

# TOASTMASTER

March 2008

## *Oscar Sound Bites:*

**The Sour,  
the Sweet  
and the  
Salty**



**Speaking About  
the Unspeakable**  
Speaking on emotionally  
charged topics.

**At Microsoft,  
Toastmasters  
Clubs are PC**



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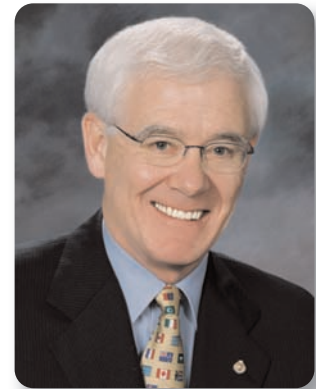
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## You're Unique! You're Special!

✦ You're unique! You're special! And hopefully someone tells you that every day (even if it is your own inner voice!). But exactly what is it that's so unique and special about you? Sure, you're a Toastmaster... so are 230,000 other people around the world. You're successful in business...and so are millions of others. You're the community energizer...again, you're not alone. You're good at making others laugh... and the world is full of comedians!

What is it that makes you the unique and special person that you are? In the context of Toastmasters, how have you shaped yourself or your world, using the gifts of your communication and leadership skills, in a way that sets you apart from the rest of the pack? I think of Sheila, a Toastmaster in my home district, who has taken her Toastmasters skills literally to the farm. You see, Sheila is a farm safety advocate, and through expertise she developed in Toastmasters, she is now shaping the safety environment for farmers all across her region. Safe farming equals more productive farming equals good food on the dining room table. So thank you, Sheila!

What makes you unique and special? See page 6 for a fascinating account of Toastmaster Steve Van De Walle who uses his skills to teach babies to read! Perhaps your special contribution is in providing hope to those doing time for crime, or working with street youth who may have lost their way in this world and lost faith in themselves.

One of the unique opportunities that came my way in the early '90s was an operational tour of duty during the war in Yugoslavia. I had the privilege of leading an international team of men and women who, armed only with their ability to communicate effectively, were able to make a substantial difference toward stabilization of the conflict that was costing lives every day. Our technique? Let's sit down and listen, think and speak! I credit my ability to be a shaping influence in the resolution of that conflict to the synergistic combination of my military training and my Toastmasters experience.

Have you discovered what's unique and special about you? Our organization's founder, Dr. Ralph Smedley, said, "The first result of speech training is self-discovery." It's our journey of self-discovery that influences the shape we'll take, and ultimately the shaping effect we'll have on the world around us.

Chris K. Ford, DTM  
 International President

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*The Toastmasters Vision:*

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

*The Toastmasters Mission:*

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

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

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

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**On the Cover:** Maureen Stapleton won the Oscar as Best Supporting Actress in 1981, for her performance in the film "Reds." She handled her "thank you" list – the bane of every Academy Awards ceremony – with one all-encompassing statement: "I want to thank everybody I ever met in my entire life."

Photo courtesy of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.



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](mailto:letters@toastmasters.org).

### Inconvenient Truth

I look forward to the *Toastmaster*, or more accurately, I used to.

I personally found your article on Al Gore and his “inconvenient truth” message very political. There is a large part of the population that firmly believe that Gore is full of pomposity and irritation. A lot of these people belong to Toastmasters.

I did not expect this article – which I consider political propaganda – to be in the *Toastmaster*, though I realize that those who think Gore is not full of nonsense will love the article.

If you are going to say that this is about a public speaking approach, don't try. However, if you are sincere about a public speaking approach, then I expect a balanced article from the certified scientists who are using a *Toastmasters* approach as a foundation for convincing people that the inconvenient truth is a myth.

This edition is in the round file.

John Trip, ATM • Ernest Speakers • Burbank, California

### No Political Bias

I was surprised by the letters regarding the “Inconvenient Truth” article (December '07). *Toastmasters* teaches effective communication and leadership. Judging by the world-wide response, Al Gore's work was well received and produced the desired effect. As a *Toastmaster*, I watched his presentation carefully, looking for ways to improve my own presentation and persuasion skills.

*Toastmasters* uses a widely known and celebrated communication model – as a teaching tool, not to make a political statement. I do not believe the magazine was endorsing any political or scientific position. Its staff chose this article as a successful example of a well presented point of view, where the author clearly had the intention to

motivate the audience to take positive action (from Mr. Gore's point of view). The only political bias I saw came from the letter writers, who apparently disagreed with the message. We are members to make us better communicators and leaders. Please leave the political statements for a more appropriate venue.

Scott Redstone • Bullish Expressions Club • New York, New York

Contrary to the opinions in your “Letters” section of the February issue, neither *Toastmasters* nor any other organization, corporation or individual need treat global warming as an issue that requires debate.

