photos or videos). If possible, you should leave copies of everything you bring, so make sure they are crisp, clean and of good quality.

Be polite and friendly on the phone and to the people you encounter on the way to the interview. It pays to be courteous, professional and friendly with the receptionist, the secretary, and even the people in the parking lot and elevator. You have no way of predicting which people you encounter on the way to and from the interview are part of the hiring team or have input into the hiring process.

Think of the interview as a conversation, not an interrogation. Introduce yourself in a relaxed, confident manner. Sit straight, and lean slightly forward to show openness and interest, but give the interviewer breathing room. Respect the importance of physical space and never get so close that it makes the other person feel boxed in.

Communication is a two-way street. Focus your attention on what the interviewer is saying (not on what you'll say next). Don't talk too much. If you do most of the talking, you will probably miss cues to help you know what the interviewer feels is important.

Once you've determined where the interviewer is "coming from," you can follow his or her lead. Try to speak with the same rhythm and tone of voice. Make some friendly observations about your surroundings. If the interview is conversational, make small talk about your interests, hobbies, or what you did last weekend. Be positive and upbeat. This will help both of you relax and establish a connection.

Remember that communicating information about yourself is your responsibility. It is not up to the interviewer to drag it out of you. The interviewer will often signal the end of the interview by asking if you have any questions. If you feel you haven't discussed some key points, take the initiative and say, "Before I ask my first question, there are a couple of points I would like to mention."

C IS FOR COMPATIBILITY

Think of two overlapping circles – one is you and one is the company. Everything that you say and do during the interview should contribute to enlarging the space where these circles overlap. The bigger and more clearly defined you can make this area, the more desirable you will be as a candidate.

Your preliminary research of the company and the position should give you a clear idea of the skills being sought. Observation during and before the interview should also give you clues as to the personal strengths and character traits that will be key to this position. (An auditor needs to be good at detail work and be very trustworthy. A sales-

"Whenever you are asked a closed-ended question, treat it as an open-ended question by assuming the interviewer is asking for a brief, comprehensive explanation. Respond with a 'situation + action + results' answer."

man needs ambition and people skills, for example.)

Most companies typically conduct a Situational Interview. You will be asked open-ended questions that

begin with phrases such as "Tell me about a time..." or "Describe an experience..." Interviewers assume your answers will reveal interesting information and be reliable predictors of your behavior in future situations.

Think of each question as a Table Topic and give yourself about one minute to create an interesting answer. Part of your preparation will be to have several effective stories that you can use at the appropriate time to illustrate the trait or skill being addressed. Always plan and rehearse stories that illustrate some of your most marketable traits and talents. Be sure to include a relevant situation, what you did, and the results.

These open-ended questions give you the best opportunity to sell yourself to the interviewer. Closed-ended (yes/no) questions don't give you the chance to elaborate. Whenever you are asked a closed-ended question, treat it as an open-ended question by assuming the interviewer is asking for a brief, comprehensive explanation. Respond with a "situation + action + results" answer.

An interview is primarily an attempt to assess your compatibility with the job and the organization. When you hear any of the following questions, you may have several different responses in mind, but the 'right' answer is the one that will emphasize how closely you match the interviewer's mental picture of the ideal job candidate:

"Why do you want to work here?" or *"What about our company interests you?"* Few questions are more important than these, so it is important to answer them clearly and with enthusiasm. Demonstrate your interest by sharing what you have learned about the job, the organization and the industry through your own research. Be specific about how your skills will benefit this particular company.

"Tell me about yourself." This question deserves a well-prepared, two-minute answer that includes: where you've been, where you're going, and why you want this position. Each part should focus on the skills, traits and knowledge that make you the best match for the job.

"What are your best skills?" or *"What are your biggest accomplishments?"* Keep your answers job-related. By now, you should know what skills the company values. List them, then describe situations where the skills contributed to success for you and your company.

"What kinds of tasks and responsibilities motivate you the most?" *"What kind of work environment do you prefer?"* *"Do you work better by yourself or with others?"* Many questions don't have an obvious "right or wrong" answer, but these questions are clearly intended to measure the compatibility between you and the job environment where you would be working. Unless it has already been stated clearly that this is a job involving one extreme or another, the

ideal answer will emphasize your flexibility. Be honest, and give examples describing your ability to deal with a broad spectrum of alternatives.

ASKING QUESTIONS DURING A JOB INTERVIEW

Prepare five good questions (you may not have time to ask them all, so ask in order of importance to you.) Concentrate on gaining information about the responsibilities of the position and the culture of the organization. Reinforce the awareness that you already possess knowledge about the company and industry. One question might be, "I read in *The Wall Street Journal* that . . . How would that factor create an impact on your business?"

While you are learning more about the employer, your interviewer will be using this opportunity to further evaluate you as a job candidate. He or she will be measuring your interest in the organization, knowledge of the field, maturity, professionalism, and communication skills.

Note: Never bring up salary, benefits or work-hour questions at this first interview. Salary and benefit negotiations occur during a second or third contact with the employer. Your initial interview should help the recruiter see whether you "fit" the company and position, and help you determine whether you want to work for this organization.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

When you leave, thank the interviewer for his or her time and attention. If the interviewer does not volunteer specific follow-up details, ask about the next step in the process. Is additional information needed, or forms for you to provide? Who can you contact when checking on the search status? If they offer to contact you, politely ask when you should expect the call.

While situations will vary, look for positive signs that the interview went well. These may include: The interview lasts longer than you expected, and longer than the company said it would; the interviewer asks you at the end whether you are still interested; you are given a very spe-

cific date when they will follow up. (Normally, a follow-up date is general or vague.)

As soon as you leave the building, find a quiet place to sit down and evaluate the interview. How did it go? What did you do well? What can you improve? Be sure to note what you learned about the company or the industry, impressions of the people you met, your responsibilities for any follow-up, and when you can expect to hear from them. If you did not receive business cards from the people you met, you may call the company directly when you get home and ask the receptionist for the correct spellings of their names and titles. This information will become crucial if you are invited back for a second interview.

Write a brief (no more than one-page) thank-you note. Include an expression of appreciation to each decision-maker that you met, confirmation of your interest in the job, summary of how your background and skills fit the responsibilities of the position, and one or two conversation details to demonstrate that you listened carefully. Be sure to include your full name and contact information on this note.

If the job contact was made through the Internet or e-mail, send an e-mail thank-you note immediately after the interview. Then mail a second letter by regular post, timed to arrive a week before the hiring decision will be made. Take advantage of this second communication to expand on one or two significant topics that will reinforce your strength as a job candidate.

Will there be a second interview? If you have done all of the above, you have demonstrated the Attitude, Behavior and Compatibility to make you a formidable candidate for the position. Even if this job doesn't land in your lap, you will have begun accumulating some positive interview experiences and memories that will help you in future interviews. **T**

Shelia Spencer, DTM, a member of the Leadership Roundtable Club 1636-46, is a freelance writer living in New York City. She can be reached at bockr@attglobal.net.

Are You Ready To Live Your Dreams As a Fee-Paid Professional Speaker?

Professional Speakers enjoy significant financial rewards and tremendous feelings of success and fulfillment...not to mention an unparalleled lifestyle.

The Bill Gove Speech Workshop has been the training ground of the world's most successful professional speakers since 1947.

Visit us at www.feepaidprofessionalspeaker.com
Or Call **Gove-Siebold Group** Toll Free 877.789.2915





Listening to your heart, even when it flies in the face of conventional wisdom, can lead you to your Holy Grail.

By Rob Walsh, ATM

Dare to Dream

It is usually wise to listen to the advice of senior members of your profession. Usually, but not always. Sometimes, ignoring the voices of reason, and doing what feels right can make your dream come true. I know. It happened to me.

In 1994, I was a programmer/analyst for a Fortune 500 company. Though hardly a shy person, I did not consider myself public speaker material. So, when a co-worker invited me to a Toastmasters meeting, I was skeptical, to say the least. But I went. And then I went again. Next thing I knew, I was halfway to my CTM, serving on the board, and entering humorous speech contests.

Around this time, I was offered the “opportunity” to head my company’s Safety program for our department (Translation: Lots of extra work – same pay.) I jumped at the chance to use my newfound speaking ability in a public forum. Every month, I would design and present a one-hour meeting for the department on a variety of safety topics. Then, the company started a multi-cultural awareness program. Again, I eagerly volunteered for the task of

designing, facilitating, and leading seminars on age, race, sexual orientation and belief systems. I began to get a reputation as someone who was capable of and enthusiastic about public presentations. If anyone was planning a party, picnic or other special event, I was sure to get a call.

It was at this point that several people, including my manager at the time, took me aside and suggested that being involved in all this “fluff” was not good for my career. They warned that I would be perceived as a playboy, not at all serious about the very serious business of information technology. The ‘90s were winding down. Businesses were getting leaner. And when it came time to cull the herd, the showmen wouldn’t stand a chance against the “solid performers.”

Their advice was difficult to accept. I had come to realize, after 15 years as a programmer, that I was in the wrong profession. I was not the tube jockey who had graduated back in the early ‘80s, before ubiquitous PCs and Internet access had transformed computers from powerful tools of industry to household appliances. I was a performer, a pub-

lic speaker. But, like it or not, programming paid very well. The golden handcuffs were on. And as a single dad with two small children, the financial ramifications of a career change seemed to squash any such dream. So I resigned myself to plodding away at the keyboard. I lowered my profile, resigned from the multi-cultural and safety programs, even dropped out of Toastmasters, so that I would have no distractions from my "real job."

