

TOASTMASTER

February 2010

The
Magic
of
Mentoring

**Overcoming
Objections**

**Leadership Lessons
of Olympic Athletes**

**Turning the Tables
on Table Topics**





The Most Important Attribute of a Leader

† When I first joined Toastmasters, I was extremely nervous every time I rose to speak.

My coping mechanism was to speak as fast as possible so the discomfort would end and I could return to my seat. During one club meeting, a speech evaluator gave me advice that changed my life: "If you focus on the audience instead of yourself, you will eliminate your fear." I did and it worked!

Focusing on others is good advice for leaders as well as speakers. The easiest – and most successful – way of leading others is to focus on service. When you serve others, they want to help you, too.

One of the greatest servant leaders I have ever known is my former employer, United States Senator Mark Hatfield. When I joined Toastmasters 15 years ago this month, Toastmasters gave me the confidence to secure my first job working for Senator Hatfield. After working for Senator Hatfield for a few months, I was given the opportunity to visit his Washington, D.C. office. While I was there, Oregon's other U.S. senator was going to be sworn in as a new senator. This was a major event, held in the Senate and attended by the Vice President of the United States, who administered the oath of office.

I desperately wanted to go to the Senate Gallery to watch the historic proceedings. Unfortunately, hundreds of others wanted to watch too, so there was no room in the Gallery.

When Senator Hatfield found out I wanted a seat, he personally walked me to the Senate Gallery and asked the doorkeeper to find me, "his trusted staff member," a seat. When a senator asks, the doorkeeper delivers. I was ushered into the Senate Gallery and witnessed the ceremony. Little did I know that after escorting me to the Gallery, Senator Hatfield immediately went to the Senate Chamber where he delivered a welcoming speech for the new Oregon Senator.

Senator Hatfield demonstrated to me that day what it truly means to be a servant leader. He focused on the needs of others (me, a new staff member) rather than his needs (delivering an important speech in front of all his colleagues and a national television audience). That simple act inspired my loyalty and service back to him for the past 15 years.

Be a servant leader to your fellow Toastmasters. We each have countless occasions to serve others, whether we are an officer, a mentor, a meeting participant or an ambassador for the Toastmasters program. Enjoy your opportunity – and responsibility – to be of service. Your journey of service begins now!

Gary Schmidt, DTM
International President

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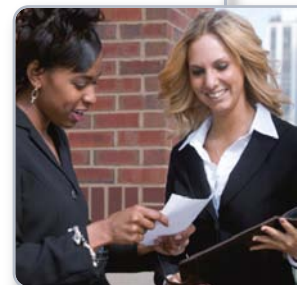


The Magic of Mentoring

How wisdom shared can change lives.

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Turning the Tables on Table Topics

Success strategies for the tongue-tied talker.

By Craig Harrison, DTM

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The Toastmasters Vision:

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

The Toastmasters Mission:

Toastmasters International is the leading movement devoted to making effective oral communication a worldwide reality. Through its member clubs, Toastmasters International helps men and women learn the arts of speaking, listening and thinking – vital skills that promote self-actualization, enhance leadership potential, foster human understanding, and contribute to the betterment of mankind.

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

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

A Tip o' the Hat to Don Ensich

The article about Don Ensich, "Staying With It" by Katherine Wertheim (October), brought back some very happy memories for me. I'm a member of the Tralee Toastmasters in Ireland, and in 1999 I spent a month in Ventura, California, with my family. I got Don's name as a contact person for local Toastmasters clubs, and I rang him on arrival in Ventura. He immediately invited me to a meeting of his club – the Sandpipers Toastmasters in Ventura – for the following day. Don drove me to every meeting that was scheduled for the month.

Along with Sandpipers members Herb Nowlin and Jim Sullivan, he brought me to a district conference in Oxnard (California), where I had the honor of addressing the delegates. As Ms. Wertheim's article illustrates, Don has lived a life of service – to the community and to Toastmasters. He made me, a stranger, feel welcome and ferried me around that beautiful part of the world. Don Ensich is a rock upon which neighborliness, courtesy, professionalism and generosity are built.

Sean Lyons • Tralee Toastmasters • Tralee, County Kerry, Ireland

Celebrating in Style

What fun, enthusiasm and pride Toastmasters clubs in Santa Ana, California, enjoyed in preparing for the 85th anniversary celebration of Toastmasters International. The organization was born in Santa Ana on October 22, 1924, and existed in the city for about 66 years before moving to its current location in Rancho Santa Margarita, California.

My club, Inner Strength, based in Santa Ana, wanted to highlight this precious local history. We bought and read *The Story of Toastmasters, Vol. II*, by Toastmasters' founder,

Ralph C. Smedley. I was mainly impressed with the book's "Toastmasters' Famous 15 Points," especially with No. 9 ("to promote friendship among Toastmasters clubs and Toastmasters") and No. 14 ("to establish the place of the Toastmasters Club in the life and work of the community").

I encourage everyone to read this book. It is packed with delightful details of Dr. Smedley's life, diligent work and caring ways.

Patricia Adelekan, Ph.D., DTM • Inner Strength Toastmasters
Santa Ana, California

A Toast to TI

Toastmasters International's 85th anniversary gave me a chance to present a wonderful toast at my club. When I was preparing it, the features in the October *Toastmaster*, especially the Viewpoint from International President Gary Schmidt and articles relating to Toastmasters founder Dr. Ralph Smedley, helped me a lot.

In my toast, I said, "October 22 is the birthday for one of our young members; however, there is an even bigger birthday party for you and me to celebrate. Today, Toastmasters International turns 85." My toast ended with how this "pukka" organization changed my life.

By the way, pukka was the Word of the Day. It means "first-class."

Jason Zhang • Deer Park Club • Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Manufacturing a Speech!

I came across Toastmasters International one evening while searching the Internet for a way to increase my communication skills. I attended a meeting that was located five minutes from my home and found it to be everything I wanted to be a part of. That was on April 1, 2009, and I must say it was challenging. I work at a manufacturing

center on the night shift and take three college classes during the day. I didn't have free time to practice, so I would practice at work while running my machine. Co-workers would find me speaking to myself, waving my hands, and practicing my gestures while trying to run a machine at the same time.

The practice did pay off, but I still couldn't overcome the nervousness. I felt that I needed to speak more to become better. So I would work all night, go home and sleep for two hours, then visit other Toastmasters groups at noon and present speeches. Little did I know that I would complete 10 speeches in eight months. Toastmasters has truly been a life-changing experience and was one of the best decisions I've ever made.

Brehon Mills, CC • SPBC Toastmasters • Richmond, Virginia

It's All in the Room

Right on the mark! I concur absolutely with the views of Gene Perret's article "Be (A)ware of 'The Room'" (November). Over the past 40 years, I've given around a thousand presentations – mostly outside of the Toastmasters environment, at maybe 600-700 different venues. The *room* aspect is something I've attempted to bring home to Toastmaster members over the years. Great to see the subject's finally getting the airing it deserves.

Arthur Thomas Ware, ATMG, CL • Dundas Club
Sydney, Australia

It Really is Academic

Regarding John Cadley's article "It's Academic" (November), may I point out that King John didn't sign the Magna Carta in 1215 (he couldn't write) – he sealed it. Sorry to be so academic.

Stuart Lawson, CTM • West Herts Speakers • St Albans, England

When the best voice to hear is your own.

The “Yes I Can” Moment

✦ If I had only one piece of advice to offer the world, it would be this: Don't let other people tell you what you're capable of. Don't let other people tell you what you can and can't do.

Ten years ago, while I was working as a database developer, a new programming language called Java was introduced. With all the buzz in the industry about Java, I was excited to learn it.

Sun Microsystems offered an exam, and if you passed, you would become a “Sun Certified Java Programmer.” I told a co-worker that I was seriously considering becoming certified in Java.

My supervisor, Kevin, heard of my plans and took me aside. He said, “Be realistic. You're just a database developer. You're never going to be able to pass that exam. Do you have any idea how difficult it is to learn Java? Do you have any idea how hard it is to pass that exam? You'd be wasting your time.”

I believed him because he was a senior manager at a prestigious company; he had a lot of experience and he knew the industry. But mostly, I believed him because he spoke with such authority. He really sounded like he knew what he was talking about, and he persuaded me to give up my goal.

That night I couldn't sleep. I lay in bed, staring at the ceiling, replaying the day's events in my head. The more I thought about what Kevin had said, the more I grew annoyed. I thought, Kevin never took that exam! He doesn't have that certification. How could he know how hard the exam is?

How could he possibly know that I wouldn't be able to pass?

I promised myself that I was going to get that certification and nobody was going to stop me. I spent the next six months with my nose in a Java book. I passed the exam and became a Sun Certified Java Programmer.

If you let other people tell you what you can and can't do, they will define you. People will try to put you in a box. Don't let them do it. Human beings have almost unlimited potential... and that includes you.

I know that earning a certification in Java isn't the biggest achievement of all time. Every day people achieve bigger and more important goals. But it was important to me. And if

by e-mail, to ask questions about the club. I sent answers and offered to help with any other questions.

After a while, I noticed a pattern to our correspondence. The first contact was always about logistics: “Where do you meet?” or “What time do you meet?” or possibly, “What are the directions?” But the second e-mail was always deeper – usually about how difficult public speaking had been for them. By this time, they were starting to get cold feet.

I learned to read between the lines of that second e-mail. They really were asking, “Am I crazy for thinking that I would be able to speak in public? Can I really do this?”

My answer was always, “Yes, you can do this! Don't let anybody tell you that you can't. Don't allow


“Human beings have almost unlimited potential... and that includes you.”