One need look no further than last year's Nobel peace prize award as an indication that the scientific community accepts global warming as a reality. The opposing viewpoint will shortly be relegated to the same status as creationism: fringe and lacking any factual basis. It's time to start acting to save our planet so our children will inherit a livable planet.

John Kerenyi • Moreno Valley Motivators • Moreno Valley, California

### The Secret is Not Science

I think of the *Toastmaster* as a solid magazine, but Judi Bailey's article “Visualize Success” (January 2008) was a few bricks short. Bailey claims that, “A principle of energy is that energy of a certain quality or vibration tends to attract energy of a similar quality or vibration.” That principle is from folk traditions, belief systems and spirituality, not science. In science, the opposite ends of magnets are what attract.

The nadir for me was Bailey's mention of “The Secret,” the philosophy for enlightened narcissists. To believe that “we attract into our lives whatever we think about the most” is to embrace a vicious, corrosive mindset. No one fervently hopes to be poor or deathly ill. People don't

ividly envision being destroyed by natural disasters, wars or genocide.

I hope to see future articles from Ms. Bailey with more transcendent themes.

Cate Bramble, CC • Warner Center Toastmasters  
Woodland Hills, California

### Stretching the Boundaries of Humor

I really enjoyed John Kinde's article “Acceptable Humor: The Mark of a Professional” (January 2008). As a *Toastmaster* who aspires to become a stand-up comic, I'd like to try out my material at a club meeting. I belong to two clubs and they are miles apart from each other on what they consider acceptable humor. My home club is more conservative. It would not be a good idea to practice in front of them.

My second club has a more relaxed atmosphere where banter and humor are always present. This club is unique. We encourage our members to take a risk, go beyond the “accepted” norms of *Toastmasters* and push our speaking material to the edge and maybe a little bit over it. Two years ago I gave a speech titled “How to Become a Greek Goddess in Five Easy Steps.” It was a hit but it certainly was not home club material. My suggestion to would-be comics and those who want to stretch the boundaries: Start a club with like-minded *Toastmasters* and let the creative juices and humor fly.

Rose Beeson, MA, DTM • Well Done! Toastmasters  
Scottsdale, Arizona

**Editor's Note:** *The reason Toastmasters International advocates a conservative, “clean” view of what constitutes acceptable content for speech material is that any Toastmasters meeting or contest needs to be a place where visitors can feel comfortable attending without risking being offended by speech content.*

**On a mission to stamp out illiteracy.**

# Teaching Toddlers to Read

When Toastmaster Steve Van De Walle attended college for his teaching degree in 1999, the former world-class boxing athlete and Olympic hopeful noticed something disturbing during his clinical observation class.

“So many children in the elementary grades struggled to read, and I could see defeat on their faces,” says Van De Walle, who decided to make literacy his mission. Once he became a teacher in 2002, he taught children to read using his own method and saw reading skills drastically improve among his students. It wasn’t until he showed a fellow Toastmaster his work, however, that he developed the idea to market his own revolutionary reading system.

The seeds for Believe It Baby! – Van De Walle’s program that teaches children as young as one to read – came out of a conversation with Toastmasters 2001 World Champion of Public Speaking Darren LaCroix.

“I met Darren during a regional speech contest and showed him a video of me speaking,” says Van De Walle, who belongs to the Easy Speakers club in Moline, Illinois. “The end of the clip featured my two-year-old daughter, Amaris, reading, which amazed Darren. He told me I had something that could help a lot of people and to pursue speaking about it on a full-time basis.”

LaCroix’s enthusiastic response spurred Van De Walle to develop the Believe it Baby! reading program, complete with materials such as interactive reading cards, a DVD and CD. In May 2007, he resigned his teaching position and has since concentrated his efforts on spreading the word about the Believe it Baby! system by giving seminars and selling monthly memberships to the program. He credits Toastmasters for helping him make his dream a reality.

“From assistance with developing my speeches and my method, to leadership and networking skills,

the organization has guided me every step of the way,” says Van De Walle, whose boxing career was cut short by injuries he received during a near-fatal car accident.

“Toastmasters gave Steve a great outlet to convey his message and an effective program to follow in order to do so,” says LaCroix, who belongs to the Powerhouse Pros club in Las Vegas, Nevada. “On top of that, the energy, enthusiasm and conviction he has for the topic is amazing – which all combines to make people want to listen to him. Even when there is disbelief about what he’s doing, Steve digs in his heels and shows doubters proof that his system works.”

The idea that toddlers can be taught to read often elicits skepticism, which is why Van De Walle calls the program Believe it Baby!