In 1997, the entire Information Systems department – showmen and solid performers alike – was sold off like excess inventory to a consulting firm. I chose not to go gently into that dark night, and took a job at another company. True, I had simply traded one gilded cage for another. But I had learned that keeping your head down and your nose to the grindstone was no guarantee of job security. So, once again I fed my addiction to the limelight by volunteering for every event committee and party-planning team that came within arm's reach. And, as if by divine providence, a Toastmasters club had just formed in the company. I rejoined, and was soon serving on the board as Vice President Membership.

In May of 1999, the Information Systems (I.S.) department held its annual kickoff meeting. I was, of course, willingly recruited for the design committee. We decided on a theme of "I.S. and the Search for the Grail," modeled after the film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. (My favorite movie.) I was to emcee the event, in the guise of King Arthur. Dressed in a tacky homemade tunic and plastic crown, I cavorted through the entire day's proceedings, with my faithful servant, Patsy, prancing behind me banging two empty halves of a coconut together. I introduced guest speakers, from managers to the vice president of the department, and led our slapdash cast through a series of skits based on scenes from the film, but rewritten with a plethora of painful puns and inside jokes.

Again, the warnings came. Being associated with this sort of non-productive activity was career suicide. The predictions seemed to gain weight when, just a few months later, 600 people were let go, in the first layoff in the company's 30-year history. Soon thereafter, the company was bought by another firm, one with little use for "fluff." Things were looking grim for this button-down Barrymore wanna-be. And then, a miracle occurred.

In the spring of 2001, I was searching through the company's online listing of open positions for my sister, who was looking for a better job. I didn't find anything for her, but I did come across a listing for an Internal Training Consultant. I had long considered training as an ideal career, combining my technical expertise with the presentation skills I had learned through Toastmasters. But most training consultants travel extensively – not an option for a single parent. This job, however, was all in-house. It was, in a word, perfect! Surely there would be a salary reduction involved. I would be moving from the guru-level of programming to novice trainer. But I had been preparing

for this day, living simply and frugally. I had moved into a small home with a small mortgage, paid down my credit card and other "divorce debt," and was keeping my paid-off '95 Neon in good repair. Financially, I could do this.

The only problem was that the requirements for a candidate for this position included a degree in an education curriculum or comparable experience. I certainly did not have the former; my bachelor's degree was in Computer Systems Technology. Could I possibly dress up several years of extra-curricular involvement with safety committees and multi-cultural awareness teams to look like teaching experience? Against all odds, I submitted my application.

When the manager who was hiring for this position called a few days later, the skepticism in her voice was undeniable. Yes, my programming experience would be useful in the technical training they were planning to present. But she was looking for someone with solid presentation skills. I had no college degree in this area, and my teaching experience was, to put it gently, a little thin. But if I wanted to apply, she would grant me an interview. Undaunted, I set up an appointment for the next day.

When I entered the manager's office, and she saw me for the first time, her eyes lit up and she said "Oh! It's you!" She had been at that Holy Grail kickoff meeting, and seen King Arthur prancing around, performing in skits, introducing dignitaries, and generally having a grand time making a fool of himself. And, as she told me in our interview, every time I came on stage, all she could think was "We've got to get this guy in front of a classroom!" The other revelation from that interview was that the only reason she had considered my application at all was that I was a vice president of our company's Toastmasters club. Remember when your high school counselor recommended that you join some clubs and serve on committees, because college recruiters look at that sort of thing? That's a life-long philosophy. Toastmasters is recognized and respected in the business world. And serving on the board is a bigger feather in your cap than you might expect.

But I digress. The manager went to bat for me with the vice president of the department (who had not been to the kickoff meeting) and convinced her to take a chance on this I.S. geek whose closest thing to a teaching credential was an ATM from Toastmasters. Whatever she said, it probably would have made a great Speech Number 9 – Persuade With Power, because I was offered the job. Even with the pay cut, it took me all of two seconds to accept.

On that day, I became a teacher. And when I say that this is a dream come true, it is not an exaggeration or a cliché. For years I had dreamed of the day when I could make my living doing what I love to do, communicating. Thanks to Toastmasters, and my utter disregard for the sage counsel of my superiors, that day is here. **T**

Rob Walsh, ATM, is a member of Siemens Club 8300-38 in Malvern, Pennsylvania.



All humanity needs to laugh more, especially at work.

The Humor in Laughter

We know that laughter brings many benefits: better mood, group unity, greater physical well-being and, perhaps most of all, romantic appeal. What better way to build and solidify a relationship than by laughing together! I should explain that I'll be using the terms *humor* and *laughter* interchangeably, but the two have different definitions. Humor is a state of mind, while laughter is the physical expression of what is humorous. One starts the ignition, the other is when the engine rolls.

What is it that makes people laugh? "Something funny" is the usual reply, but what is it about that something that is funny? The generalizations proceed around and around. The reason we laugh is simple. We laugh because we are greeted, as if by magic, with a new and different interpretation of a common experience. Like an artist, a humorist gives new perspective to what's around us. While the former has only a personal audience to please, the humorist must reach many – fast.

To illustrate, take a situation we've all been in: doing routine, humdrum, repetitive tasks at work. In a group of six or 10, we're flipping burgers, typing documents or taking inventory. Unexpectedly, someone makes a remark that causes laughter. This person, the humorist of the moment, has taken the same experience that everyone else has been a part of and given it a new and different meaning. (Interestingly, there are only three types of humor: incongruity, ridicule or a combination of both.)

The funny remark brings several simultaneous results. The person creating the joke gets welcome recognition, becoming the hub of the wheel and gaining a form of social control.

Everyone laughs; a sound that itself breeds more laughter. (This is one reason for the use of pre-recorded laugh tracks on television sitcoms). What before was dull and stupefying becomes manageable. Fun brings variety, a change of pace and an energy boost. There is also a sub-

tle form of bonding, since humor – like good wine – is best when shared.

The same principle applies in scenarios such as a bus veering off the road or an elevator getting stuck between floors. The act of laughter, created by someone's different interpretation of a common event, makes loneliness and fear disappear. Mirth brings unity and, whether it's with smiles or laughter, guides the way out of any tunnel.

Many join Toastmasters to improve career-communication skills. Humor is peerless at this. A laugh or smile gets the message across with ease and grace. A smile, after all, is the universal symbol of friendliness and acceptance. The boss with a mild, self-mocking sense of humor (a variant of ridicule) seems approachable, and a timely quip can defuse a tense situation or add spice to what is pallid. It is surprising that in the workplace humor is used so little. All humanity needs to laugh more, especially at work.

By way of remedy, in recent years consultants have been brought in to offer suggestions, usually along the lines of slapstick. By acting silly, wearing different types of socks, putting on a clown's nose and the like, personnel will laugh and unwind. This is the humor of ridicule, and it may work, although many take part through coercion rather than voluntarily. There are softer ways.

1 Meetings. Every organization has meetings. In the business world they are usually stressful, in the academic world, tedious. If a humorous segment were added at the end, it would enrich the content of the meeting. By definition, humor is always centered on the specific, pertaining to whatever topic is under review. It's obvious that leaving a meeting in good cheer is great for renewal, but how often does it happen? The end of anything carries importance, surpassed only by the beginning.

There are no better masters at communication today than those who create TV commercials. Every well-produced ad ends with a slogan that summarizes the product's unique sales point; it's called a "kicker." End your meeting with a kicker!

2 Memos. Lots of memos go out each week. A humorous quote could be inserted at the top, so that what follows gets greeted with a receptive attitude. Just as Toastmasters has a word- or quote-of-the-day, there could be a Quote-of-the-Week contest among employees, perhaps with a prize for the winner. A different quote each week adds novelty and a sense of the unexpected. The Internet, only a keystroke away, makes this task a laughing matter!

3 Newsletter. In whatever format the in-house newsletter is done, an employee profile and/or humor segment should be included. The profile (don't forget the digital photo) is invariably light-hearted, boosts morale and acknowledges merit. The humor segment can be a compilation of quotes on some relevant theme or incident at work. There are endless ways to approach this. (For those with graphic ability, some fonts by themselves, and independent of the words they clothe, appear humorous.)

4 Video. The miracles of technology have made the cost of digital camcorders available to most everyone. Taking video footage of events such as the company picnic, the softball or basketball team in triumphant action, the Christmas party or April Fool's Day, transforms the ephemeral into the concrete. Formatted into a fundamental design sequence, these vignettes would be a visual and aural log of yearly happenings; an animated photo album of good times.

5 Pay for the pizza! There are always crunch times when a project must be completed under tight time constraints. This furnishes a great opportunity to build



"What theme is gender-neutral, has infinite creative potential, lots of room for vocal variety, and guarantees attention? I submit:
In praise of aggravation."

COPYRIGHT © BY MARTIN SIEGEL, 2002

cohesion. Working late without a break is insanity itself. The boss should pay for the pizza and join the crowd while the napkins are passed around.

Productivity isn't measured by time spent so much as in creative ideas and imaginative solutions. This interval for unwinding and joking around keeps the juices flowing. Don't forget to make these moments memorable by taking photos, either for the newsletter or to foster friendship.