I had listened to Kevin, I would have stopped before I even began.

How many times have men and women heard comments along the lines of, “You can't become a firefighter – you're a woman.” Or, “You want to become a nurse? But that's a woman's job.” Never let another person define you that way. The interesting thing about statements like that is that if you believe them, they become true. You don't need anybody's approval to pursue your goals.

Last year I served as Vice President Membership for my local Toastmasters club. People who were considering joining Toastmasters in my area would contact me, usually

anybody to put you in that box and tell you that you aren't worthy, or it's too hard. If you do, you'll never make it.”

One of the most beautiful things about Toastmasters is that moment when you realize that you can. It is the moment when you discover that the people who said you couldn't were wrong. It is a moment that transcends public speaking. It is a moment that you carry with you throughout your life. 

Rick Silva, CC, is a member of Lakesiders Toastmasters in Wakefield, Massachusetts, and a Sun Certified Java Programmer. Reach him at silva.rick@gmail.com.

Speech training scores as the X-Bots' secret weapon.

By Anna Jaworski, ATMS, CL

Building a Better Robotics Team

“Why did you create a robot with wheels instead of treads?”

“What were your duties on the team?”

“What did you do when team members disagreed about how to build one of the arms for solving a mission?”

Those are just a few of the questions my robotics teams, comprised of children ages 8–14, have had to answer over the years. They were given five minutes to answer a barrage of questions about robotic design and programming, teamwork issues and their research.

As a FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) LEGO League (FLL) coach, I have used my Toastmasters training to help my team. It's no coincidence that during the four years I've been coaching, my robotics team has brought home trophies. With their improved communication skills, my students are better prepared for their competitions.

Do the questions in the first paragraph look like Table Topics? They did to me. After a few years of preparing for competitions, I realized how valuable Toastmasters training could be for my team. I asked parents and team members to help me remember the types of questions they had been asked in the past and then, with the help of a fellow Toastmaster, created a list of Table Topics for the team. In the past, my team members tended to

give monosyllabic answers. Consequently, my goal was to help them respond to the judges more eloquently.

FIRST LEGO League was founded in 1989 by Dean Kamen, inventor of the Segway Human Transporter, to make science and technology tangible for children by introducing real-world problems and asking them to come up with real-world solutions. The league uses special robotic kits created by LEGO that have motors, sensors and a “brain” – a special LEGO part that communicates with a computer. This allows the children to create autonomous robots (robots that respond to a computer program, versus remote-controlled robots).

Every year, FIRST comes up with a theme and a challenge to solve. Teams are told the theme a year in advance, but they aren't given the challenges until about 10 weeks before their competition. The robotic challenges are presented on a 4' x 8' playing field where the FLL teams create autonomous robots that solve as many missions as possible in a scant two-and-a-half minutes.

During the first two years I was a robotics coach, I was more worried about the robot performance portion of the competition than the research and presentations. We did the research project and the research presentation, but my team suffered from an inability to accurately and concisely explain to others what they had done. The first year we participated, a 14-year-old boy on

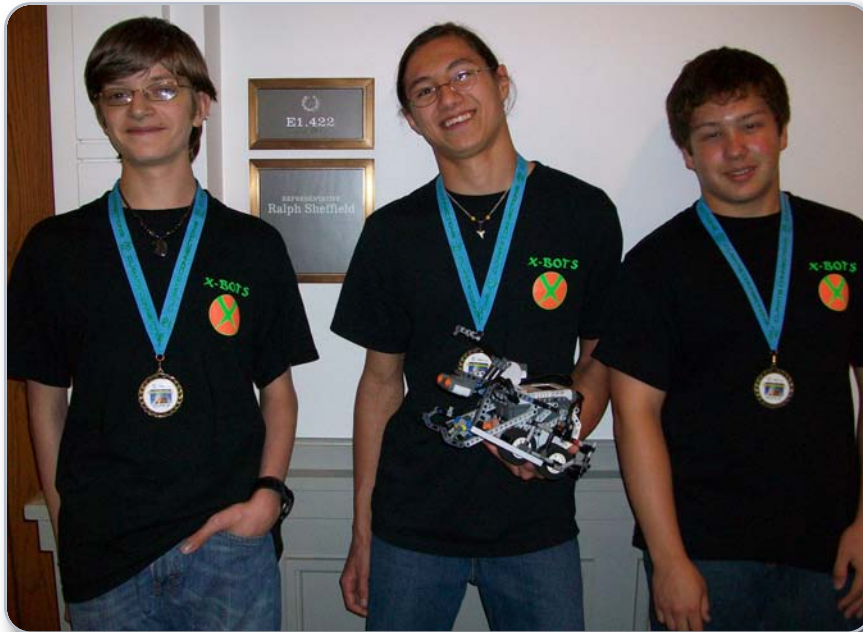
my team was new to robotics. When the judge asked him about his contribution to our research project, he said, “I didn't do anything.”

I was mortified! Each of my team members had gone on a field trip, researched different aspects of the project and practiced their presentation as a team. This boy simply froze and chose to deny he'd done anything rather than tell the judge what he knew.

Then in the third year, the light bulb came on and I realized my team was expected to answer the equivalent of Table Topics. Of course it doesn't say that in the Coaches' Handbook, but I started to see what my students needed to do from a Toastmaster's perspective.

“Why did you use wheels instead of treads?” I asked the team this year in preparation for their Technical Presentation. At first the boys simply looked at each other. “Come on!” I encouraged, “Think back to the beginning of the season. Let's talk about what we did.”

The boys discussed how they'd divided into two groups to complete their assignment, which was to create one robot with wheels geared down to be a little slower and more accurate and another robot with treads geared up to move faster. The robots were given a challenge – retrieve an object and bring it back to base. After a few minutes of discussion I asked the question again. This time I got a response! But it was sloppy and longwinded, so I



◀ (From left) Alex Jaworski, 15, Nicolas Kwan, 15, and Cheyne Murray, 14, participated in the Texas State Robotics Expo last year in Austin, Texas. Nicolas holds the team-built robot, BURT.

asked the team, “How can we say that more precisely?”

More discussion followed until veteran team member Alex came forward and said, “We used wheels instead of treads because the robot with treads was too big to maneuver through all the competition areas. Even though we geared it up, it moved too slowly for us to accomplish many missions. Our robot with wheels was faster, more accurate and small enough to get to all the missions.” Bingo!

For the research presentation, the teams are expected to put together a five-minute multi-media presentation and then spend five minutes answering questions from the judges. For the robotic-design presentation, the team is expected to spend five minutes detailing how they created and programmed their robot. Then they are given five minutes to answer questions from the judges. For the teamwork presentation they’re given 10 minutes for the judges to observe how the team works together. They also answer questions about their duties and what they learned by participating.

For the first two years, I helped my team with their presentations by writing what they needed to say on note cards. The boys read from the cards to answer the judges’ questions. At the end of the second tournament, I asked one of the judges what my team could have done better. “Get rid of the note cards,” the judge said emphatically. As we learn in Toastmasters, people listen and appreciate speakers who really know what they’re talking about instead of reading from a script.

Now, we prepare comprehensively. Throughout the season, my co-coach and I ask the children questions about what they are doing. Parents act as judges, and the kids keep a blog that details what they do during our meetings. We help the children learn correct vocabulary and good language usage in answering questions. As we often do in Toastmasters, my students write out their presentations and practice them. They understand the importance of their time limits. They rewrite their presentations until they are concise.

The week before the competition, we meet to practice presentations

before family members, who also ask practice questions. When the boys have trouble answering a question concisely, the whole team comes together to suggest better responses.

My robotics team has won prizes every year since I began sharing simple Toastmasters principles:

1st Year: 1st place Ocean Odyssey Research Award.

2nd Year: 3rd place Robot Performance and 2nd place Champion’s Award.

3rd Year: 3rd place Robot Performance and 1st place Power Puzzle Research Award.

4th Year: State Champion’s Tournament in central Texas: 3rd place Robot Performance and 2nd place Champion’s Award (for exemplary scores in research, robotic design, robotic performance and teamwork).

By winning the Champion’s Award, the highest award given to an FLL team, my team, the X-Bots, earned a place at the international tournament. They were invited to attend the FLL World Festival in Atlanta, Georgia, at the Georgia Dome.

This amazing growth in the team proved that their work on communication skills was worthwhile. The Toastmasters advice I shared gave them a distinct edge in the competition, as well as skills they’ll use for the rest of their lives. ■

Anna Jaworski, ATMS, CL, belongs to Texas Stars Toastmasters in Belton, Texas. Reach her at jaworski@vvm.com.



Leadership Lessons FROM Olympic Athletes

Top athletes and leaders refuse to accept reasons for why something can't be done.

By Victor M. Parachin

Some of the best athletes from around the world compete this month in the 2010 Winter Olympics, taking place in Vancouver February 12-28. With athletes from more than 80 countries participating in sports such as figure skating, ice hockey, skiing and snowboarding, it's the perfect time to reflect on leadership lessons demonstrated by Olympians.

- ▶ Former professional hockey player Joe Juneau lights the Olympic cauldron at a ceremony in Ottawa, Canada, held two months before the scheduled start of the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver.



“You have to get over the hurdles and keep running.”

Those are the words of Nawal El Moutawakel (pronounced “Moo-twa-keel”), Morocco’s Olympic gold medalist. El Moutawakel spent her childhood running through the streets of Casablanca in Morocco. She parlayed her speed and talent to earn a track scholarship to Iowa State University. In the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles, as the lone female representative on the

Moroccan team, she dusted her competition in the 400-meter hurdles. El Moutawakel earned Morocco its first gold medal ever and became the first Muslim woman and first African woman to win gold. She ran her victory lap with a large Moroccan flag in hand, and citizens back home in Casablanca celebrated in the middle of the night.