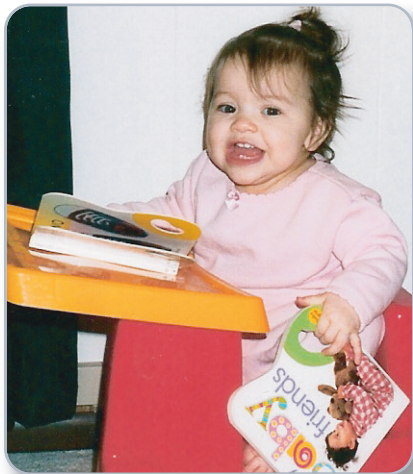
“My wife, Kari, is a very analytical person, and at first even she was doubtful,” he says. “I started teaching Amaris, who had been born nine weeks premature, to read before she was two. Within the first week of using the method, she was able to read 17 words and enunciate them well. At that point, my wife became a believer. By the time she was three, Amaris read complete sentences and little children’s books, and today at six she can read just about anything she wants. Her younger sister, four-year-old Kiera, also reads, and I’ve started the program with their brother, 16-month-old Mateo.”

The whole idea of toddlers learning to read is not universally



Steve Van De Walle





▲ Steve Van De Walle's daughter, Kiera, at 18 months.

embraced; some suspect that this puts too much stress on young children. But Van De Walle says his method is set up as a game, which children find enjoyable. "There is a misconception about what we do," he says. "The fact is that the whole program is designed as a series of fun games and kids don't even know they're learning. It is also more than just reading words – they comprehend what they've read."

Van De Walle feels that teaching toddlers to read is critical to curing illiteracy because this time period of a child's life is so formative. "Reading is one of the most fundamental ways we learn and ages zero to five are the most natural time for children to learn how to read, yet we don't start teaching them until the end of that time period," he says. "The window of opportunity is wide open from birth to five, and teaching them at that age gives them a huge head start and unlocks the doors to linguistic development. Rather than entering the school system and struggling, they can easily begin reading and become lifelong readers, learners and communicators, which will make them feel good about themselves."

Van De Walle isn't the first educator to teach young children to

read. "Over 100 years ago Maria Montessori taught impoverished children to read at the ages of two and three," he says. "In the 1960s, Glenn Doman, founder of the Institute for the Achievement of Human Potential, taught brain-injured babies of the same age how to read."

Van De Walle's broader mission is to help stamp out illiteracy. "There are an estimated 10 million children who are illiterate in our school system, and my method can inspire and empower parents and early childcare providers to teach children how to read during this formative time," he says. "Learning to read opens up the world to children."

Michelle Johnson of Moline, Illinois, signed up for the Believe it Baby! program after attending one of Van De Walle's seminars. "My husband and I went to the seminar, and it made a lot of sense to us," says Johnson, who has three young children.

The Johnsons have used the Believe it Baby! system on their four-year-old and their first-grader with great results. "We started working with our four-year-old just a few months ago and he already knows all of his letters and the words on the cards and is even reading sentences, which is very exciting. He really enjoys the whole program and thinks of it as a game. My oldest son has had low self-esteem about reading, and the system seems to have improved his self confidence."


Though the Johnsons are very busy with three young children, they find the program easy to implement. "We simply grab the cards whenever we have a chance and flip through them for about two minutes at a time," she says. "Then the kids go on their way."

As a father of three himself, Van De Walle knows that time is limited for most parents, so as Toastmasters taught him, he analyzed his audience and developed a program that can be done in quick lessons throughout the day with interactive playcards.

"I'm really encouraging parents to play and bond with their children using these cards," says Van De Walle. "Some are picture cards and some are word cards, and the games last from one to three minutes. I also encourage regular lap reading. I especially like rhyming books because they help develop phonemic awareness."

Toastmasters accredited speaker Johnny Campbell is Van De Walle's

**"Even when there is disbelief about what he's doing, Steve digs in his heels and shows doubters proof that his system works."**

mentor. "Steve has truly benefited from Toastmasters," he says. "Today he is much more focused and proficient on stage compared to when I met him five years ago. He's managed to take his love of speaking and intertwine it with his goal and mission of literacy worldwide, which is something that people are truly concerned about. This makes for a really powerful presentation with an important message." 

**Julie Bawden Davis** is a freelance writer and longtime contributor to this magazine. She lives in Southern California. Reach her at [Julie@JulieBawdenDavis.com](mailto:Julie@JulieBawdenDavis.com).

**Editor's Note:** Do you have an inspiring story of how the Toastmasters program has helped you? Tell us at [letters@toastmasters.org](mailto:letters@toastmasters.org).

**Emotionally charged topics require more tact, knowledge and preparation than the average presentation.**

# SPEAKING ABOUT THE Unspeakable

By Linda McGurk

*If you're a seasoned Toastmaster, you probably feel comfortable speaking in any number of situations – presenting a new business proposal, giving a toast at your daughter's wedding, making an acceptance speech or launching a campaign for political office. But there are some topics that make even the most experienced and eloquent speaker squirm and lock his tongue in silence: Death. Grief. Illness. Depression. Sexual abuse. Family trauma. They're not your typical speech subjects, and yet they're such universal issues.*

Speaking about difficult topics can require more tact, knowledge and preparation than the average presentation, and it naturally triggers a lot of questions. How important is it to have personal experience with the topic? How do you manage your and your audience's emotions? And is it okay to make jokes when speaking about a sensitive subject? Learn from three individuals who – using different approaches – have touched audiences across the world by speaking about difficult, highly emotional subjects.