In the frenetic pace of the day-to-day: traffic jams, predatory electronic news, deadlines, computers, television and Maalox, it's easy to forget that we spring from the earth. We need variety, different colors and textures, time to mentally kick back and alternate rhythm. Laughter, so revitalizing and based on the new, brings us together, making loneliness and stress ebb away.

As bread is the staff of life, laughter is its nectar. **T**


Martin Siegel, ATM-B, a member of Tree City Club 6322-10 in Kent, Ohio, is a retired marketing professor.

MAKE 'EM LAUGH!

Learn from Darren LaCroix the 2001
**World Champion of
Public Speaking**

A humor seminar for your car!
4 CD Set 

More info:
The Humor Institute 888-528-4451
www.humor411.com



WARMING UP to Cold Calls

Applying Communication Skills to Obtain Job Interviews and Client Appointments.

Cold calling isn't solely the domain of high-pressure telesales professionals in boiler rooms such as seen in the movie *Glengarry Glen Ross*. In point of fact, cold calling is an accepted and proven technique for prospecting and generating sales, interviews and new clients.

I've even used cold calling to attract new members to my Toastmasters club, and to generate support to build new clubs. You can successfully cold call tastefully and judiciously on your way to success. Using skills learned through the Toastmasters program, you take the chill out of cold calls.

COLD CALLS DEFINED

Any time you call someone you don't know, it's considered a cold call. You are calling "cold" without any previous contact. They don't know you and you likely don't know, or know about them. (If instead you were referred to the person you're calling, or they already know of you in some form or fashion, that's considered a warm call.)

DIALING BY NUMBERS

The reality of cold calls is that success is a numbers game. On average one must make many calls for each sale. The key is to keep making the calls and not take rejections personally. In many cases, the person you call will eventually buy from you, though it may take a number of calls or con-

tact over an extended period. This is common. Attitude, then, is one key to cold calling. By staying upbeat and consistently making your calls, you will make appointments, contacts and sales and get better at it over time. A 10 percent success rate in cold calling is considered excellent.

THE TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Successful cold callers create a cold-caller's tool kit to support them. You can too! Create a clean work environment where you can have a notepad, crib sheets, calendar, a lead tracking system, reference materials and even a mirror nearby. The more organized you are the more confident you will feel and sound as you make your calls. You'll also be more efficient with the tools of your trade at your side. Oh yes, don't forget your telephone! I find a headset telephone to be most convenient as it leaves my hands free and my neck unencumbered.

The mirror serves a special function. It's there to remind you to smile as you call. Though they can't see you, listeners need to hear your warmth, confidence and relaxed nature. Periodically look into the mirror to confirm you are smiling as you speak. Smiling relieves tension in your jaw, face and neck, and by relaxing you it helps relax the party on the other end of the line.

BECOME A SCRIPTWRITER

To be most effective, you should sketch out a script of what you intend to say, prior to making any calls. As skilled as you are in Table Topics, write a conversational script that



introduces you, your company, and its products or services, and emphasizes the benefits these offer the prospect.

By rehearsing with your script prior to actually calling, you begin to become familiar with your end of the conversation. This helps in several ways. It frees you to ad lib since you are now speaking from experience. It also removes the pressure of what to say next so you can instead concentrate on the receiver's response.

Remember, we deliver the script conversationally. Practice by calling your voice mail and recording yourself. When you play it back, analyze where you sound confident and where you waiver. What words flow from your tongue? Where do the words stick in your throat? Tweak your script accordingly to smooth out your pitch.

ASK QUESTIONS

Cold calls are intended to gather information as much as impart it. By asking questions you can best learn how to serve the prospects' needs. What are their needs? What problems do they have? Where is the gap in their product line? What keeps them up at night? Such open-ended ques-

tions will garner valuable information to help you see how you can help them. By listening intently and taking notes, you form a fuller picture of the sales scenario.

SPEAK THE LANGUAGE OF BENEFITS

Let customers know more than the features of the products or services you have to offer. Let them know the benefits they provide! What is the result of using your products? What result derives from the services you offer? Simply put, what's in it for them? Say so, in no uncertain terms.

When I call to explore the possibilities of building Toastmasters clubs for local organizations, I stress more than club features, such as weekly meetings, a learning lab for speech making and the logistics of each meeting. I emphasize the benefits and end-results of the Toastmasters experience. We build confident communicators and leaders! That's the takeaway people respond to!

OBJECTIONS ARE YOUR FRIEND

Objections are not to be feared, but valued. They give valuable insight into your prospective customers' con-

cerns, fears and thought processes. Take note. Knowing objections allows you to quell them, soothing the prospects and clearing the way to the sale. Don't argue or dispute their assertions. Instead make sure you understand, then work to address those concerns. Doing so can net you the sale and become the beginning of a new business relationship.

THE TOASTMASTER'S EDGE

As a Toastmaster, you are well-equipped to cold call successfully. You already possess the ability to speak concisely from your felicity with Table Topics. You are able to infuse your words with vocal variety to convey confidence and authority. Often cold calls are a combination of the advanced Communication and Leadership manuals *Speaking to Inform* and *Persuasive Speaking*. And you've become a skilled listener from having been an audience member for others. Advantage Toastmaster!

IT'S CLOSING TIME

Sales may come on the first call, the fourth or the fourteenth. Never assume the sale is not forthcoming, but don't apply pressure or rush your prospect. Build trust, rapport and a fuller understanding of the prospect's world and the sale will help make itself. Your biggest concern should be to make sure you are addressing the decision-maker. Assuming you are, remain upbeat, use a combination of logic and emotion, and speak to the prospect's needs. Viola! The sale will be yours. It's your call! **T**

Craig Harrison, DTM, a member of Lakeview Club 2767-57 in Oakland, California, is a professional speaker and has sold everything from jewelry to joke books to biscuits-in-a-basket using basic cold-calling techniques. Contact him through his Web site www.craigspeaks.com.

By Craig Harrison, DTM



Getting Past Gatekeepers

Does it sometimes seem as though hiring managers or key decision-makers are residing in a gated community? As a job seeker or sales professional, you don't have to grope for the access code. Learn how to reach decision-makers so you too can enter the gates of employment or make your sales quota.

Half the difficulty in getting a job or making a sale is getting to the decision-maker to make your case. Traditionally there was a secretary or administrative assistant to circumnavigate. Now there are electronic nemeses as well – challenges like voice mailboxes and blind e-mail addresses. How to get past the gatekeepers – those professionals who “guard” the decision-makers and often run interference for them?

Gatekeepers (GKs), those entrusted with guarding the Decision-Makers (DMs) you wish to reach, can be your adversaries or allies, depending on your approach. They serve as a filter or screen for their bosses. Your challenge: to be regarded as important enough to be allowed into their inner sanctum. Gatekeepers may be administrative assistants, secretaries, voice mail systems or switchboard operators. They also may be temporary workers or human resource representatives.

Here are my rules of thumb for "Passing Gate" and receiving consideration by decision makers:

DO

- Turn Gate Keepers into allies, treat them with respect, humor and compassion. They have a tough job. Regard them as people with their own personalities, not as faceless obstacles to be overcome.
- Help the decision-maker look good. Can you solve her problem? Let the GK know and the GK will "carry your torch" for you. Let the GK present you as his/her solution to the DM's problem.
- Recognize GKs as vital to your information-gathering mission. Learn from the GK more about the DM, his/her department, recent trends and changes within the company.
- Call at different times if your initial attempts are rebuffed. Learn your DM's schedule and moods!
- Calling before/after the GK's shift will get you through directly. Many decision makers work long hours and feel less pressured before or after-hours.
- Use humor, creativity and topicality to distinguish yourself from others.
- Take the time to establish rapport with each person you come in contact with. Whether or not they're the actual DM or GK, they are actual people – deserving of your courtesy, respect and attention.
- Gather information with every call you make, whether or not you accomplish your primary purpose in calling. Ask appropriate questions and gather pertinent information on the decision maker, his or her schedule, what else is happening in the department or company at the time you are calling. You're also interested in insights into the psychological make-up of the person you are calling. For instance, when is the best (and worst) time to call? How do you pronounce the decision-maker's name? Does he or she prefer an informal name: "T" for Hortence or Condy for Condolezza?
- Use multiple forms of communication to make contact. Consider using phone calls, postcards, faxes and e-mails to make contact. Ask decision makers (and their gatekeepers) for the best way to communicate. Once you know, play it their way.
- Use the phrase "I'm returning his/her call" to upgrade your call's importance in the GK's eyes.
- When leaving repeated voice mail messages be brief, and list a different benefit you provide or skill you possess

during each message, as a way to both qualify and distinguish yourself.

- Don't use up the entire voice mail tape. Make your messages succinct.
- Stay upbeat – even if it's the 10th unreturned message you're leaving.
- Be creative/funny/distinguishable so as to get consideration. One job candidate could never get her calls taken when she left her full name. One time, when asked by the gatekeeper for her name, she used a literary name from the television series *I Claudius*. She replied "Clydemonestra." She nearly fainted when the gatekeeper then asked her to spell her name. The decision maker, intrigued, took her call and turned out to also be a fan of the same PBS series.
- Humor works. Self-effacing humor and humor in solidarity with the gatekeeper help open doors.
- When all else fails, have your Gatekeeper call theirs!