El Moutawakel is now a member of the International Olympic Committee, providing wide-ranging sports leadership. In her own country, she uses her celebrity status to help other Muslim women in sports. In 2007, she organized the nation’s first all-female 10-K race in Casablanca, which now attracts 27,000 runners. She has summed up her triumphs by saying, “My athletic race was the 400-meter hurdles, but it has been a metaphor for my life... *You have to get over the hurdles and keep running.*” That’s good advice for anyone, especially those in positions of leadership. Working with others and guiding organizations means getting over hurdles and moving forward. Olympic athletes are among the most disciplined, determined and dedicated people on the planet. “The Olympics remain the most compelling search for excellence that exists in sport, and maybe in life itself,” said Dawn Fraser, an extraordinary Australian who became the first woman swimmer to win gold medals in three consecutive Olympic Games (1956, ’60 and ’64).

The lives of Olympians and their achievements offer these six inspiring lessons in leadership:

1 Olympians turn adversity into advantage. Writer Napoleon Hill said, “Every adversity carries with it the seed of an equivalent or greater benefit.” That truth is embodied by the life of Hungarian pistol champion Karoly Takacs. In 1938, Takacs was serving in the Hungarian Army and was the top pistol shooter in the world. He was expected to win the gold medal in the 1940 Olympics. But one day, during a routine military training exercise, a grenade exploded in Takacs’ right hand, blowing off his shooting arm.

Takacs entered a deep depression over the loss of his Olympic dreams. However, he turned this calamity into a challenge, deciding he would learn how to shoot with his left hand. Telling no one, Takacs practiced by himself for months. In the spring of 1939, he showed up at the Hungarian National Pistol Shooting Championship. Other competitors offered their condolences on the accident. “I didn’t come to watch,” he said. “I came to compete!” He surprised everyone by winning the competition. Though the Olympics were cancelled in 1940 and 1944 because of World War II, Takacs continued to train and won gold medals at both the 1948 and 1952 Olympic Games.

2 Olympians focus on the positive. A commonly spoken proverb says, “When life hands you lemons, make lemonade.” Olympic achievers set aside the negative to focus on the positive. During World War II, Tamio

Setting a Gold Standard

TI has its own Olympic heroes

Toastmasters International knows firsthand about the leadership skills of Olympians. Terry McCann, who won a gold medal in freestyle wrestling in the 1960 Olympics, was Toastmasters' Executive Director from 1975 to 2001. Under his tenure, the organization regained financial stability, tripled in size and established a world-wide reputation for its educational programs.

The same gifts that McCann displayed as an athlete – tenacity, confidence and integrity – served him well as he guided Toastmasters for more than two decades. Members recall him as charismatic and someone whose passion and commitment inspired those around him.

"Terry's contributions to our organization is the stuff of Toastmasters lore," Past International President Dilip Abayasekara said after McCann passed away in June 2006.

Amazingly, McCann isn't the only Toastmaster to win a gold medal in the Olympics. In fact, he's not even the only one to win gold in the sport of wrestling! Michigan native Steve Fraser, a Toastmaster from 1985 to 1990, was the Olympic champion in Greco-Roman wrestling in the 1984 Games, which were held in Los Angeles, California. He was the first American ever to win a medal in Greco-Roman wrestling.

Fraser has parlayed his leadership and communication skills into coaching talented young athletes. For the past 14 years, he has been the U.S. men's coach in Greco-Roman wrestling and has coached his teams to 18 Olympic and world medals.

"Toastmasters was great for me, because I was just coming off of winning the Olympic gold medal and was thrust into the speaking world," says Fraser. "So that was part of my motivation for joining Toastmasters, to gain practice and expertise in public speaking. It did that for me."

After his 1984 victory, Fraser worked in a series of leadership and management jobs for the Domino's Pizza corporation. His work included giving motivational speeches around the country – more than 100 a year. After hearing about the benefits of Toastmasters, Fraser started the Domino's Pizza Toastmasters club at the company's world headquarters, in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He remembers calling Terry McCann for advice about starting a corporate club. Fraser says he talked to McCann a number of

"Tommy" Kono and his parents were forced from their home in San Francisco to a Japanese internment camp in the California desert. A scrawny, asthmatic child, Kono found the desert climate better for his lungs. To pass the time, he began lifting weights, discovering it was something he enjoyed and was good at. After the war,

By Paul Sterman

times over the years, adding that the fellow Toastmaster and Olympic champ gave him some public speaking tips.

"He was an amazing guy," Fraser says.

McCann's leadership went beyond Toastmasters. He also served two years as executive director of the Surf Industry Manufacturers Association, helped found a new national governing body for wrestling (now called USA Wrestling) and spent four years as its president.

Fraser says his own Olympics triumph taught him a great deal about how to succeed and lead in life. For one thing, everything is grounded in hard work. He says it took him 16,000 hours of training spread over eight years to be good enough to compete in the Olympics.

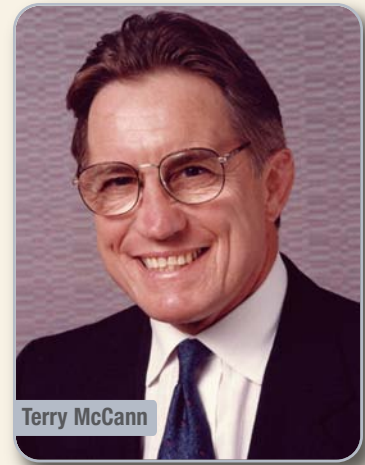
"Dedication and committing to something 100 percent would probably be the number one lesson of my Olympics experience," says the 51-year-old. "I think to be successful takes that kind of commitment, that drive – to pick yourself back up when you hit obstacles.

"Good leaders have to show how important it is to overcome adversity. Nobody becomes successful in business or athletics without overcoming tough problems," he continues. "And I truly believe that the people who get what they want, who get that pot of gold they may be striving for, are people who learn to stay focused on their goal no matter what trips them up along the way."

Fraser says it's also important to enjoy the journey. Drawing on his communication skills as a coach, he urges his wrestlers to take satisfaction in working toward their goals:

"I try to teach my guys that you might have the most grueling, exhausting practice, but when you leave the room you should feel good and happy and proud, because you're making a move toward achieving your dreams." **T**

Paul Sterman is an associate editor for the *Toastmaster* magazine.



Terry McCann

Kono continued training even harder. Despite what had happened to his family, the young Japanese-American proudly represented the United States, winning gold medals in the 1952 and 1956 Olympics as well as a silver medal in 1960. The thin, unhealthy youth who was forced into an internment camp eventually set seven Olympic

records and 26 world records. None of that may have happened had he not been confined to an internment camp as a child, where he focused on what was available, not what was left behind.

3 Olympians know the importance of integrity. Former U.S. President Abraham Lincoln said, “I desire so to conduct the affairs of this administration that if at the end, when I come to lay down the reins of power, I have lost every other friend on earth, I shall at least have one friend left, and that friend shall be down inside me.” That kind of integrity was important to Canadian Olympic sailor Lawrence Lemieux. During the 1988 Olympics in Seoul, South Korea, Lemieux’s race went well until the winds picked up and suddenly two Singapore sailors competing in a different, two-person event were thrown from their boat after it capsized under six-foot waves. One sailor desperately clung to the boat, while the other was swept more than 50 feet away by the currents.

Lemieux veered off course and rescued the sailors. Later it became clear that one, if not both, of the sailors would have drowned if not for the Canadian’s actions. Because of the delay, Lemieux came in 22rd place. “I could have won the gold,” he said, “but in the same circumstances I would do what I did again.” Lemieux’s act, however, did not go unrewarded: The International Olympic Committee (IOC) presented him with the Pierre de Coubertin Medal for sportsmanship. “By your sportsmanship, self-sacrifice and courage, you embody all that is right with the Olympic ideal,” said IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch. Lemieux showed that winning at all cost is not winning at all.

4 Olympians maintain a sense of justice and fairness toward others. The best Olympians compete fiercely but also guide their lives by justice, fairness and sportsmanship. At the men’s pole vault event in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, five athletes reached the finals. Among them were Earle Meadows of the United States and two Japanese athletes: Shuhei Nishida and Sueo Oe. Meadows took first place. After five hours of competition, Nishida and Oe tied for second place. The Japanese teammates were offered a final opportunity to have a jump-off for the silver medal but the two friends declined out of mutual respect for each other. For the purposes of Olympic-medal recordkeeping, Oe agreed to accept the bronze while Nishida took the silver, because Nishida vaulted higher on his first try than Oe did. Upon their return to Japan, Nishida and Oe had a jeweler cut their Olympic medals in two and exchanged one piece with each other. Putting the bronze and silver halves together, they created a medal that came to be known all over Japan as the “Medal of Friendship.”

5 Olympians turn setbacks into comebacks. Leadership expert Stephen Covey says, “Just as we develop our physical muscles through overcoming opposition – such as lifting weights – we develop our character muscles by overcoming challenges and adversity.”

Toward the end of World War II, Danish horseback rider Lis Hartel emerged as one of her country’s best equestrian riders. But in 1944 she became pregnant with her second child *and* contracted polio. The illness left her almost totally paralyzed. After she gave birth – the baby girl was healthy – Hartel vowed to return to equestrian competition. When she first tried to exercise, she could lift only one arm and use some thigh muscles. Then she began to crawl, and within eight months of being diagnosed with paralyzing polio she was walking, using crutches.