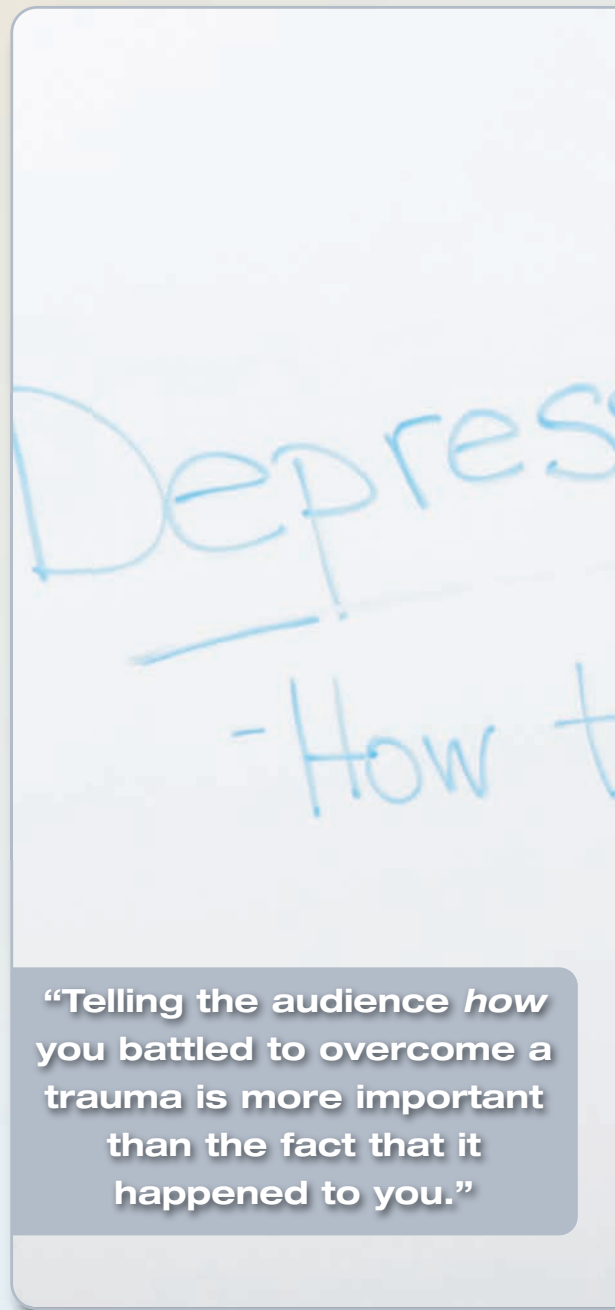
## **Dell deBerardinis**

After developing a treatment model for victims of sexual abuse, licensed psychotherapist and personal development

specialist Dell deBerardinis closed her private practice and launched a speaking career in the early 1990s. Since then, she's traveled across the United States and Canada, spreading awareness of what she calls "our number one health epidemic: child abuse."

Many of deBerardinis' talks are targeted toward mental-health specialists, but she also speaks to the general public. Often there will be victims in the audience, which makes her sensitive topic even more precarious.

"You can't expect not to push anybody's buttons. Sometimes, the talk brings up a personal issue that makes somebody emotional," she says. "There have been difficult moments when somebody in the audience is hostile or I get hostile feedback, and it happens more



**"Telling the audience how you battled to overcome a trauma is more important than the fact that it happened to you."**





often with topics that are sensitive. My job is to stay professional no matter what and stay tuned into what happens in the audience.”

In cases when emotional people approach her after the talk, deBerardinis makes sure she’s able to offer a phone number or other information about where the person can turn to receive help.

DeBerardinis says what she does best is connecting with the audience and making them feel comfortable with the topic. “I maintain eye contact, involve the audience when I can, and I honor and respect them. I talk to a lot of health care professionals and I’m constantly humbled by them. I keep in mind that they can bring something to the talk too.”

Sometimes, she uses humor to lighten the mood and diffuse some of the seriousness inevitably associated with the topic. “I make jokes about dysfunctional families,” she says. “But I don’t joke about the specific topic that I’m talking about and I probably time it a little differently.”