DON'T

- Call and claim you're family, or claim to be calling from the police, IRS or FBI. One candidate thought he'd get through to an human resources manager from India by telling the receptionist he was a relative calling from India. The manager's father had been sick and fearing the worst, she dropped everything to take this call, in fear the news concerned her ailing father. Needless to say, this candidate never worked for her company as a result of his misguided stunt.
- Become surly, rude or sarcastic. It's a turn-off and suggests immaturity and a lack of flexibility.
- Fill your recipient's voice mailbox with long and detailed messages. It's inconsiderate and shows bad judgment. Instead show off your communication skills with a short and pertinent "elevator" speech.
- Blame the decision-makers for not being there to answer you in person, or for not having responded yet. You're not the center of their universe!
- Strive to make an impression. Using clichés and following scripts leaves you indistinguishable from the competition. Show personality and spunk to make you stand apart from the crowd and be memorable when they decide who to call back.

While cold calling can be a numbers game, the essence of calling is a people game: Treat others like the valued individuals they are and remain confident you're someone whose call decision-makers will be glad they took. **T**

What to do when an employee's performance is unacceptable.

Evaluating Poor Job Performance

When an employee's behavior or work performance needs improving, the best thing to do is deal with the situation immediately so it can be corrected. As a manager, you may not know the best way to discuss poor performance issues. Until you feel comfortable handling these types of situations, you may ignore a situation, hoping it will correct itself. Here is the bad news: It won't. Here is more bad news: Your good employees will lose respect for you if you don't handle the problem.

Learning how to improve an employee's job performance and behavior is crucial to a manager's success as a leader, yet this is one of the most difficult skills for any manager to master. So what do you do when you don't know what to do? Learn the steps outlined below, practice them, and soon you will become confident in your ability to deal with unacceptable performance. You'll be able to effectively handle any and all situations before they turn into chronic problems.

Let's look at a possible situation. You receive a call from a customer telling you that one of your employees was rude to him, and he is so upset that he is thinking of taking his business elsewhere. You listen as the customer tells you what happened, then you thank him for bringing this to your attention. You explain that you will handle the situation so this doesn't happen in the future. You are able to rectify the problem to his satisfaction and before ending the contact, you assure him your company values his continued business.

What happens next? Most likely, your first tendency is to be angry with the employee, especially if you already suspected she mistreated customers. You may feel like talking to her immediately and venting your anger by let-



ting her know she almost cost your company a valuable customer. Don't. Never discuss a situation with an employee when you are angry. Give yourself time to calm down so you can rationally speak to him or her. Displaying anger or other emotions will only put you – and the employee – in a defensive position where you'll do most of the talking and the employee isn't taking ownership of the problem.

After you compose yourself, try to see the situation from your employee's perspective. The first step in handling poor performance is knowing the root cause for the behavior. An employee's poor performance usually can be attributed to two causes: lack of a training or lack of motivation. It is your responsibility to ensure that the employee has the necessary skills to do her job. However, the responsibility for lack of motivation falls on the employee's shoulders. You can help the employee see the need for a positive change, but ultimately, only the employee can change her attitude.

Is this situation something the employee should have known how to handle? If yes, you know you are dealing with a motivation issue. However, if you don't know the reason, meet with the employee to discuss the issue. This will enable you to discover how to correct the problem. After asking some key questions, you will be able to determine

the reason for the poor performance. Only when you know the cause should you diagnose the problem and determine the best solution. Never assume you know the reason. Doing so may cause you to react in a non-helpful way.

Before you meet with the employee to discuss the situation, think through the conversation you want to have, as well as the desired outcome. Follow the outline below to help you plan and conduct your meeting.

■ **Plan what you will say.** Think about the situation you need to discuss. This will help keep you on track during the meeting. Focus on the employee's behavior rather than on the employee herself. In other words, only discuss the behavior associated with this particular situation. It may help to jot down a list of items you want to discuss, as well as some open-ended questions you plan to ask the employee.

■ When you meet, **briefly describe the behavior you observed.** Stay focused on this particular situation, rather than falling into general accusations or comments. "Yesterday your customer, Mr. Smith, called me. He was very upset about the conversation he had with you. He said you were condescending to him when he asked about our return policy. He was so upset after speaking to you that he thought about ending his business relationship with our company." Refrain from using terms such as "you always..." or "you never..." Tell the employee specifically what you know about the situation. If you observed the contact, tell her what you observed. If a customer complained to you, relay what the customer said.

■ **Ask the employee to explain her actions.** Ask the open-ended questions you prepared. Questions beginning with who, what, where, when or how will encourage the employee to answer in detail, rather than with "yes," "no," or "I don't know." Be direct in your questioning. Your aim is to uncover any problems the employee may have with her job, your customers or whether she needs additional training. Some questions you may ask are: "What happened during the conversation with that customer?" or "Why did you respond in that manner?"

■ **Listen, and bite your tongue.** This is the time to use your listening skills. Even if you feel like answering for the employee, don't. When you ask a question, let the employee answer completely. If the employee stalls, wait for a response. If she says she doesn't know what you are talking about, ask, "Why do you think that customer perceived your tone as condescending?" Give her time to answer your question. Guide her to fully explain her actions. She may answer with, "I thought the customer should already know our policy." If so, ask "Why would that be a valid reason for you to respond unprofessionally?" Continue to ask probing questions until you feel the employee has taken ownership of the problem. You'll have your "ah-ha"

moment when you have answered the training versus motivation issue. Then you'll know what to do to rectify this problem.

■ **Reach an agreement of what the desired behavior should be.** If the employee indicates she didn't know how to handle the contact, schedule a training session. If her reply indicates a motivation issue, review the reasons for good customer service. Review written guidelines or training procedures. Ask more open-ended questions. "What will happen if we get into the habit of offending our customers on a regular basis?" "How long will our customers keep doing business with us if they feel they aren't treated with respect?" After each question, listen to the employee's response. Let her take ownership for correcting the situation, then ask, "What will you do differently in the future?" Let her know what you'll do to support her and to help her improve.

■ **Affirm that you know she can do it.** Tell her you're confident she will improve. Let her know you care that she performs her best. Also let her know you depend on her to do the right thing.

That's it. Following this outline will work, but only when you take the time to follow up on the employee's performance. Try to catch the employee doing it right and immediately acknowledge good performance. Let her know, very specifically, what you observed. "I liked the way you explained our return policy to that customer. Your job knowledge and confidence came through in the positive manner in which you answered." Following up with an employee and giving her positive feedback will make the employee strive to continue to perform well.

Knowing you helped an employee succeed is one of the most rewarding aspects of any manager's job. The key to success is your ability to effectively handle these types of situations and turn around poor performance before it becomes a pattern. There may also be times when you decide not to take action immediately. You may decide the best approach is to further observe the employee before taking action. Doing so may help you discover the cause of the problem.

Finally, by incorporating these tips, you have the ability to improve your own performance as a manager. Initially, you may take baby steps. You may even take a step back now and then. Improving behavior, including your own, is going to take time. The more you practice, the better you will become. **T**

Renee Evenson, of Whitehouse Station, New Jersey, is a freelance writer and author of two books, *Customer Service 101: Basic Lessons To Be Your Best* and *Customer Service 201: Managing Your People To Be Their Best*. She can be reached via her Web site, www.bullseyepublishing.com.



The harder we try to impress our audience, the farther away they run.

The Power of Acceptance

◆ HAVE YOU EVER BEEN ON A DATE WITH SOMEONE YOU liked so much you were a nervous wreck? You hung on every word he said, trying frantically to think of a witty, intelligent response. You laughed at all his jokes, even the ones you knew weren't funny. To make matters worse, the harder you tried to make him like you, the less interest he seemed to have in you.

Perhaps you have been on the receiving end of such a date – you're simply enjoying the chance to meet someone new while your poor date is desperately trying to impress you with every word and action. The more you try to relax and get to know the other person, the more nervous she becomes. It can be an exhausting experience.

The same thing happens when we deliver presentations. If we need our audience to like us or to agree with us or to think we're funny, we inadvertently turn them off. In fact, the harder we try to impress our audience, the farther away they run. They stop laughing at our jokes and start looking at their watches.

Ironically, the best way to get an audience (or a date!) to like you is to give them the freedom to not like you. The next time you prepare a presentation, choose to accept your audience exactly the way they are. This does not mean you can't introduce new ways of thinking or try to persuade your audience to a new point of view. It simply means that you give your audience permission to be who they are. And just like the dating scene, the more you allow your audience to be who they are, the more time they will want to spend with you.

I remember the first time I experienced the power of accepting my audience as they were. At the time, I was teaching a weekly stress-management class at an alcohol and drug abuse recovery program for women. Once a week for three months, I had stood in front of an audience of 30 women – many of whom had been sober for only five days – and delivered a class on managing stress. While there was always a handful of women who tried to make me feel welcome, most of them sat with their arms crossed and either rolled their eyes to the ceiling when I looked at them, started whispering to their neighbor or gave me a stare that said, "I dare you to call on me. I just dare you."

I tried everything I could think of to make this group like me. Of course, I didn't see it that way at the time. I thought I was just trying to find ways to "reach" my audience, to make a positive impact in their lives. And while some of

that was true, another part of me very much wanted this group to approve of me and to show their approval.

After three months of struggling with this program, I finally decided to quit. I remember coming to this conclusion on a Tuesday. I decided I would teach the class one last time the next morning and then inform the program director that I would help her find a new stress management instructor.