Eventually she learned to ride a horse again. Although she was paralyzed below the knees and needed help mounting and dismounting from her horse, she learned how to ride and perform without the benefit of the muscles in her lower legs. Remarkably, she won a silver medal in the 1952 Olympic Games – in dressage, a sport almost entirely dominated by healthy men. Hartel also won a silver medal in the 1956 Games. Her amazing comeback demonstrated the iron will of a champion.

6 Olympians break through excuses. Many people squander their potential because of self-imposed limitations. They make excuses for why they cannot engage more fully with life: *I don’t have time. I’m too young. I’m too old. I’m too tired.* Olympians, on the other hand, simply refuse to accept reasons for why things can’t be done. Consider the example set by track star Alice Coachman. Born in 1923 to a poor family in Albany, Georgia, she was a victim of racism. Segregation policies during that period prevented African-American athletes from competing in organized sports or using training facilities. But young Alice was not deterred.

She trained anywhere she could. She ran barefoot in fields and on dirt roads. She improvised with homemade equipment – using rags, ropes and sticks – to practice the high jump. Her efforts paid off. At the 1948 Olympics in London, Coachman won a gold medal in the high jump. In the process, she became the first African-American woman to win a gold medal. That year she was also the only female American athlete to win a medal of any kind.

Decades later, at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia, Coachman was named one of the 100 greatest Olympic athletes of all time. **T**

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Do your words betray you?

The Link Between Language and Leaders

The proper use of language in presentations, conversations and written documents play a tremendous role in a person's ability to lead and influence others. Mediocre written and oral communication can stall your career, jeopardize a sale, derail a project, destroy a relationship or even bring a country to a grinding halt.

Are you working to develop your leadership skills? If you are, then you should pay attention to this caveat: *Language shapes thinking*. Consider, for example, the current global economic situation and the various terms that came into play when the United States Congress attempted to legislate a solution. Various media and world leaders – depending on their bias – referred to the bill as the “bailout plan,” the “workout plan” or the “rescue plan.” With each twist of the wording, the commentators determined a different reaction to the event.

The airwaves continue to buzz from country to country with leaders and public relations representatives trying to communicate, some doing so more successfully than others.

Here are a few tips to consider when communicating with your employees, customers and the public.

Avoid “Verbing” Words

In case you haven't noticed, several new words are *trending* into the vocabulary, and many of them are



verbs. They are *impacting* the way we handle our clients, *text-messaging* our buddies and even *incenting* our employees.

Managers become particularly adept at *fast-tracking* their way around obstacles such as generally accepted grammar usage. In fact, these managers often *incentivise* outstanding performers by complimenting them on reports and proposals that contain such usages. They often *dialogue* about important projects and hope the entire team *nets* the essentials. Then, whether *downsized* or *right-sized*, teams can *strategize* organizational initiatives, *prioritize* divisional goals, *operationalize* tactical plans, *utilize*

their best resources, *marginalize* any deficiencies in their systems, *institutionalize* project outcomes, *optimize* their opportunities, *mobilize* human talent and *capitalize* on their investments.

Dump the doublespeak and jargon. Before you add an *ing* or an *ize* to a noun, or coin a new word completely, consider checking your dictionary to see if a perfectly precise term already exists for the concept you want to convey.

Get the Grammar Right

The importance of language to career and social standing is, with few exceptions, a universal issue. People from all cultures insist that

proper language separates the wealthy from the poor, the educated from the uneducated – and most important of all – the leaders from the followers.

Before you write anything, consider how your e-mail, proposals, handouts and slides affect your image. Imagine working for the manager who wrote this e-mail:

Hi Team;

Just a quick up date. Wanted to let you know that the supplier, which we had chosen for the Universal project has declined to accept our contract terms. And the fact that we will be conducting an other round of meetings to agree on a alternative vendor by the end of June. On another note you're list of equipment, should be forwarded to me by May 5 however we may postpone budget discussions at the next staff meeting I'll let y'all know by Tuesday.

Regards,

Hank

Embarrassing, isn't it? You only make it worse when you follow up with poor grammar in your speech. Using the tools of language correctly to improve in this area gives you the power to communicate clearly and influence people.

Your image is conveyed by more than your appearance and energy level. Frankly, bad grammar is like bad breath – even your best friends won't tell you. So if you want to check for a gap in your skills, take a free online assessment at **www.howsyourgrammar.com**.

For more personal help, you can ask the evaluators of all your Toastmasters speeches to report on your grammar usage and offer suggestions for improvement. They should go into greater detail than the meeting's grammarian. Additionally, you could ask the grammarian to listen to you carefully and provide feedback on grammar errors. This will help you

to improve even when you're not giving a scheduled speech.

Frame Negative News Positively

"Inside every cloud there's a silver lining," became a cliché for good reason and should be considered in all bad-news situations. As a presenter and leader, you may be called on to deliver bad news. If your audience sees the glass as half empty, you have every right – even an obligation – to help them see it as half full.

“Before you write anything, consider how your e-mail, proposals, handouts and slides affect your image.”

Instead of hiding important details, provide them in such a compelling way that you gain buy-in for your action plan. One seasoned CEO was forced to announce a salary freeze to his ailing organization in the high-tech industry shortly after he took the helm. While crunching the numbers, he became increasingly aware that his predecessor had approved annual raises and bonuses at the expense of capital improvements, research and development, and marketing efforts. As a result, the competition had outstripped them. Armed with industry charts of compensation studies, competitor pricing, research and demand, budgeting for prior years, capital budgets and projects put on hold, he laid out the facts to his employees. Then he summed up this way:

“In almost all job classifications, according to industry averages, you're overpaid – and that has led us almost to the point of demise. The good news: We're not going to lower your salary. The bad news: We'll not give any more cost-of-living raises for the next three years.

Any bonuses will be based on performance and contribution. We can't afford to do otherwise, or none of us will have jobs five years from now. Take a look at the facts. Punch holes in the information I'm about to give you, if you can. Let's talk about the reasoning behind this decision. I'm open for questions.”

The employees asked many questions. But with complete information that had been missing in previous years, a straightforward explanation and positive language

about the future, the CEO gained their trust and buy-in.

Tell the Whole Truth

Every day we are asked different questions from bosses, customers, suppliers, co-workers, kids, spouses or neighbors. Rather than provide easy answers, it's better to offer truthful, but often more difficult responses. Trust builds over time. It can be dashed quickly with evasion and equivocation. Some executives pride themselves on being able to “spin” their way out of almost any situation by twisting truths.

However, by twisting the truth less and explaining it more, you'll find your listeners trust your leadership because they know they can believe what you tell them. **T**

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How to hurdle the protests in your path.

Overcoming Objections

Regardless of your profession or life circumstances, you're always selling something to others. You're urging your boss to implement your idea. You're pitching your product to a customer. You're convincing your spouse to go out to dinner. All these interactions are selling situations where you might come head to head with an objection. Maybe your boss doesn't think your idea will work; perhaps your customer only wants the product in red; your spouse says they're too tired to go out. In order to persuade the other person, you need to overcome their objections.

While many people shudder at the thought of having to deal with objections, if you handle them

Do you ever wonder why some people effortlessly sell their ideas or products while others flounder and never seem to make any headway? Chances are the person who sells easily is actually an astute objection-handler. Here are six techniques to help you excel in this area:

1 Prepare for the objection. In any sales situation, you will *bear* a series of objections. If you give up after the first one, you've lost, usually before the selling has even really started. But if you hang in there, you have a good chance of succeeding and getting the sale. Experienced salespeople know the most common objections they encounter, and they have prepared

encounter and prepare a response for each.

2 Look forward to objections. One of the keys to dealing with objections is to embrace them rather than fight them. If you spend all your time dreading the possibility of facing disagreements, then you won't be doing what you need to be doing, which is solving your customer's or listener's problem. Realize that an objection is simply your listener's way of saying, "I need to know more." It's actually a good sign, because the other person is still standing there; they didn't walk away. They want you to say more, and with the objection, they're guiding you to the information they need.

3 See their point of view. Always put yourself in your customer's or listener's shoes. Ask yourself, "Why is this an objection in her mind?" Many times complaints are based on problems people have had in the past with similar products, services or ideas. Your listener is simply trying to make sure they won't experience that same problem with you. Other times protests are nothing more than a stall tactic. The person is trying to delay the decision. That's why you need to find out if that objection is valid. If they say, "I can't do business with your

"Realize that an objection is simply your listener's way of saying, 'I need to know more.'"

properly they actually *help* you close the sale. Fortunately, in Toastmasters you often hear disagreement with your ideas. Maybe it's someone who protests some aspect of your speech. Or perhaps someone asks a question that contradicts your entire topic. These are prime opportunities to practice your objection-handling skills.

responses they have fine-tuned over the years. That way, when they hear the complaint, they simply state their prepared response and don't have to "wing it" or wonder what to say next. So whether you give the same presentation all the time or sell a new idea every day, take the time to think about what objections you're most likely to



company because you don't deliver on Saturday," you need to ask, "Is delivery on Saturday really important to you?" They may answer "yes" but more likely will say something like this: "Not really. I guess I could take the delivery late Friday afternoon." Now you've taken that objection and you've dismissed it.

4 Keep the customer's needs first.
4 If you're doing your job properly,

you're looking out for the other person's best interests. If you're strictly trying to "make the sale," you'll lose in the long term. So frame every objection and response so that it keeps the other person's priorities first. After all, if your customers have good results with your product or service, they'll come back for more, they'll recommend you, and you'll receive spin-off business. Keep the other person's needs first,

no matter what the objection or your response to it.