DeBerardinis’ talks focus more on the personal than on statistics; she thinks sharing a personal experience makes the presentation more real, like revealing her own story about growing up with alcoholic parents. But, she cautions, telling the audience *how* you battled to overcome a trauma is more important than the fact that it happened to you. “When I share that there was alcoholism in my family, I try to do it with discretion and when I think it will benefit the audience as a learning

experience. I think [sharing personal stories] helps create a bond, but you can't do too much of it because then it might have the opposite effect and push people away. There has to be a balance."

For speakers who are preparing to tackle a topic like child abuse for the first time, deBerardinis offers the following advice: "Educate yourself, do the research and be prepared that there will be people in the audience who will be touched by it. The most important thing is that the speaker is comfortable with the topic, so do whatever it takes to get to that point. Spend a little time with people who work with it and interview people who have experience with it."

She adds, "Another thing that's so important when you're talking about topics like this is to offer solutions. We're talking about problems, but as a speaker it's also my job to present some things that you can do about it."

Dell deBerardinis lives in Texas and is the author of *Sexual Abuse: Recognition and Recovery*, and *Therapy Made Simple*. Learn more about deBerardinis at [www.speakerdell.com](http://www.speakerdell.com).

### Bobby Smith

If somebody would've told Bobby Smith 25 years ago that he was going to switch his career as a law enforcement officer in Louisiana for one as a professional speaker, he probably would've scoffed at the thought. But in 1986, Smith was shot in the face and blinded by a violent drug offender. Eleven years later, his 22-year-old daughter Kimberley was killed in a car accident. The traumas Smith went through – losing his eye-sight, job, independence, self-confidence, marriage, and finally his daughter – catapulted him onto the international speaking circuit.

The first time he told a group of fellow law enforcement officers about the assault that left him blind, Smith broke down and started sobbing uncontrollably half an hour into the talk. "I was an emotional wreck. It was horrible," he says, acknowledging he wasn't really ready to speak about his trauma at that point. Smith didn't realize it at the time, but speaking, and as a result helping others deal with trauma and loss, eventually became a sort of therapy. That doesn't mean it's for everybody. "You've got to be careful with that. Just because you have a story to tell doesn't mean you have to tell it. Not now," he says.

Speaking has been profoundly personal for Smith from the get-go, and he says having experience with the topics he covers has been key to his success. "I'm a storyteller and all my stories are personal," he says. "There are a lot of people out there who are hurting and they need to hear about it, not just from a textbook standpoint."

Smith has seen many experienced speakers put audiences to sleep by loading up their talks with PowerPoint presentations and too many faceless statistics, while leaving out the stories that could potentially move and engage the listeners. Smith says he usually outlines every presentation in his head but never uses notes or speaks from a lectern.

His speeches often bring people to tears, with some people sobbing openly, but humor is also an important component of his self-taught speaking style. "I've learned to laugh at myself and I laugh *with* people, not *at* people. I laugh about being blind and some of the things I do as a blind person," he says. Sometimes, Smith gets emotional when speaking and he doesn't always know what part of the presentation will trigger it. "I don't plan to cry and I don't plan to laugh. I just show the real me and expose myself to the audience," he says. "I call it the 'Southern style.' I speak from my heart and what you see is what you get."

Bobby Smith is the author of *Visions of Courage* and *The Will to Survive*. Learn more about Smith at [www.visionsofcourage.com](http://www.visionsofcourage.com).

### Sara Rich Wheeler

Most parents can't think of anything more painful than losing a child, and as certified grief counselor Sara Rich Wheeler discovered 20 years ago, the need to talk about it is tremendous. Wheeler was in charge of a new program about stillborn babies and newborn death at a Wisconsin hospital when she and a colleague were asked to speak about the topic at two national events in the late 1980s. The response to their talk was so overwhelming that they decided to take the program on the road. Now the Dean of Lakeview College of Nursing in Danville, Illinois, Wheeler often speaks to health care professionals as well as lay audiences about grief and how to cope with miscarriages and infant death.

"I've worked with a lot of people who have had miscarriages, and listening to them has taught me a lot. When I speak about grief I share their stories, and by doing that I can teach somebody else," she says. In addition to real-life stories, she always tries to provide a theoretical framework for what grief really is, to help people understand the process of healing. "I work really hard, when I speak, for people to 'get it.' If you talk to people, especially on topics like this, and they don't 'get it,' they won't do anything about it."

Wheeler always tries to show up to a speaking engagement an hour ahead of time, to get her audio-visuals ready and introduce herself to people as they come in. Sometimes she plays music to create a certain atmosphere and sets up some books or other things for people to put their hands on.




She also makes an effort to create a protected and safe environment, where it's okay for people to cry if they feel the need. It's not unusual for people to become upset or even angry when they are reminded of a situation that happened to them, Wheeler says. "Sometimes people have even gotten up and left, and if that happens I usually ask somebody to check on them. I've noticed some national meetings are not prepared for that, but some people get overwhelmed with emotions and they need somewhere to go."