The next morning, I began my class the way I always did, but for the first time, I didn't care if my audience liked me or didn't like me. When no one raised her hand to answer a question, I didn't panic. I simply made a joke about it. When no one laughed at my joke, I joked about having such a poor sense of humor – and to my surprise, everyone laughed. As I let go of needing their approval, my focus naturally fell on them and I felt my heart open to their situation. Without either of us saying a word, they felt my compassion and spontaneously uncrossed their arms. At the end of the class, all 30 women were listening to my every word and five actually came up to give me a hug. I was absolutely stunned. I was also exhilarated.

Needless to say, I never did have that talk with the program director. Instead, as I drove home that afternoon, I prayed I would keep the wisdom I had just learned: to focus on accepting and being of service to my audience, rather than looking for signs of their approval and appreciation of me. **T**

Michele LeBien, CTM, is a member of Ashland Club 6253-7 in Ashland, Oregon. She can be reached at mlebien@msn.com.

Transform your speaking passion
into speaking profits...

Get your **FREE Speaking Biz Success Letter**
by visiting www.speakingsuccess.com

1-800-321-1225

Burt Dubis



**Work on substance at least
as hard as you work on style.**

In Praise of the Amateur Speech

◆ WHEN A SPEECH IS DESCRIBED AS “PROFESSIONAL,” I CRINGE. Technically, “professional” implies pay for living and assumes an accepted general level of competence. Nothing wrong with that.

But as a speechwriter I cringe because generally the underlying message meant by such a comment is that the “product” was “slick.” This is considered desirable in some substantial quarters because communication isn’t the goal of speech – dispatch of duty is more likely the point. The “product” – an obscene term when it refers to communication – was therefore inoffensive background noise crafted to conceits of comfort.

Comfort is Not the Goal

Comfort for the speaker, that is – and boredom for the audience. Why? Most speeches are delivered by speakers professional in fields other than speaking; making speeches may be part of the job description but not its core duty. Therefore – for various reasons – they prefer to say nothing. In a pleasant way, of course. And that’s what folks often mean when they say a speech is “professional:” It says nothing in a palatably formulaic way.

The Toastmaster Duty

As a speechwriter, I have a different view of these smoothly bland “professional” speeches: They give public speaking (and professional speechwriting) a bad name. Sadly, they make up the overwhelming bulk of rhetoric and collectively lower expectations of public speaking. As a listener you deserve to hear better. As a Toastmaster and speaker, you have a duty to do better.

Toastmasters focus – rightly – on delivery, but frankly I’d rather hear real ideas presented clumsily than vapor overwrought. So may I submit a suggestion? If you want to stand out in the world of rhetoric, work on substance at least as hard as you work on style. They’re the yin and yang that together compose any message that purports to be complete.

Substance

Two questions here. First, what’s the point of view? Nothing’s more personal than a speech; any substantive speech is anchored in a clear and human point of view. Yet strangely, one mark of too many “professional” speeches is an arm’s-length detachment between speaker and issues. Does the speaker use the passive voice and a passionless pitch? There’s a tip-off right there.

Second question. Is the content contagious? Any substantive speech contains an idea – and ideas infect the recipient. Don’t confuse idea with fact or opinion or argument. As a speechwriter, my working definition of an idea is a thought that’s no longer the speaker’s once it’s been spoken. It floats into the ear, hooks the listener’s imagination, burrows into the brain, gets muller over with a considered “hmmm” in the consciousness – and then is uniquely stored into the recipient’s personal intellectual filing system. Unlike a fact, opinion or argument, an idea is organic and begins to morph once given away. As an audience member, can you claim an idea from a speech you hear – a single *hmmm* or *aha* you make your own and take home?

Style

Substance is necessary but not sufficient for a great speech. The Toastmaster’s discipline is meant to elevate an idea into effective rhetoric, and there’s a valid dimension of “professionalism” to this process. In my experience counseling several dozen Fortune 200 CEOs over the years, the realization that communication style is critical can bloom late – but it always blooms eventually – in the leader’s mind.

CEOs don’t spring fully formed from the forehead of the board of directors. Having observed the grooming of CEOs-to-be preparing for ascension, I’ve seen the pattern repeated: After a career built in concrete action – operations, marketing, planning, technology, finance – with scorn paid to communication, the realization dawns that communication is finally undeniably important.

So the final signs of CEO maturation may include new dimensions of trust, vision and delegation, crowned with a new respect for communication – real, authentic, credible.

The lowest expression of public speaking is having something to hide and putting effort into hiding it effectively. Slightly better is having nothing substantive to say and wishing to mask that fact. Better still is lacking substance but making it fun.

But the highest expression is having something substantial to say and wanting to say it best. That pays. Isn’t that why you’re a Toastmaster? **T**

Ken Askew is a former White House speechwriter whose current clients include Fortune 50 CEOs, executives from small businesses and a variety of other communicators.



**Be sure you know
what type of speech
you are giving
and analyze your
audience accordingly.**

Audience Analysis from the Experts!

It's time-proven advice to "know your audience!" This is especially true if you are taking your speaking skills "on the road" to non-Toastmasters groups. Audience analysis helps you tailor your topic to their needs and interests and may save you from some serious social blunders. For most of us, "getting to know the audience" means asking a few questions ahead of time and finding out something

BY JUDITH E. PEARSON, PH.D., DTM ■ PHOTOGRAPH BY EYEWIRE

about our listeners. That's good advice, but what questions should you ask?

The answer depends on how you want to relate to your audience, the atmosphere you want to create and the purpose of your speech. These factors set up your audience's expectations about you and yours about them. To find out more about audience analysis, I contacted eight experts, each specializing in a specific type of speech, and asked them how they do it. The eight types of speeches cover a range of presentations that are most familiar to Toastmasters: Inspirational/Motivational, Informative, Humorous, Sales Presentations, Technical Briefings, Political/Persuasive, Training Programs, and Master of Ceremonies. The speakers I interviewed were:

- **Willie Jolley**, a 1999 Toastmasters International Outstanding Speaker, motivational/inspirational speaker, President of Willie Jolley Worldwide, and author of *It Only Takes a Minute to Change Your Life!*
- **Jeff Davidson**, founder of the Breathing Space Institute of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, an informative speaker on topics such as management, competition and communication, and an award-winning author of more than two dozen books, including *The Complete Guide to Public Speaking*.
- **Tom Antion**, humorist, President of Tom Antion and Associates Communication Company of Landover Hills, Maryland, author of *Wake 'Em Up!*, and manager of an Internet magazine on public speaking.
- **Gregg Baron**, President of Success Sciences Incorporated in Tampa, Florida, a certified management and sales consultant and author of *The Sales Professional's Idea-A-Day Guide*.
- **Jim Litchko**, President of Litchko and Associates, of Kinsington, Maryland, a consultant, trainer and national expert on Cyber-Terrorism and Internet Security.
- **Joel Blackwell**, of Reston, Virginia, a "Grass Roots" consultant to lobbying organizations, and author of *Personal Political Power*.
- **Jo Condrill**, former Toastmasters International Director and District 27 Governor, President of GoalMinds, Incorporated, specializing in leadership training, team-building, and coaching, and author of *Take Charge of Your Life*.
- **Joyce Kaye**, of Joyce Kaye Comedy Enterprises in Parkland, Florida, a comedy-writer, musician and singer.

Talking to these pros was great fun! They offered a wealth of good general advice and some insider secrets as well. Read on to find out what these experts had to say about the best ways to know an audience.

USE QUESTIONNAIRES

Almost all the speakers I contacted send out questionnaires in advance of their presentations to meeting plan-

ners, training coordinators or whoever does the booking. The responses help speakers know what to expect about the environment in which they will speak and the people they will be addressing. The questionnaires ask about audience demographics, such as education, age-range, gender, occupation and ethnic diversity. A technical speaker, such as Jim Litchko, wants to know about the level and range of expertise in his audience. Jo Condrill wants to make sure her training objectives match organizational needs and expectations. Even audience gender counts where humor is concerned. Says Tom Antion, "Women laugh easier and let their egos down. Men look around to see who else is laughing."

Logistics are also an important consideration: Who will be making the introduction for the speech? Where is the location? What is the room layout? You may be surprised to know that the time of day is a significant consideration. Antion says:

Early morning is not a great time for humor. Just deliver your material. You might get some laughter, but don't plan on it. Midmorning or brunch is the best time, because you get people at their maximum energy level. They've had their coffee and they are ready for fun! Wherever food is involved, at lunch or dinner, you have to compete with distractions. It's in my contract that if I speak at a meal, the host will announce a 10-minute break for drink refills, desserts, etc., before I speak. Then, during my speech, waiters have to stop taking orders and bussing the tables. After lunch is when people typically crash and their sugar levels are low. Get them to stand up and move around during your speech. Get them involved. Use light-hearted humor, because people can't concentrate on the heavy stuff. After dinner, some people are tired and by that time, some may have had alcohol. So be careful and have the meeting planner on hand to make sure things don't get out of hand, in case someone has too much to drink.

If an organization (or corporation) hosts your speech, ask additional questions about the organization: its mission, goals, motto, history, achievements and challenges. Are they growing or downsizing? Who are the key people who will be in the audience, and what are their titles, roles and responsibilities? Who are the heroes in this organization? What are some of the "war stories"? Are there any sensitive topics to steer around? What have they liked and not liked about previous speakers? What is the dress code? With this information, you can tailor your speech to the organization's culture, philosophy, challenges, strengths and needs. If your speech is part of a larger event, such as a conference, ask about the event: What's the theme, purpose, the location and program agenda? Will there be media coverage? Are other activities going on at the same time as your speech?