5 Propose your solution. The final step is proposing a solution to the objection. If they say not having Saturday delivery is a real problem, you have to find other solutions. You may suggest setting up a late Friday or an early Monday delivery. Chances are you'll find some solution that works. Once the other person agrees to one of your solutions, you need to restate it, as in, "Great. Late Friday delivery will work for you." Then, without pausing, move on to your next point or to the close. Why? Because once you pause, you give the person a chance to think of another objection. Once you confirm the solution, you have to move the conversation forward.

6 Make Objections Work for You.
6 Always remember that only you know what your organization's capabilities are. So if you're focused on what's best for the customer and you apply your knowledge of the product or service to their situation, you will come up with a solution to every objection. These objection-handling techniques will help you have greater success in all areas of your life. **T**

Sam Silverstein is the past president of the National Speakers Association. An expert on organizational leadership and growth, he is the author of many books, including *No More Excuses*, and spoke on that topic in his keynote presentation at Toastmasters' 2009 International Convention in Connecticut. Reach him at www.SamSilverstein.com.



By Karen E. Novek, DTM

The *Magic* of Mentoring

A Chinese proverb says *“Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.”*

**How wisdom shared
can change lives.**

It's true. If we seek help from knowledgeable and experienced people, we can avoid making unnecessary mistakes that waste valuable time and ultimately achieve our goals faster. This is the concept behind the Toastmasters mentoring program.

I joined Toastmasters in July of 2006. I'll never forget it. It was during a time in my life when I was stuck.

I had low self-esteem and no ambition. Then one day I met a woman who told me how Toastmasters had changed her life. I'd heard about the organization, but public speaking always made me feel extremely nervous. She invited me to attend a meeting that night. When I arrived, I was warmly greeted by the club president, who immediately introduced me to other members.

It felt as if they were inviting me to become a part of their family. I joined that evening.

Soon I was asked to serve as the Sergeant at Arms. I realized that by taking on an officer role I would not only learn leadership skills, but I would be forced to build my confidence. Shortly after that, I asked Barry, the club president, to become my mentor. He not only worked with me in developing my speeches, he taught me about meeting roles, club protocol, speech standards and more. He also encouraged me to take risks.

Because of his encouragement, I learned to become the best I could be. Soon I was attending Toastmasters conferences. I became club president and then area governor. I even began to teach Speechcraft classes to business executives. Thanks to Barry, I went from being quiet and introverted to a confident go-getter in fierce pursuit of my greatest dreams.

New Members Need Guidance

Take a moment to think about your first Toastmasters meeting. How did you feel? Once you joined, did you have a mentor who showed you the way and helped you get the most from the Toastmasters program? All new members could use someone to teach them club protocol and customs and show them how to prepare and participate in various meeting roles as well as help them prepare and rehearse their first few speeches. Mentors provide this valuable service.

Last year my mother decided to join my club. As we drove home after her first meeting, she said, "Wow, it's a bit overwhelming; there's so much to learn. There are so many great speakers. Will I ever get to that point?" She reminded me that most new members join because they want to improve their communication skills. Remember: They're not familiar with your club's agenda and meeting roles such as Ah-Counter, timer or grammarian. Everything that happens in your club is new to them. It's important to quickly assign each new member a mentor so they won't get discouraged.

Toastmasters International defines a "mentor" this way: "A mentor helps an inexperienced person, sometimes called a 'mentee.' A mentor serves as a role model, coach and confidante by offering knowledge, insight, perspective and wisdom that will allow a mentee to learn and advance more quickly." Mentors aren't just for new members; experienced members can benefit, too. For example, say you want to add

humor to a speech and there's a club member who excels at "the funny." Why not ask them to mentor you on your speech?

I've learned the rewards of being a mentor both inside and outside Toastmasters. You can, too. Perhaps a colleague comes to you for advice on a

"All new members can use someone to teach them club protocol and customs, show them how to prepare for and participate in various meeting roles, and help them prepare and rehearse their first few speeches."

project because you have experience. You can provide your own insights on the subject, refer them to books or other material that you found helpful, introduce them to other people who can help and provide feedback on their work.

Qualities of a Mentor

To become a mentor, you must be:

- **Available.** Spend at least 15 minutes a week helping with speech assignments, answering questions and reviewing meeting roles. During the first few weeks most new members may require more time.
- **Patient.** People learn at different speeds and some need more guidance than others.
- **Sensitive.** Tact and diplomacy are vital. Some people join Toastmasters to overcome shyness or fear of speaking. As a mentor, always keep comments motivating and encouraging.
- **Respectful.** Each person is unique. Respect your mentee's wishes and don't push too hard.
- **Flexible.** Life happens. Always remember that not everything goes according to plan and you may have to allow for last-minute changes.
- **Supportive.** Show pride in your club and what it has done for you. Be an advocate for the Toastmasters program.
- **Knowledgeable.** Before becoming a mentor you must have completed at least five speeches in the basic manual, served in most meeting roles, developed enough speaking skills to help another member and be familiar with your club's routines as well as the Toastmasters education program.
- **Confident.** A mentor should come across as self-assured and friendly, eager to help.

- **Listening.** By being a good listener, you enable the mentee to articulate any problem and sort things out.
- **Concerned.** You must truly want to help others.

Mentoring Steps

Explaining the entire Toastmasters program right off the bat to a new member can be overwhelming and confusing for both of you. Take it one step at a time. In addition, be patient with your mentee, your schedule and yourself. If you can't fit all the following action items into a single meeting, plan additional time with your mentee, going at a pace that works for both of you. With that in mind, here are guidelines for planning what to do before, during and after each meeting:

First Meeting

1. Get acquainted and establish your mentoring relationship.

- Help your mentee become comfortable and feel welcome in the club.
- Share how you've benefited from Toastmasters in your personal and professional life.
- Explain the basic parts of the club meeting. Answer any questions about what is taking place.
- Introduce the mentee to other club members.
- Use the new-member information survey as a tool to determine your mentee's short- and long-term goals.

2. Orient the new member to club customs and procedures.

- Describe in detail the various elements involved in the meeting (i.e., prepared speeches, Table Topics, evaluations and voting).
- Review how to use the CC and CL manuals in the New Member Kit, if they've received it, or show them what to expect, using your own manuals as an example.
- Invite your mentee to attend any upcoming special events.

3. Help your mentee connect with resources.

- Review the Toastmasters Promise together and explain its value.
- Make your mentee aware of all resources, such as the Toastmasters Web site, the *Toastmaster* magazine, conferences, training workshops and manuals.

Remember, new members tend to be shy. Take the initiative to contact them between meetings and follow

up on a regular basis. Keep in mind that new members can offer fresh perspectives and ideas.

Second Meeting

1. Help your mentee leap into action.

- Show this person how to sign up for meeting roles, such as the Ah-Counter, timer or grammarian. Make sure they're on the rotating agenda schedule.
- Provide a club contact list. Point out who to contact if your mentee is signed up for a role but cannot attend.

2. Encourage your mentee's skill development.

- Schedule your mentee's Ice Breaker speech as soon as possible. Be available to help with speech ideas and organization.
- Use the "Sandwich" approach when critiquing a mentee's progress. Provide positive feedback (acknowledge progress), offer a suggestion or two and then end with positive comments.

Third Meeting

1. Maintain support for your mentee's skill development.

- Continue to help with your mentee's speech assignments and preparation for meeting roles.
- Praise your mentee on activities done well and offer encouraging comments about their progress.

2. Help your mentee discover a path toward leadership.

- Explain club officer duties and help them to understand why being an officer develops leadership skills and requires a commitment to helping the club and its members be successful.
- Invite your mentee to workshops, lectures or other programs that may enhance their growth as a public speaker or leader.

3. Introduce your mentee to opportunities in the Toastmasters organization.

- Explain speech contests and how they work at the club, area, division, district and international levels.
- Describe the TI organization and opportunities for leadership beyond club level.


Mentoring Helps Everyone

The next time you find yourself at a professional sporting event, pay attention to what's happening on the sidelines. Chances are you'll see that young superstar standing alongside an older player who's not in the lineup. That

more-experienced athlete is helping the young player navigate unfamiliar territory. Similar mentoring takes place in every field of human endeavor and provides numerous opportunities, challenges and rewards. Become a mentor and experience them for yourself.

If you want to grow as a Toastmaster and meet your potential in a faster way, *get* a mentor. If you want to expand your potential and experience deeper satisfaction as a Toastmaster, *be* a mentor. My life has been transformed by my mentoring experience and so can yours.

Toastmasters Products

Interested in starting a mentor program within your club? Check out Mentoring (Item 296). It is part of *The Successful Club Series* and includes a script, PowerPoint presentation and **Club Mentor Program Kit** (Item 1163). 

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By Craig Harrison, DTM

Making 'The Ask'

How you ask for help from a mentor often determines the results you receive. Asking the right way is an important skill that can help you build committees, form teams and complete projects – even help you find a marriage partner. Here's the most effective way to ask for help:

- **What's in it for them?** Phrase your request in terms of the benefits to the person (or people) you're asking for help. Speak to what's in it for them. Why will they benefit from saying yes to your request?
- **Be positive.** Will the experience be fun? High profile? Will it build new skills? Lead to a promotion? Make the world a better place? Will it give all involved a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction?
- **Show respect and appreciation for your prospect.** When you recognize a person's skills, track record, personality or other attributes, he or she feels special. It's flattering and affirming to be asked to participate, whether as a mentor, club officer, contest chair or other role.
- **Give accurate and clear expectations of what the position requires.** It's tempting to tell people what they want to hear, or only emphasize what is easy or fun. Give a fair explanation of your request.
- **Listen to the prospect's concerns.** What are they worried about? How will they base their

decision? Strive to understand their needs, fears and constraints.