When speaking about grief, it's important to choose your words carefully, Wheeler says. Words that are routinely used among health care professionals often come across as insensitive to a lay audience, like "incinerating" when talking about cremating the remains of a fetus, or "spontaneous abortion" when talking about a miscarriage.

Often, people in the audience want to share their experiences with grief as well, and if there is time Wheeler tries to accommodate that need. This can be risky, however, since she doesn't know what people are going to say or how long it will take. "I want to recognize what people have to say, but I don't let them dominate the session," she says. "I try to be tactful about it."

Wheeler, who hasn't lost a child herself, says her training and education coupled with work experience helped immensely once she started speaking publicly about grief. She recommends that those who want to try it work hard on their credibility, possibly even by getting certified in a certain area or publishing a book.

"If you're going to be speaking about this, you'd better have the facts right. If you mispronounce words or misstate the facts, it ruins your credibility," she says. "And when you start speaking to people who work in this area, they may ask some very intricate and complicated questions. You need to have the background and experience to answer them, or the humbleness to say that you're not sure and turn to somebody in the room who might have an answer. If I don't know the answer, I don't fake it."

Sara Rich Wheeler lives in Indiana and is the co-author of *When a Baby Dies: A Handbook for Healing and Helping*, and *Goodbye My Child*. 


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How to breathe life into well-worn subjects.

# Remedy for a Lifeless Speech

You've had this experience too many times: The speaker of the evening tells a limp joke or two. Then he or she launches into a shop-worn topic such as:

- The importance of profits in today's competitive environment.
- The need for teamwork in society.
- How to be successful by setting goals.

While you are toying with your dessert fork, you wonder: Why is this speaker wasting our time? There's really nothing wrong with these subjects except that they have been done to death, and public speakers cannot always come up with earth-shaking topics. What's more, a speaker is sometimes assigned a yawn-producing subject – particularly in the case of panel discussion events. Fortunately, there are easy ways to breathe new life into well-worn subjects. Here are six of them:

**1 Dig deeper into the subject.** One way to freshen the stale speech topic is to find something new or unusual to say about it. You can get a good start on this research by using the key words of your talk to visit the Web sites relating to the subject. This will usually lead you to some interesting and unusual facts about your subject, and provide you with useful data.

Research of this kind often yields impressive statistical numbers, poll results, investigative reports and much more. You can also find unusual quotes to insert in your speech. I recently looked into the overly familiar subject of "good sportsmanship." Google turned up 604,000 references, including the book, *Seven Ways to Raise a Gracious Loser and a Humble Winner* by Diane Laney Fitzpatrick. With this information, you can offer the latest tips and quote respected authors on this topic. Tired generalities become a problem of the past. Good riddance!

Don't make the mistake of thinking that your audience can't tell whether you have researched your topic well – they can! A well-researched speech will be more impressive by a long shot.

**2 Tie the subject to a major, current event.** You can be sure your audience will be interested in your topic if you come up with some sort of national-interest subject. For example, a petroleum industry executive recently planned to give a talk on "the need for adequate profits in our industry." Members of his staff persuaded him that such a topic would put his audience to sleep. Instead, he decided to speak about a subject close to the pocketbooks of motorists: "The outlook for supplies and prices of gasoline for the next five years." The "need for adequate

profits" theme was still a major part of the talk, but it was not headlined.

To find a major, current event you need look no further than the front page of your newspaper, or the cover lines on a recent magazine. Almost any subject can be tied to events such as political campaigns, immigration or rising prices.

**3 Injecting the "wow" factor.** Your speech subject may be prosaic, but you can create interest in it by injecting what some speakers call the "wow" factor – unusual statistics or riveting anecdotes.

Here are a few examples of arresting facts from recent speeches:

- "Ten percent of all human beings ever born are alive at this very moment."
- "Eleven percent of the world is left-handed."
- "22,000 checks will be deducted from the wrong bank accounts in the next hour."

Where do you find unusual statistics or lively anecdotes? One good source is **anecdote.com**, a Web site devoted to interesting stories. Another is **YouTube.com**. YouTube has a great collection of speeches that often contain unusual facts or arresting anecdotes.

Still another good source should be your own personal file of ideas, tales, clippings and quotations. If you have such a file, you'll find it a



great time saver. The actual form of the file and the method of classification is not important – as long as it is easy for you to use. One favorite method is to use five-by-eight-inch cards, arranged according to topics in alphabetical order. That size card is useful because you can carry it with you to the podium.

#### **4 Include an element of controversy.**

An old saying goes, “If you want attention, start a fight.” Jeff Scott Cook, author of *The Elements of Speechwriting and Public Speaking*, recommends talking about current conflicts if you want attention as a speaker. Or, he adds, “start one yourself. Emotions run hotter when ideas, events and arguments are *polarized* – cast in terms of right or wrong, rich or poor; and *personified* – cast in terms of factions and their leaders.”