The experts send their questionnaires via mail or e-mail. Jeff Davidson advises a follow-up phone interview for clarification on the questionnaire responses, or if the questionnaire isn't returned at all.

Find out what the audience wants and what will win them over! Jeff Davidson asks his sponsors, "What would you like to get from my presentation? What would make it among your best ever?" To Willie Jolley, the most important questions are, "How do you want people to feel when my presentation is finished?" and "If there's one thought you want people to have when they leave, what is it?"

DO YOUR RESEARCH

With research, you can learn even more about the organization hosting your speech and about its members. Visit the organization's Web site. Read the biographies of its leaders. Look at its newsletters, press releases, organizational charts, sales figures, brochures and press clips. Talk to colleagues or friends who know about this organization. Here's a smart tip from Jeff Davidson: "I ask for the speaker evaluation form, if they have one, as it plays a large role in whether I get rebooked."

If your speech is political in nature, do some research on the opposition, as Joel Blackwell advises:

An audience at a political speech may be divided on the issues. You have to know where they stand. Know the opponent's arguments as well as your own. Find someone who is happy to tell you why they disagree with you. Look at what your opponent is saying and doing. Read their campaign literature. Then talk about what you are for, rather than what you are against. Emphasize the positive. People don't vote for you because of where you stand on the issues ... They vote for you based on whether they like you or not. It's less about what you say and more about who you are.

Tom Antion tells us that even a humorist needs to do some research:

When I speak to an organization, I get copies of its newsletters and trade publications. I sift through them and brew over them. As an outsider, I can play dumb. It's hilarious, because I show people how funny their industry seems to an outsider, and how their jargon can have different meanings and double entendres. I once spoke to an organization of pharmacists. I ordered a copy of their journal, and just about busted a gut laughing! There was a very serious, in-depth article about the effects of a chemical on the flatulence of cows! I said, "Who measures this sort of thing? How do they do it? What are their job qualifications?" You don't need canned jokes. Just keep your eyes open - humor is everywhere!

Why is this research so important? Gregg Baron has the best answer:

"The up-front work is not just about being prepared. It's about the audience knowing I have taken the time to understand who they are and what's special about them! ... The answers are in the questions you ask. The highest leverage you have in business is your ability to think in advance. The more information you can gather, the more time you have to think, plan, and optimize your moment of opportunity."

CONDUCT PHONE INTERVIEWS

Another strategy is to conduct phone interviews with a sampling of audience members. Trainer Jo Condrill notes that phone interviews create "allies" in your audience before you've even set foot on the platform. Here again, the questions you ask are based on your type of speech.

Sales presentations, for example, require unique questions about the organization's needs and decision-making process. Gregg Baron says:

I ask ... about employee performance. "What makes this audience effective, and what prevents them from being as effective as possible?" I ask about the buying process. "Tell me about the process your organization uses to make a decision about this kind of product or service and to invest in this kind of solution." I shape my presentation around their decision process. I ask what solutions they are considering to identify the competition.... For direct competition, I play up the advantages of my solution. For indirect competition, I ask, "What is appealing about that direction and how does it fit your business plan? How does it solve your problem, without unintended outcomes?" Then I show how my solution avoids unanticipated negative outcomes. I ask, "Who are the stakeholders in the solution? Are they concerned about cost, timing or quality? What else might affect their decision?" My goal is to establish credibility, rapport and comfort with me.

Comic and emcee Joyce Kay uses interviews to gain insight about the people she will introduce or roast:

For a retirement ceremony or roast, I ask about the guest of honor. I produce a custom piece of material based on that person's life. It is nostalgic and humorous. I ask about their childhood, marriage, talents and lifestyle. Maybe they like golf, or they're a great dancer. I ask about habits. Does he smoke a cigar and everyone hates it? If he has a motto, I use it to get the audience involved. If his motto is "Teamwork," I have the audience shout "Teamwork! Teamwork!" as the guy walks up on stage. I also want to know how he reacts to humor. Is he easy-going or sensitive?

Tom Antion uses phone interviews to find additional sources of humor:

I get a cross-section of people from different departments. I call and tell them who I am. They think, "Whoa! The program speaker is calling me?" I reassure them I'm not a management spy – just want to do a great job on stage, and I want their help. This builds rapport, gives me the inside scoop on the organization, and these folks are more likely to laugh during my presentation. I ask about their work challenges. If I hear the same things over and over, there is potential there for big laughter!"

Here's my "asterisk" technique. It's the reason I never have hecklers. I ask the meeting planner for a list of audience members and say, "Put an asterisk beside anyone who could be trouble – someone who's always griping, say." If it's "Jerry," I call on Jerry. "Jerry – can you give me a hand? You've been around a while, and I need your opinion...." I butter him up! Now, what's the chance that he's going to heckle me? He'll rave about me! So if you are ever in my audience and I see an asterisk next to your name ... hmmmm!

MIX WITH THE AUDIENCE

On the day of your presentation, arrive early and mix with audience members beforehand. Joyce Kaye advises that you mingle with the audience before your speech, and get a "sense of their culture." Mixing will give you additional anecdotes for your speech, and create a rapport when it's your time on the platform. Joel Blackwell gives this advice about political speeches:

Before my speech, I work the crowd and "press the flesh." I ask people what is on their minds and weave that into my speech. I pull someone out of the audience. I interview them and make their story a part of my speech. I tell politicians, "Grip people with a good story! Get the drama behind the issues ... the story of a living, breathing human being ... specific details – names, dates, and places."

Technical briefer Jim Litchko agrees that meeting with audience members one-on-one enhances his delivery and his reception:

I arrive about 90 minutes early to set up. As attendees arrive, I talk to them. I ask, "What do you do for this company? What do you want to know?" If they tell me about a security problem, I incorporate similar case studies into my talk. If someone offers an opinion on security, I incorporate that, giving them credit for the idea. It helps me connect with the audience in an open, positive way.

Tom Antion targets organization leaders for his "warm-up:"

If the head honcho doesn't laugh, no one else will. Their minds are elsewhere – on the sales budget, or something else. I get to the CEOs ahead of time and coach them. I say, "Look, you hired me. People take their cues from you. If you want people to have a good time, act like you're having a good time!"

KEEP ANALYZING THE AUDIENCE FROM THE PLATFORM

Audience analysis doesn't stop when your speech finally begins. The speakers I contacted continue to analyze the audience from the platform by calibrating the audience's reaction and response. Joyce Kaye says, "I throw out a one-liner and see how they react. If they like it, I keep going. If not, I 'wing it.'" Willie Jolley puts it this way:

I learned early on to judge the feel of the room. I go in with a plan, but I remain flexible. I watch their body language, because I want people on the edge of their seats. I listen for the laughter. I want them "wowed!" I may bring in more humor, or tell a story, or sing a song. You have to "know when to hold them and know when to fold them." My audience analysis is continuous.

BE SENSITIVE TO PEOPLE'S FEELINGS

Finally, audience analysis is also about sensitivity to your listeners' feelings. Part of the success in learning about your audience lies in understanding how to get your message across in acceptable and appealing ways. Joyce Kaye says:

With an organization, you walk softly. I never insult anyone. These people aren't professional entertainers. When I introduce people, some of them are shaking in their shoes because they have to get up and say something. Comedians think in threes. If my audience wants a serious business presentation, I give excitement, enthusiasm and energy. If they want to have fun, I keep them alert, awake and anticipating my next introduction.

TAKE YOUR SPEECH ON THE ROAD!

Speaking to new audiences is an exciting challenge that will sharpen your speaking skills, expand your networking opportunities and spread your message. As you can tell from the advice of these experts, audience analysis is an art. So tailor your topic to your audience and take your speech on the road. Just be sure you know what type of speech you are giving and analyze your audience accordingly. **T**

Judith E. Pearson, Ph.D., DTM, is a member of Galloping Governors Club 8539-27. She has a counseling/coaching practice, Motivational Strategies, Inc., in Springfield, Virginia.



Never let the words get in the way of a great presentation.

Lessons from a Pro

◆ IT'S 7 A.M. ON THE FIRST MORNING OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM. The speaker, business consultant Barry Maher, looks fresh. If the meeting planner hadn't told me, I'd never guess that Maher hadn't slept since he left his Las Vegas home at 5 o'clock the previous morning. Then he'd spent the day stuck in airports and the night driving a hastily rented car from Nashville, Tennessee, to Washington D.C. He'd arrived at the hotel with just enough time to shower and shave.

Yet here he is, already in the meeting room an hour before his keynote, looking rested and ready, checking the audiovisual equipment, the lighting, the stage, even rearranging some of the seats. Then the attendees begin to arrive, most of them much the worse for wear after the ultimate New Year's Eve celebration. Maher greets them with a smile and a bit of mild banter, looking as if there's no place on earth he'd rather be at this hour of the morning – and no other people he'd rather be with.

"This was a mistake," the meeting planner whispers ruefully. "Bringing this crowd back to life after the night they had last night... We're not talking motivation, we're talking resurrection."

An hour later, the entire audience stands in applause – resurrected. The expression on the meeting planner's face says that all that's keeping her from asking Maher to change the water on the back tables into wine is that she won't risk offering more alcohol to this group.