- **Give your prospect an appropriate amount of time to make an informed decision.** Don't pressure, manipulate or overwhelm your prospect. This often backfires.
- **Strive for win-wins.** Use flexibility and creativity to find mutually acceptable outcomes.
- **Accept their answer**, whether or not they agree to your request.
- **Consider a counter-offer should your initial request be rejected.** Having a fallback offer allows your prospect to join your team or work with you in whatever capacity they are able to.
- **Thank them either way for their time and willingness to consider your offer.** By treating them with respect and care, they are more likely to say yes in the future. 

Craig Harrison, DTM, is the founder of LaughLovers club in Oakland, California. He is a professional keynote speaker, trainer and principal of Expressions Of Excellence™. For more resources, visit www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com.

Taking the “EE!” out of committee work.

Creating and Managing Effective Teams

✦ Grinding through Toastmasters’ business, or for that matter business, often requires the collective efforts and brain power of a committee. Unfortunately, receiving the benefits of that committee work can be a nightmare. Dysfunctional committees invariably produce poor and sometimes untimely work, animosity between members and disharmony in the organization. So how do you build a committee that works effectively as a team?

Critical First Steps: Find Your Way

The difference between a group and a team is that a group is a collection of individuals, while a team is bound by a common goal. All teams are groups, but not all groups are teams.

The first step is to have a goal. “Let’s create a committee,” is often the first thought people have when a problem arises. Don’t create a committee when a problem can be solved by an individual. If a committee needs to ask, “Why are we here?” it shouldn’t be there.

Let’s say you must accomplish something that can’t be done by an individual – what then? Committee composition is important. The members should have the *desire* to achieve the task plus the knowledge, skills and abilities to get it done. Assigning people to a committee simply because they aren’t busy enough is a bad idea. Assess potential committee members based on:

- Desire
- Tools to make a contribution
- Collaborative attitude

Regarding that last quality, understand that some people can contribute better by working alone rather than as part of a team. Use your organization’s people for their strengths.

The final component of your committee’s work is to strive for an outcome that everyone can agree on. As soon as the organization assigns goals to the committee leader, make sure they’re communicated to the team and agreed to. Tell the leader, “Here’s what we want to accomplish,” then work backward with objectives, strategies, tactics, activities, timelines and assignments.

Five-Step Cycle of Committee Dynamics

There’s a predictable process for committees or teams whose members don’t know each other well. Understanding the process can save time, eliminate squabbling and promote productivity and harmony.

- **Forming.** The committee meets, outlines goals and processes, and begins building relationships while working through potential problems with structure and leadership.



- **Storming.** An inevitable period of turmoil. Questions arise about leadership, accountability and the goals. Members are uncomfortable as they learn that some can’t be counted on, or the reverse – they try to do everything themselves.

- **Norming.** The team reaches an agreement on goals, committee form and format. This period is characterized by cooperation, mutual support and accord. Group norms are developed that allow the team to compensate for the weaknesses of individual members.

- **Performing.** This is a period of accomplishment, achievement, productivity and pride as the committee works together and reaches its goals.
- **Adjourning.** The committee members address their mixed feelings of accomplishment and loss as the team achieves its goals. Success ultimately means that the team members must go their separate ways.

Tips for Leading Effective Committees

A leader's role in a committee has a huge effect on whether the committee's work is useful. A leader who monopolizes discussions and demeans others' opinions won't receive the benefit of the others' thoughts. It's far better to encourage input, delay criticism and create an environment that nurtures open expression.

Here are a few tips to achieve effective dialogue and committee work:

- Encourage all committee members to participate and contribute. Later, this will ensure that everyone buys in to the common goal.
- Make the process of generating ideas and evaluating them distinct from each other. Too often, a committee member will put an

idea on the table only to have it shot down immediately, which discourages and stifles the creativity of other members. Divide the two processes into distinct sessions.

and the workplace. When they're called for, committees are valuable. It's up to team members and their chairperson to use the process most efficiently, keeping the interest of

"All teams are groups, but not all groups are teams."

- Don't respond to each participant or dominate the ongoing discussions. A chairperson's responsibility is to elicit ideas, not supply them.
- Look forward, not backward. Permitting too much complaining about how "We can't do this because last time . . ." means you can't accomplish the committee's goals at all.

Love them or hate them, committees are a reality in civic organizations

the organization and the participants in mind. If the leaders understand how to get committee members to buy into the five-step cycle, they are well on their way to achieving even the most challenging of goals. **T**

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e've all experienced the frustration of returning to our seats after delivering a less-than-stellar Table Topics response, only to realize how we should or could have answered the given topic.

To protect you from such encounters in the future, here are a dozen strategies you can employ when responding to Table Topics. These are sure-fire frameworks for verbalizing your thoughts. With them, your impromptu battles will be won, and your tongue untied, as you learn how to turn the tables on tough topics.

1 Bridging. *Bridging* gets you from what you *don't* know ... to what you do know through the figurative building of a bridge – a sentence you use to connect the unknown to the known. The sooner you build your bridge, the quicker you'll be on safe ground.

TOPIC: Your car didn't start this morning. How would you trouble-shoot it?

- **Problem:** You as the respondent don't have a mechanical bone in your body. You don't even pump your own gas – you're a nurse.
- **Solution:** Find a way to "bridge" from what you don't know (fixing cars) to what you do know (mending humans).

RESPONSE: "Not being a mechanic, I would imagine fixing a car to be like fixing a human. First you must diagnose the problem..."

Here's another example of bridging from the unknown to the known:

TOPIC: How would you chair a peace negotiation between a Hamas leader and the Prime Minister of Israel?

- **Problem:** You don't follow foreign affairs, aren't particularly interested in politics and haven't followed issues in the Middle East at all.
- **Solution:** Bridge to a familiar situation – a feuding family. Describe approaches you'd use with Uncle Harry and Aunt Bess. Seating arrangements, small praise, patience and humor.

RESPONSE: "This reminds me of a situation in my own family, when we had a terrible argument that nearly ended family get-togethers forever. Here's how I put a stop to the fighting..."

2 Reframing. Suppose you're hit with a topic you just don't like or one that's not right for you. Don't despair – *reframe* it as one you'd like to respond to. Redefine the topic as you believe it should be, or at least the way you'd like it to be. Keep the structure but alter the subject. Rephrase the question or even challenge

TURNING T

on Table Topics



HE TABLES

it; explain why the question given is not the right question at all!

TOPIC: Who's better, Cristiano Ronaldo or Fernando Torres?

- **Problem:** Who cares? You don't. You don't have a clue who these people are and don't care about soccer.
- **Solution:** Find a pair of performers you believe are worthy of comparing. Perhaps it's Serena vs. Venus Williams in tennis, or opera singers Placido Domingo vs. Luciano Pavarotti, or maybe even that classic debate of coffee vs. tea.

3 Dialogue. Also known as thinking out loud, use of *dialogue* involves asking rhetorical questions of your audience as you reason together. You're also probing for areas you know well enough to continue with, as well as areas that the audience will react to. Consider this technique a closely monitored stream of consciousness.

4 Quotes, Jokes and Sayings (use what you know). Does the topic remind you of a *quote*? Or a *joke*? Or a *saying*? You can latch onto that to jump-start your response. Remember, you're buying time to think, brainstorm and draw the audience in, all at the same time.

5 The Monodrama. Take the audience into your mind as you reason, out loud, the answer to the question. Tell us how you'd accomplish something or what you'd experience as something happens to you – from your travails as a tourist in an inhospitable country to preparing for your first blind date in years. Share your thoughts on the way to the altar or relive the most embarrassing moment from your school days. Don't just recount it; take us there, immerse us in the experience and relive it with your entire body.

TOPIC: In order to get your driver's license, you must take the skeptical driving instructor for a drive.

RESPONSE: "It's hard to say which one of us was more nervous. I could taste the fear in my stomach and smell the fear coming from him. Perhaps it was the various dents, scrapes and paint colors from other cars pock-marking my vehicle. The turning point came when we strapped in and I stopped to recite the Lord's Prayer. I thought his eyes were going to pop out!"

6 The Far Side. Take your topic to extremes. By exaggerating or embellishing, you heighten the seriousness or absurdity, whichever the case may be. This might involve presenting a "What if..." question or "Just suppose..." scenario. If you're telling a story, it will

Which One Would You Choose?

Putting it all together, here's how each of the 12 strategies might work for a particular Table Topics question.

TOPIC: What is the secret to passing a class in organic chemistry?

1 Bridging
The secret to passing organic chemistry is similar to the secret to passing advanced calculus. It all falls into place the third time you take it...

2 Reframing
I can't tell you how to pass, but I can speak authoritatively on how not to pass. Cut classes, skip labs, cram the night before midterms, date the professor's daughter...

3 Dialogue
Student: Professor, I'll do anything to pass organic chemistry this term!

Professor: Anything?
Student: Anything.
Professor: Even...study?

4 Quotes, Jokes and Sayings
How can you tell I failed organic chemistry? I'm like comedian Steven Wright. I bought powdered water, but I could never figure out what to add to it!

5 The Monodrama
My moment of truth has arrived. It's final exam day for Organic Chemistry. Pass, and I become a doctor, carry on a family tradition, marry my high school sweetheart and live a life of luxury and prestige. Fail, and I become a veterinary doctor, a doggie doctor, and always wonder what could have been. I studied, prayed, ate a great breakfast and even helped an old lady across the street on my way to class. I've got my lucky-charm eraser. My heart is pounding. It's a matter of seconds before the test begins...

soon become a tall tale. If your topic has drama, you'll heighten it to melodrama. Absurdity is actually less threatening to an audience.