Here’s an example of how a flat statement can be turned into a more provocative passage in your speech:

*Dull:* “Immigrants are easily crossing our nation’s borders and living in our towns.”

*More interesting:* “They refuse to learn our language, can’t afford car insurance and live in substandard conditions. They send their kids to our schools and hospitals, letting our taxpayers pick up the tab. Yet they take jobs others don’t want and could be a real source of strength for our nation.”

In sum, if you are planning to give a talk, look it over for places where you can inject some controversy.

**5 Keep it Simple.** The speaker usually knows more than the audience about the subject at hand, so there is always the temptation to parade your expertise. In preparing for a talk, some speakers collect

enough information for a year’s graduate course on the subject. They are so concerned about proving their expertise that they haven’t looked at the talk as the audience would.

There is no way an audience can digest it all. “Faced with an overload of information, the brain decides to shut down and take a holiday,” is the way a veteran speaker explains it. How many times have you pretended to listen to a speaker while your mind went elsewhere?

The solution is easy: Simplify your talk. Hold it down to three major points – or less. Then fill in the background of each point with specific examples.



#### **6 Develop a “Carry Away” Message.**

What is the main idea you want to leave with your listeners? It helps to formulate this idea in the planning stages of your talk. The “carry away” message ought to be captivating, clear and interesting in order to keep the audience’s attention. It is the single idea that you want to convey – hopefully, an idea that is unexpected and different.

Determining the “carry away” message early in the planning stages of your talk helps to keep you focused on the main subject, and prevents you from wandering into different territory. This message may be stated and restated in different ways several times during the course of your talk.

Here are a few examples:

*“We need to stop or markedly slow global corruption”* – from a talk by Alan Boeckmann, chairman of the Fluor Corporation.

*“Business can make a real, positive and lasting difference in protecting and preserving freshwater resources”* – a speech by Neville Isdell, chairman and chief executive officer of the Coca Cola company.

*“How to influence power effectively”* – a talk by John L. Napier, former U.S. congressman, on the subject of lobbying.

The final step in the process is, of course, to practice the speech several times. Memorizing might rob it of spontaneity, but delivering it aloud a few times will help smooth out the anecdotes and lead to stronger openings and closings. **T**

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Where doublespeak ends  
and understanding begins.

# A Primer of Political Words

As the joke goes, the etymology of the word *politics* derives from *poly*, “many,” and *tics*, which are blood-sucking parasites. In truth *politics* issues from the Greek word *politēs*, “city, citizen.” Politics may make strange bed-fellows, but, it makes for even stranger, and sometimes colorful, vocabulary.

Americans are in the grip of a feverish, frenetic, fervent, frantic and frenzied presidential campaign that demonstrates why in England people *stand* for election, but in the United States they *run*. It’s also a time that demonstrates that although the classical societies of ancient Greece and Rome have vanished, Greek and Roman thought are very much alive in the parlance of politics.

Taking first things first, we’ll start with the word *primary*, which descends from the Latin *primus*, “first.” *Primary*, as a shortening of “primary election,” is first recorded in 1861. In an *election* we “pick out” a candidate who we wish to vote for. In Latin *e* means “out” and *lectus* “pick or choose.”

*Campaign* is very much a fighting word. The Latin *campus*, “field,” is a clue that the first campaigns were conducted on battlefields. A military campaign is a series of operations mounted to achieve a particular wartime objective. A political campaign is an all-out crusade to secure the election of a candidate to office.

When he went to the Forum in Roman times, a candidate for office wore a bleached white toga to symbolize his humility, purity of motive and candor. The original Latin root, *candidatus*, meant “one who wears white,” from the belief that white was the color of purity and probity. There was wishful thinking even in ancient Roman politics, even though a white-clad Roman *candidatus* was accompanied by *sectatores*, followers who helped him get votes by bargaining and bribery. The Latin parent verb *candere*, “to shine, to glow,” can be recognized in the English words *candid*, *candor*, *candle* and *incandescent*.

We know that candidates are ambitious; it’s also worth knowing that *ambition* developed from the Latin *ambitionem*, “a going about,” from the going about of candidates for office in ancient Rome.

*President* descends from the Latin *praesidio*, “preside, sit in front of or protect.” Presidents sit in the seat of government. When we speak of “the ship of state,” we are being more accurate etymologically than we know. The Greek word *kybernao* meant “to direct a ship.” The Romans borrowed the word as *gubernare*, and ultimately it crossed the English Channel as *governor*, originally a steersman. That’s why the noun is *governor* and the adjective *gubernatorial*.

The original Greek meaning of the word *idiot* was not nearly as

harsh as in our modern sense. Long before the psychologists got hold of the word, the Greeks used *idiotes*, from the root *idios*, “private,” as found today in *idiom* and *idiosyncrasy*, to designate those who did not hold public office. Because such people possessed no special status or skill, the word *idiot* gradually fell into disrepute. But modern English hasn’t given up on this word entirely – in particular, when it comes to voting.