I'm a speaker myself, a registered dietitian who speaks about health and nutrition. I've taken presentation courses and spoken at enough rubber-chicken luncheons to imperil my own health. But the most important lesson I ever learned about presenting came from studying the video of that Millennium miracle.

If you'd asked me right after the presentation what was so special about it, I probably would have said the content: great material, meticulously honed, perfectly tailored for the audience. After watching the tape two or three times, I might have said it was the speaker's technique: polished without being slick, insincere or in any way studied or unnatural.

Still, a lot of presentations have wonderful content, and many speakers are masters of technique. And as a matter of fact – perhaps in his exhaustion – Maher actually made a couple of minor technical mistakes that the power of his performance kept me from even noticing the first few tapes I watched the tape.

I believe the real key to Barry Maher's success on that particular morning-after was something more difficult to

evaluate than content or technique. Fortunately, I was able to corner the speaker later that day, after he patiently had talked with each and every one of the attendees who approached him after the presentation.

First, I asked him how he managed to be so fresh after such a journey. "Fresh?" he laughed. "I was exhausted – right until I got to the meeting room. That's when the anticipation cuts in, the excitement you should always feel before a presentation. Once you begin talking, if you can't get all the energy you need from the audience, you're in the wrong business. And after the presentation, what could be better than being surrounded by people who've been touched by your words or who want to discuss your ideas?"

"How much preparation do you do for a presentation like this?" I asked.

"Since much of what I'm presenting is me, I guess I've been preparing that part of it my whole life. And there are skills here that I've been working on since I got up to sing at a wedding when I was three."

"An appreciative audience?"

"A tolerant audience. I gave them 'Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer,' not perhaps the best material for a June wedding. As for preparation though, I never step on the platform without thoroughly understanding the audience, then spending hours customizing and rehearsing until I have the presentation down cold. Still, in some ways it's like I discover each presentation as I give it – in what happens between the audience and myself. Even if for some reason I gave another group the exact same program, the exact same words that I spoke this morning, the nuances, the body language, the meaning, the communication between the audience and myself could be completely different. And that's where the power, the real creativity and the freshness of each presentation lies. Of course, if you haven't spent all those days and hours preparing beforehand, you'll never reach that level of communication. You'll be too preoccupied with yourself and with the words you're trying to say."

It was only later, studying the tape, that I realized what this exhausted, world-class speaker had just taught me.

Never let the words get in the way of a great presentation. Never let anything get in the way of a great presentation. **T**

Rosemarie Fennell, is a registered dietitian who speaks and writes about creating better health through better nutrition. She can be reached at rofennell@aol.com.

By Stan Holden

Want fresh ideas or solutions to problems?

Try Brainstorming!

If two heads are better than one, then five or six or as many as 10 heads must be better still. Especially when you need fresh ideas for your club or solutions to a specific problem.

And when all those heads are in the same room, furiously tossing out ideas and solutions that range from wacky to wonderful, you've got a brainstorming session! Or maybe not.

What, exactly, is brainstorming?

Getting people together to generate ideas or solutions is nothing new. Over the centuries, there have been tribal council meetings, town hall meetings, sales meetings, board meetings, association meetings and countless other kinds of meetings. But relatively few have been true brainstorming sessions.

"Brainstorming," explains its leading proponent, Alex F. Osborn (a co-founder of the famous advertising agency Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn), "is a creative conference for the sole purpose of producing a checklist of ideas. Ideas that can serve as leads to problem solutions. Ideas that can subsequently be evaluated for further processing."

Note that word "subsequently."

"No conference," Osborn insists, "can be called a brainstorming session unless the deferment-of-judgment principle is strictly followed. Otherwise, fresh ideas that are 'outside the box' are stifled, and potential solutions to problems may never see the light of day."

What kinds of ideas or solutions can be generated? Just about any kind! In his book, *Applied Imagination: Principles and Procedures of Creative Problem-Solving*, Osborn summarizes a wide variety of case histories with tangible results, including these:

- A group from the Cleveland Advertising Club brainstormed the problem: "Ways to publicize

Opera Week and get more people to buy tickets." Of the 124 ideas suggested, 29 were developed and implemented, with seat-filling success.

- In Denver, the Postmaster and his management staff brainstormed the question, "What can be done to reduce the need for overtime work hours?" The 12-member panel generated 121 suggestions in 60 minutes – an average of 10 per participant – and some of their ideas were immediately implemented. During the next nine weeks, it was reported, the Denver post office saved 12,666 hours of labor.
- When a Pittsburgh department store was overstocked with a chair-covering fabric, a group of employees brainstormed other uses for the item. Then the store ran an ad featuring their best ideas. Within a week, the entire stock was sold out.

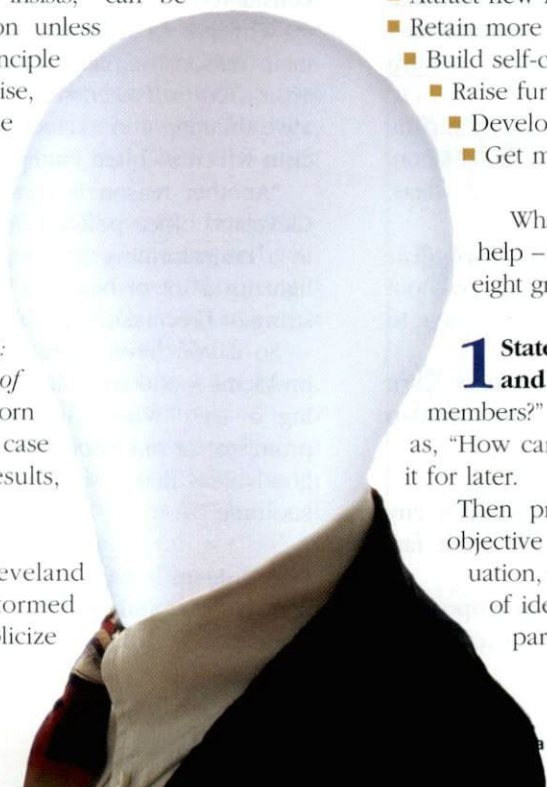
What's your biggest concern right now? Perhaps you could use some fresh ideas or solutions to help your club:

- Engage in new activities
- Improve members' skills
- Attract new members
- Retain more members
- Build self-confidence
 - Raise funds
 - Develop more interesting programs
 - Get more publicity.

Whatever your concern, brainstorming can often help – a little or a lot – but only if you follow these eight ground rules:

1 State your topic (just one per session) clearly and simply. Such as: "How can we attract more members?" If you also have a related question – such as, "How can we keep members from quitting?" – save it for later.

Then prepare a one-page memo that states the objective or problem, provides background on the situation, and offers two or three examples of the type of ideas being sought. Distribute a copy to each participant at least two days before the session.



2 Invite five to 10 participants. You might get by with just three or four, but in most cases, the more, the better – up to a point. Sessions can be unwieldy if there are more than 10 participants.

Participants can be members of your club. Or – to get a really fresh approach – some can be guests (e.g., friends or relatives of members, perhaps high school or college students). Many times, the freshest ideas or best solutions will come from those who knew little or nothing about the topic before being invited to brainstorm.

“I work with many ad hoc groups,” says creative consultant James L. Adams, author of *The Care and Feeding of Ideas*, “and I find them remarkably productive insofar as creativity and change are concerned. They are not anchored to past traditions and constraints.”

3 One member of the panel should serve as the leader to introduce the topic, explain the basic rules of brainstorming and direct the conversation if it goes off-course. Moreover, the leader should call on specific individuals if nobody talks, or if everyone tries to talk at once, and jot down the key words of ideas, as they’re presented, on a chalkboard or flipchart. It’s crucial that he or she firmly try to squelch any negative comments, such as “We tried that once; it didn’t work.” (See Rule 7.)

Another member of the panel – or a non-participant – should serve as a recorder or facilitator and also jot down the ideas, so that none are lost. As further insurance, you could use an audiotape recorder or camcorder, with an omni-directional microphone at the center of the group.

4 Begin the session at the scheduled time and end it when the ideas stop coming or after about 45 minutes, whichever comes first. Often, it takes time for panel members to feel comfortable tossing out suggestions, especially if they’re new to the group, new to the concept of brainstorming or are intimidated by some of the participants.

“In the usual type of continuous ideation,” Osborn writes, “it has been found that the speed of flow tends to accelerate. For example, the Armstrong Cork Company brainstormed an employment problem for its Macon, Georgia, plant. The first 10 minutes produced 27 ideas. The next 15 minutes produced 86 ideas.”

The main purpose of brainstorming is to produce ideas in quantity – once again, the more, the better – without any initial regard for quality. There are several ways to achieve this.

In his book, *Aha!: 10 Ways to Free Your Creative Spirit and Find Your Great Ideas*, creativity consultant Jordan Ayan suggests these three techniques:

- **Freewheeling:** Anyone can call out any idea at any time. It’s an idea free-for-all that benefits from fast thinking and momentum.
- **Round-robin:** Each participant is invited to propose an idea or to pass. The rounds continue until everyone

passes. Participants listen more closely to what the others suggest, thus triggering their own ideas.

- **Closed eyes:** With eyes closed, people tend to be less inhibited, because they are not staring at their colleagues and feeling self-conscious. This can generate as much as 30 percent more ideas and many more unusual ideas than if they had their eyes open.