TOPIC: Should we raise taxes?

RESPONSE: "Absolutely. Not only should we raise taxes, but just think of the benefits we'll achieve when we raise the tax rate to 98 percent. We'll have all the money we need for programs, defense and government. We can bail out everybody! We won't need banks and investment counselors. Nobody will have money to shop, so there'll be fewer TV commercials and billboards. Won't life be wonderful?"

7 Moderator (also known as Point/Counterpoint). Rather than take one side of an issue that you may or may not be prepared to argue strenuously enough, take the middle road by representing both sides. Imagine yourself as Oprah Winfrey, the impartial moderator, airing both sides and straddling the middle position. We all know a couple of arguments for *and* against issues such as gun control, smoking in public or raising taxes.

This is a safe approach for a Toastmasters meeting and it provides great practice for outside encounters where being noncommittal is preferable. Use a few simple phrases to let the audience know where you're heading:

6 The Far Side
To pass O-Chem I channeled the great minds of science: Louis Pasteur, Madame Curie and Albert Einstein. I can hear them each exhorting me in a particular kind of science. If only they wouldn't all talk at the same time. And they all have accents! Now they're arguing with each other. This is becoming distracting...

7 Moderator
We're watching student Craig Harrison take his final exam. Odds-makers listed him at 3-1 to pass. He's coasted through most of his classes this year without cracking a book like his classmates. He's headed for a crash. He thinks he's smarter than he is. You recall earlier he blew several tiles off the ceiling with his ill-fated lab work.

8 Outer Space
Earthlings are funny... studying organic chemistry. As Arcturians, we access planetary information telepathically from vast knowledge banks. We don't need tables, calculators or charts.

TOPIC: Should smoking in public be banned?

RESPONSE: "On the one hand we all know... (45 seconds). But then again, consider the flip side... (45 seconds). Choose your ending: Do this. Do that. Do both. Do nothing."

8 You Came From Outer Space. Step out of yourself to respond to a Table Topic. Be an extraterrestrial and put an alien spin on the topic. Instead of being Joe from District 32, answer as if you're a stranger in a strange land. A corollary is pretending to be someone from another country.

TOPIC: How do you feel about special commuter lanes for carpoolers?

RESPONSE: "I'm Mork from Planet Ork, what is this thing I'm observing? People lining up and entering big moving boxes with wheels on them. They're like two-legged ants in funny roving rectangles that move in straight lines and turn at right angles."

9 Transcend Time. You needn't answer as yourself in February 2010. Assume the character and sensibilities of another person in time, real or fictional.

TOPIC: What are your thoughts on public speaking?

(Continued on page 29)

9 Time Traveler
In 2010, Organic Chemistry is hard. However, in 1010 Organic Gardening was the tough subject. Many failed it and were forced to become hunter-gatherers. Never mind their GPA! They worried about a shorter life expectancy!

10 Play Devil's Advocate
For me O-Chem was easy. Leisure Sports was the real challenge. Ping pong and tiddlywinks required dexterity that I sorely lacked. I kept breaking equipment. I kept getting timeouts.

11 Mystery
Today we learn our final exam scores. Did I pass? Or not? Did I study enough? Or not? I feel like a defendant awaiting a jury's verdict. The professor calls out our names:
Adams, Banks, Carillo, Daggett, Engel...

12 Gibberish
Make it up!

Turning the Tables on Table Topics

(Continued from page 25)

RESPONSE: "I'm Demosthenes and I better take those rocks out of my mouth so I can enunciate a response to that very important subject..."

Consider this perspective:

TOPIC: Freeway traffic.

RESPONSE: "Captain's Log star date 5419... investigating planet comprised of millions of multi-colored rectangular projectiles traversing established corridors. When mating occurs, infrequently, others pass by slowly, some flash lights and motion along corridor comes to a complete stop."

10 Play Devil's Advocate. This is an old favorite of authors, poets and even political candidates. It has built-in counterpoint. Take what you're given and argue the opposite of what you would normally want to express.

TOPIC: Should the government spend more money on education?

RESPONSE: "No, I say we give some money to the television cartoon producers instead! Let me tell you why..."

11 Everyone Loves a Mystery. Build suspense into your response. Leave us with a question or at least some

doubt. Paint a picture, but leave a few strokes unpainted. Or set us up to expect one picture before surprising us with another. Give us a twist. Shock us! Introduce speculation, a shadow of a doubt or an unknown element. You might even end on a question or in mid-sentence.

12 When All Else Fails ... Say Nothing (at Length). If you're absolutely, 100 percent stumped, don't give in. Speak but don't say anything. Use a string of openings, small talk, clichés or even gibberish. Remember, content is only part of the presentation. Body language, inflection, nuance and other embellishments all contribute to a successful topic response.

Repeat the question, repeatedly:

TOPIC: "To Be or Not to Be?"

RESPONSE: "I thank you for asking me that profound question.

To be or not to be. (pause)

To BE or not to BE

To be or NOT, to be. That is the question.

Or is it?

Is it or is it Not, that is to Be...determined."

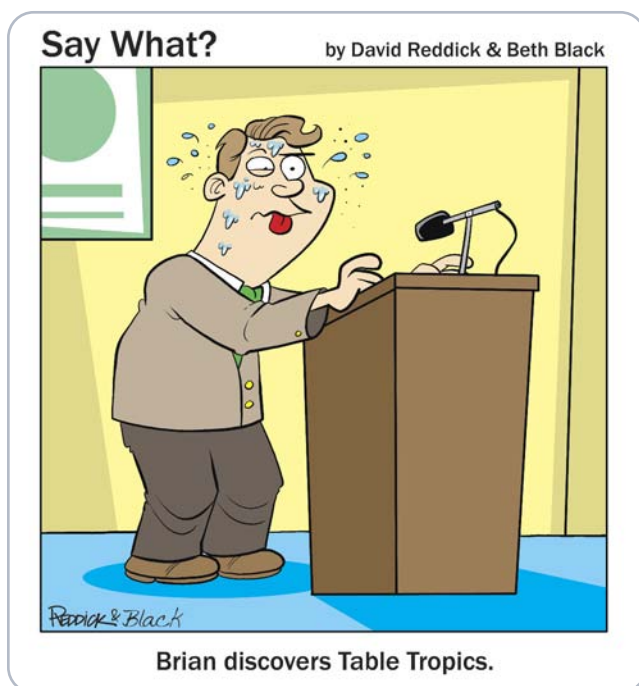
Here's an alternate response to the same topic:

TOPIC: "To Be or Not to Be, that is the question."

RESPONSE: "I'm glad you asked that question. For throughout time, that has been *the* question. I've read it in books, heard it on stage and wondered it myself. To Be or Not to Be? And whether or not you know the answer, or can explain it to others, it is a question you must ultimately answer for yourself. To Be or Not to Be? Some questions have a yes or no answer. Others are multiple choice. Still others are trick questions. If ever there were a \$64 question, this would be it. To Be or Not to Be? They say that is the question, but I say it is more of a dilemma, a conundrum, a riddle, a mystery of life and a very good Table Topic. But rather than let it work me up, I remain nonplused. After all, to worry about whether To Be or Not to Be is really *much ado about nothing!*"

One contestant I know gave a Table Topics response entirely in chicken: Every utterance was a form of bawk, bawk, bawk. Unfortunately he was disqualified for fowl language! So good luck, have fun and don't run any of the timekeeper's red lights! 🐔

Craig Harrison, DTM, is the founder of LaughLovers Toastmasters in Oakland, California. He is a professional speaker and principal of Expressions of Excellence. For more information, visit www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com.



Don't Get Comfortable

“Life begins at the end of your comfort zone.”

– NEALE DONALD WALSCH

Has your comfort zone become a rut so deep that you need a ladder just to peek out? Do creature comforts and distractions keep you from moving forward? Then it's time to get motivated, get moving and stretch your limits.

Chang Ming Ye, Huiju Park and Gustavo Duarte stretch their limits every day. Simply talking on the phone is a leap out of their comfort zones. While that may not seem like a big deal for many of us, it is for them because English is not their native language. For these three Toastmasters, phone conversations can be frustrating. Understanding

leadership roles and present speeches. Each joined Toastmasters to improve his English and achieve his professional goals.

A natural adventurer, Chang Ming Ye left his home country of China nine years ago as a successful professor. He wanted to explore the world and start a new career in the United States, but

realized the organization could help him. He joined Pacesetters, and as he stretched himself by taking on meeting roles, Ye's confidence grew. In just one year, he advanced from a novice speaker to club president; he is currently working on the Advanced Communicator Bronze and Competent Leader awards.

To challenge yourself as a Toastmaster, Ye advises taking on all meeting roles and participating in district speech contests. “Encourage new members to reach beyond their limits,” he adds.

When Huiju Park came to the United States from Korea, he practiced English by listening to CNN and ABC News, but he decided his speech sounded unnatural and rehearsed. “It was like I was reading the news when I talked,” he notes. He credits Toastmasters with helping him become more comfortable in front of an audience and is pursuing his goal of becoming a professor and using his speaking skills to inspire students.

Gustavo Duarte, a native of Mexico, pushes beyond his comfort zone with the help of curiosity and a sense of humor. “I choose speech topics that I'm not an expert on so I will have to research and organize the information,” he says. “I also talk to people with different backgrounds, careers, religions and politics so I

“I choose speech topics that I'm not an expert on so I will have to research and organize the information.”

– GUSTAVO DUARTE

the message is only the first challenge. But each day, they push themselves and expand their skills and experiences.

Ye, Park and Duarte are international members of the Pacesetters Toastmasters club in Stillwater, Oklahoma. They regularly take on

language and financial challenges proved more than he expected. His confidence sank.

A friend encouraged him to join Toastmasters. “I thought she wanted me to sell toasters,” Ye recalls with a laugh. When he learned what Toastmasters was about, he



can improve my English, satisfy my curiosity and make new friends.”

Conquer Your Fears

All three Toastmasters agree that fear traps many people in a rut. Fear can immobilize you; it allows your imagination to run wild with a list of “what ifs” that control your emotions and actions if you allow it. Escaping your comfort zone is a mental game, one that challenges the self-created barriers that hold you down. Here’s a suggestion: Think of fear as an acronym for “**F**alse **E**xpectations **A**ppearing **R**eal.” Or make a list of positive “what-if” outcomes instead of focusing on negative possibilities.

It’s not so much the fear of failure or even success that traps us – it’s a fear of change. Although often uncomfortable, change is inevitable and necessary. Stepping out of your comfort zone can cause discomfort and even panic, but the payoff is rich: new experiences, adventures and understanding.

Here are some tips for bringing about change in your life:

- **Get comfortable with change.** Try something simple, like taking a new way to work, re-arranging your routine or learning and using a new word every day.
- **Seek advice.** Find a mentor or someone who has done what you want to do. Benefit from his or her experience and knowledge. As you grow and develop your new skills, return the favor – be a mentor to someone else.
- **Visualize the results you want.** Visualization is a mental exercise that can take you from where you are to where you want to be.
- **Ease into change.** Take baby steps – start small.
- **Celebrate and share your victories and successes.** They will encourage others.
- **Remember:** If you don’t try, the answer is automatically “no.”

Excuses prevent change. They rationalize procrastination and reluctance to trade our comfort for the challenges of growth. In his new book *Excuses Be Gone*, Wayne

Dyer lists 18 reasons that people give for postponing decisions. The excuses are typical ones we have all thought or said: “I can’t afford it”; “It will be difficult”; “It will take a long time”; “I’m too old” and “I’m too tired.” Dyer analyzes each excuse and offers suggestions, visualizations and affirmations to move beyond indecision and out of your comfort zone.

Mike Dooley, an author and former Toastmaster, recommends visualization to create your future and live an unlimited life. In 2000, he gave a seven-minute Toastmasters contest speech titled, “Thoughts Become Things.” From that speech, Dooley created a platform of books, audio programs and Internet sites that encourage living life to the fullest. He credits his “thoughts become things” philosophy for everything he has accomplished, from entrepreneur and international tax consultant to motivational writer and speaker.

Broadening My Horizons

It’s always useful to add my personal tagline, “I make them great ones,”

to Dooley's mantra to add a jolt of energy, enthusiasm and optimism to my thoughts. While preparing for a recent month-long Rotary exchange to Bolivia, I practiced both Dyer's and Dooley's suggestions. Although I'd traveled to Bolivia several times on shorter trips, this time would immerse me in the language and culture. As part of the exchange, I presented programs in Spanish to 18 Rotary clubs and to the district Rotary conference, attended by more than 200 people.

A part of my preparations for the trip and presentation was to observe how Ye, Park and Duarte communicated to their audiences in their second language. Then I rehearsed my presentation until I was comfortable enough to give it without notes. Although Table Topics is not my favorite part of the Toastmasters meeting, I par-

ticipated frequently. The topics and questions prepared me to think on my feet and to think before I speak.

I visualized an exciting, fun and safe trip, not only outside my home country, but outside my comfort zone. Preparation, practice and visualization – they worked! Was the journey difficult and uncomfortable at times? Yes. Was it worth it? Most definitely yes!

Toastmasters can bridge your transition out of your comfort zone to the world of new experiences. Manuals, meetings and mentors can empower you to move forward in relationships and career areas beyond communication and leadership. Actively participating in all club roles and offices helps you grow in different ways. District and regional contests stretch your limits with opportunities to speak to larg-

er and different audiences than your home club. Even a change as simple as sitting in a different place each meeting can expand your friendships and keep you, as the speaker, attentive and focused on the audience.

When you're motivated and moving out of your rut, new dreams and adventures await you. As Neale Donald Walsch, author of the *Conversations with God* series, writes, "Life begins at the end of your comfort zone." ■

Linda E. Allen, CC, is a member of the Pacesetters Toastmasters in Stillwater, Oklahoma. She is a writer who teaches personal empowerment, leadership and cultural awareness programs. Reach her at lindaellen@sbcglobal.net.

Wish You Were FUNNIER?

Dear Fellow Toastmaster:

Do you wish you were **funnier**? Do you believe that "funny people" **think differently**?

The truth is... funny people *do* think differently. Truer still; **you will never be funnier unless you change the way you think**. That is exactly what *Get More Laughs By Next Week™* will do for you. I Darrentee it.

Would a **step-by-step process** for getting laughs be helpful?

**↑ BRAND NEW PROGRAM
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I never got laughs. I was quiet and shy and had severe stage fright. It was quite an epiphany for me when I discovered the simple exercises comedians use to develop material. A whole new world opened up for me when I was shown that humor was a *learned skill*, as opposed to a trait one must be born with.

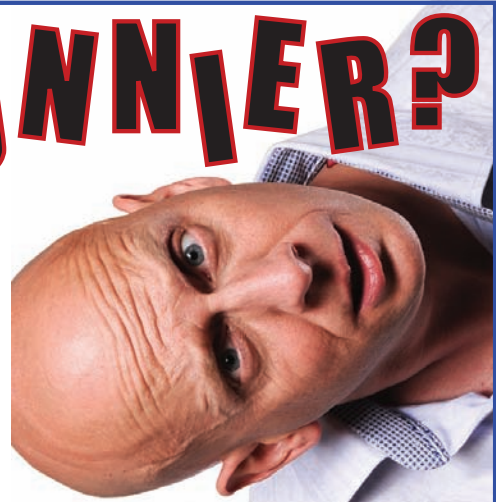
Naturally, I did things the hard way, so it took me years of struggle and tens of thousands of dollars to uncover the steps that would take me from bumbling amateur to sought-after professional. This is a *proven* system. I've been teaching this process for more than ten years.

Stage time,



Darren LaCroix
2001 World Champion of Public Speaking

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FUNNY YOU SHOULD SAY THAT!

By John Cadley

The Business of Leadership

They say leaders are born, not made, but I have here before me a catalog that confidently asserts otherwise. It comes from a marketing leadership organization and offers upwards of 50 different seminars on achieving personal and professional success that, if taken together, could very well make me Ruler of the Known Universe. I can, for instance, learn to proactively partner with my boss, manage chaos, communicate cross-functionally, find my leadership voice, manage my emotions in the workplace, become a more assertive manager, confront “real life” challenges effectively and acquire many more of the skills that real leaders apparently possess.

I could probably use that seminar on Managing Emotions. When people criticize my work, I water-balloon bomb them in the hallway, and it always comes up in my performance review under “areas for improvement.” The course description says it will help me understand the connections between my emotions and all the stressors in the workplace. In my case that would include, well, the workplace – the work, the place and most of the people in it – so I’d be interested in how they think I should deal with that, outside of WFH (Working From Home), which everyone knows is a euphemism for PDO (Paid Day Off). They also promise to help me maintain my composure under all circumstances, which could come in handy in case I get so stressed they have to take me from the building in a restraining device. One hates to make a scene, you know.

Then there’s this business of finding my “leadership” voice. I would like that, not just for the

workplace but for my two cats – who never listen to a word I say. Evidently it involves studying the master communicators like Winston Churchill, whose speeches are largely credited with saving England during World War II with their power to rally the nation against seemingly impossible odds. I’ve heard recordings and they are indeed soul-stirring: *We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight on the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.*

Great words, indeed, especially when delivered in Churchill’s deep, resonant tones larded with authority and self-assurance. I, on the other hand, have a high, squeaky voice, and I’m just wondering how those same words would have gone over if the British people thought they were listening to Alvin the Chipmunk. So I’m hoping the teacher has some techniques for lowering my voice to a more commanding level. I’m also hoping it doesn’t involve a medical procedure.

Here’s a seminar on Dynamic Listening. I’m not a good listener. I pretend to listen by going into a trance where my eyes fix on the speaker, my head nods approvingly, and my brain goes into computer sleep mode, where I look interested while conserving the energy it would take to actually be interested.

And then there’s Managing Chaos. It’s been my experience that if you’ve reached the point of chaos it’s because there isn’t any management. If I were running the course I would rename it: Managing the

Enormous Mess You’ve Created by Failing to Manage. The class includes workshops involving “real-life” case studies. That could be fun. Maybe we’ll all get to role play as Bernie Madoff’s employees the day clients started asking for their money back. The catalog says I’ll get “five new answers” for managing these kinds of “escalating pressures.” Maybe they’re the same five I use right now:

- Close the door.
- Disconnect the phone.
- Delete all e-mails.
- Hide under the desk.
- Double up on my medications.

One course I won’t take is Cross-functional Communication. People who work in other departments don’t want you to understand what they do. It’s called job security. Then, too, people take pride in knowing what you don’t. When the media director tells me that the final budget of the GRP level will be determined by the cost per point – the blank, uncomprehending stare on my face gives her a feeling of self-worth as few things can. Far be it from me to deny her such joy.

So if I take these courses I’ll be able to (A) maintain my composure (B) in the midst of total chaos while (C) listening intently to my colleagues and (D) barking commands with the voice of authority. I saw the movie *Titanic* and that’s just what the captain did as the ship was going down. Maybe I don’t want to be a leader after all. **T**

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