5 Welcome wildness. “The crazier the idea,” Osborn says, “the better. It’s easier to tone down than to think up.”

6 Invite “hitch-hikers,” ideas that build on someone else’s idea to make it even better. Also, two or more ideas can be combined into one great idea.

7 The leader (backed up by other participants) should prohibit criticism of any idea. This is the most important rule of all.

“Require everyone to suspend all criticism and judgment until after the idea-generation stage,” said think-tank leader Michael Michalko in his book, *Cracking Creativity*. “Whenever someone says, ‘Yes, but...,’ require the person to change it to ‘Yes, and...’ and continue where the last person left off. This simple change from the negative to the positive will help change the psychology of the group.”

8 At the conclusion of the session, the leader should thank the participants and ask them to keep the brainstorming topic on their minds until the next day, when they will be asked for their afterthoughts.

The facilitator – perhaps aided by the audiotape or videotape – should then transcribe his or her notes and present them to the leader for study, analysis and judgment. The best ideas should be promptly and carefully considered and, if practical, implemented.

Why are brainstorming sessions so productive? “The main reason,” explains Osborn in another of his books, *Your Creative Power*, “is that it concentrates solely on creative thinking and excludes the discouragement and criticism which so often cramp imagination.

“Another reason is contagion. As (a member) of our Cleveland office pointed out, ‘When you really get going in a brainstorming session, a spark from one mind will light up a lot of bang-up ideas in the others, just like a string of firecrackers. It’s like a chain reaction.’”

So if you have a need for fresh ideas or solutions to problems – and who doesn’t? – why not give brainstorming a try? “When properly conducted,” Alex Osborn promises, “a brainstorming session can produce far more good ideas than a conventional conference – and in far less time!” **T**

Stan Holden, is a freelance writer living in Buffalo Grove, Illinois. The author of four how-to books, he can be reached at HoldenDM@aol.com.



In Memory of Past International President David A. Corey, 1918-2002

◆ IN DECEMBER 2002, AT THE AGE OF 84, former International President David A. Corey died of a heart attack near his home in Chesterfield, Virginia. He is survived by his wife, Shirley, and daughter, Penny.

David Corey, DTM, served as the 1973-74 president of Toastmasters International – the year the organization opened membership to women and celebrated its 50th anniversary. A retired Coast Guard commander, Corey joined Toastmasters in 1961, when the organization was about a third of its current size. In July 1972, Mr. Corey was awarded the Coast Guard Commendation Medal. The citation is the highest medal awarded for non-combat service, and it mentioned his participation in Toastmasters.

Corey was born in Jamesville, North Carolina, and attended Elon College on a basketball scholarship before entering the Coast Guard. Corey's first Coast Guard position was that of Electronics Officer for the Fifth Coast Guard Station in Norfolk, Virginia, where he met his wife, Shirley. Prior to his retirement, Corey was Chief of Boating Safety in Portsmouth, Virginia.

Outside of Toastmasters, President Corey had many hobbies, including barbershop singing, woodworking and golf. He also was active in the Boy Scouts, Jaycees, Masons and Sojourners, and in 1970 was recognized by the Portsmouth Jaycees as the Outstanding Serviceman of the Year.

After his term as Toastmasters International President, for which his chosen theme was "Forward From 50 – to Club Programming Excellence," Corey remained close friends with many fellow officers, but particularly with Robert "Bob" Blakely, DTM, who served as International President 1976-77, and Buck Engle, who served as Executive Director during Corey's term in office.

"Dave was a people-person, friendly and easy to meet," says Engle, who now lives in Aptos, California. "He was an



outstanding leader and a dedicated Toastmaster."

Bob Blakely concurs. "Dave had a unique capability of using the leadership skills and personal charisma he developed in the Coast Guard in helping Toastmasters build confidence in themselves. These attributes, along with his philosophy in life, 'Leave it better than you found it,' helped guide our organization while he served as International President."

On a personal note, Blakely added that Corey's "commanding appearance, communication skills, sense of humor and down-to-earth look at life immediately caused people to know they had a friend. Dave was a personal friend, confidant and mentor I will sorely

miss. Those whom he touched know Dave left the world a better place than he found it." **T**

Whatchathink?

Visit the home page of the TI Web site at www.toastmasters.org and click on the button to take our online poll. The results will be posted in a future issue of *The Toastmaster*. This month's question is:

Why do you belong to your Toastmasters club?

We look forward to hearing from you!

Looking for a Way to Add New *Life* to Your Club?

Present one or two of these 10-15 minute modules in your club each month and you'll be surprised how your meetings will improve, and how your club's members will incorporate the tips into their speeches.



The Better Speaker Series

- 269 The Better Speaker Series Set** - A complete set of *The Better Speaker Series* modules, including overhead transparencies (270-279) . . . **\$29.95**
- 270 Beginning Your Speech** - Suggestions for starting off your speech right. Script and overheads. **\$3.50**
- 271 Concluding Your Speech** - Tips for ending your speech with power. Script and overheads. **\$3.50**
- 272 Take the Terror Out of Talk** - Techniques for overcoming nervousness when speaking. Script and overheads. **\$3.50**
- 273 Impromptu Speaking** - Don't be caught off balance when speaking off-the-cuff! Script and overheads. **\$3.50**
- 274 Selecting Your Topic** - Running out of speech ideas? Here's how to develop new ones. Script and overheads. **\$3.50**
- 275 Know Your Audience** - If you can relate to your audience, they will relate to you. Script and overheads. **\$3.50**
- 276 Organizing Your Speech** - Once you know what to say, consider next the when and the how. Script and overheads. **\$3.50**
- 277 Creating an Introduction** - Great introductions should precede great speeches. Script and overheads. **\$3.50**
- 278 Preparation and Practice** - Techniques for preparing and rehearsing your next speech. Script and overheads. **\$3.50**
- 279 Using Body Language** - Explains how to use facial expressions, gestures, and body movement to enhance a speech. **\$3.50**

The Successful Club Series

- 289 The Successful Club Series Set** - A complete set of *The Successful Club Series* modules, including overhead transparencies (290-300) . . . **\$39.95**
- 290 The Moments of Truth** - How to recognize and deal with situations critical to club success, from a visitor's first impressions to recognition of member achievement. Includes script, overheads and a club evaluation chart. **\$10.95**
- 290-B Additional Club Evaluation Chart**. **\$.35**
- 291 Finding New Members for Your Club** - Proven methods to help you seek out those vital new members! Script and overheads. . . **\$3.50**
- 292 Evaluate to Motivate** - Your club members will learn to give evaluations that benefit the speaker, the evaluator and the audience! Script and overheads. **\$3.50**
- 293 Closing the Sale** - Exercise your powers of persuasion during those moments when a guest is deciding to join. Script and overheads. . . **\$3.50**
- 294 Creating the Best Club Climate** - Techniques for creating and maintaining a healthy club environment. Script and overheads. . . **\$3.50**
- 295 Meeting Roles and Responsibilities** - How members can successfully fill each meeting role. Script and overheads. **\$3.50**
- 296 Mentoring** - A mentor program offers many benefits for your club and its members. This program defines mentoring, explains benefits, and discusses responsibilities of mentors. Includes a Club Mentor Program Kit (Catalog No. 1163) for starting a mentor program in your club Script, 11 overheads and Club Mentor Program Kit (Catalog No. 1163). Script and overheads. **\$14.95**
- 297 Keeping the Club Commitment** - Discusses the 10 standards the comprise "A Toastmasters Promise." Includes 25 promise cards. Script and overheads. **\$3.95**
- 298 Going Beyond Our Club** - Find out about learning and leadership opportunities available to members in addition to regular club meetings and activities. **\$3.50**
- 299 How to Be a Distinguished Club** - A terrific tool to use to explain and promote the Distinguished Club Program to the members of your club. Script, overheads, and 1 copy of Distinguished Club Program booklet (Catalog No. 1111) **\$3.50**
- 300 The Toastmasters Education Program** - What does it take to receive the Competent Toastmaster (CTM) award? What about the Competent Leader? This module provides a terrific education program orientation. The information is valuable to new and experienced members. **\$3.50**

PAYMENT MUST ACCOMPANY ORDER

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$ _____ (U.S. FUNDS)

Please charge my MasterCard / Visa / AMEX (CIRCLE ONE)

Card No. _____

Exp. Date _____ Signature _____

Club No. _____ District No. _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State/Province _____

Country _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Mail to:
Toastmasters International
 P.O. Box 9052
 Mission Viejo, CA 92690 USA
 (949) 858-8255
 FAX (949) 858-1207

Merchandise Total _____

Shipping _____

CA residents add
 7.75% sales tax _____

TOTAL _____

Standard Domestic Shipping Prices - 2003

TOTAL ORDER		SHIPPING CHARGES	TOTAL ORDER		SHIPPING CHARGES
\$0.00 to	\$2.50	\$1.65	35.01 to	50.00	\$7.75
2.51 to	5.00	3.30	50.01 to	100.00	9.00
5.01 to	10.00	4.00	100.01 to	150.00	12.00
10.01 to	20.00	4.75	150.01 to	200.00	15.00
20.01 to	35.00	6.75	200.01 to	—	Add 10% of total price

For orders shipped outside the United States, see the current Supply Catalog for item weight and shipping charts to calculate the exact postage. Or, estimate airmail at 35% of order total, though actual charges may vary significantly. Excess charges will be billed. California residents add 7.75% sales tax. All prices subject to change without notice.

See the Supply Catalog for more information.