The *vote* is really a “vow” or “wish.” And this is the precise meaning of the Latin *votum*. People in modern societies who fail to exercise their democratic privilege of voting on election day are sometimes called idiots.

A *metaphor* (the word originally meant “to carry across” in Greek) is a figure of speech that merges two seemingly different objects or ideas. We usually think of metaphors as figurative devices that only poets create, but in fact, all of us make metaphors during almost every moment of our waking lives. As T. E. Hulme observed, “Prose is a museum, where all the old weapons of poetry are kept.”

Take the political expression “to throw one’s hat in the ring.” The phrase probably derives from the custom of tossing one’s hat into the boxing ring to signal the acceptance of a pugilist’s challenge. Once the hat is thrown, the candidates engage in political infighting and slug it out with their opponents.



Or take the expression “to carry the torch for someone.” During the 19th century, a dedicated follower showed support for a political candidate by carrying a torch in an evening campaign parade. A fellow who carried a torch in such a rally didn’t care who knew that he was wholeheartedly behind his candidate. Later the term was applied to someone publicly (and obsessively) in love.

One more metaphor that was originally literal attaches to bandwagons, high wagons large enough to hold a band of musicians. Early bandwagons were horse-drawn through the streets in order to publicize an upcoming event. Political candidates would ride a bandwagon through a town, and those who wished to show their support would “hop [or climb] on the bandwagon” and ride with the candidate and his blaring band.

Horses and horse racing are dominant animal metaphors that gallop through political life. One of the earliest of equine metaphors is “dark horse.” The figure refers to a political candidate who is nominated unexpectedly, usually as a result of compromise between two factions in a party. American dark horse candidates who became presidents include James Polk in 1844, Franklin Pierce in 1852, Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876, James Garfield in 1880 and Warren G. Harding in 1920.

Presidents always have running mates. This too is a horse racing term and derives from the practice of one owner or one stable running two horses in a race, the slower one included to pace the star. The pacesetter was known as the star’s running mate. The phrase has been around for more than a century, but its use to define a vice president was coined by, of all non-practitioners of slang, the most scholarly, the most ecclesiastical of U.S. presidents, Woodrow Wilson.



At the Democratic Convention in 1912 the presidential nomination went to Wilson on the 46th ballot after a terrific brawl. Governor Wilson of New Jersey announced that his vice presidential choice would be another governor, Thomas Marshall, adding, “And I feel honored by having him as my running mate.” Wilson’s turn of phrase brought the house down,

the only squeak of humor those assembled had ever heard out of Woodrow Wilson. **T**

**Richard Lederer** is the author of more than 30 books about language, history and humor, including his best-selling *Anguished English* series and his current book, *Presidential Trivia*. He was Toastmasters Golden Gavel recipient in 2002.





# At Microsoft, Toastmasters Clubs are PC

By Paul Sterman

A wide web of benefits.

**J**ason Black's first stab at speaking in front of groups came when he was a teenager: In high school, he took a public-speaking class – one where the students gave speeches and critiqued each other. Unfortunately, the experience did more damage than good.



“My high school peers were not exactly the most supportive audience,” he says wryly. “That class left me with a lot of trepidation about public speaking, and that feeling never left me.”

But years later, when Black began working as an engineer at Microsoft – and had to make presentations to colleagues or pitch ideas to clients – he knew it was time to overcome this fear. Following a suggestion from his boss, he joined an in-house Toastmasters club at the software giant.

“It’s been a tremendously supportive environment for working on public speaking skills,” says Black, who last June became president of the group, called The Early Birds. (They meet weekly at 8 a.m.) “Here, we’re all in the same position... Other members aren’t going to laugh at you if you flub something up. The worst thing that can happen is you’re not going to get the ‘Best Speaker’ ribbon, right?”

*“That I can live with.”*

Ultimately, Toastmasters has made him a better communicator in his job, adds Black, who works at corporate headquarters in Redmond, Washington. His experience mirrors those of other Microsoft employees involved in their in-house Toastmasters clubs; they say they’ve become more comfortable and confident speaking in the workplace – whether that be to colleagues, clients or customers.

Because all club members are Microsoft employees, each is particularly understanding of the challenges faced by the others at work. And because of this, colleagues are in a great position to offer many helpful suggestions to each other.

“I go every week – I really love it,” says Henrieta Riesco, who works at the Redmond offices. “For me, the way it helps me is that every week I’m practicing. My job is dealing with computers, but there’s not a lot of talking; this way, once a week I have the chance to be in a group who wants to talk.”

She adds that she enjoys interacting with fellow employees in a different context than the regular work environment. “I like talking about things outside of work – that excites me,” notes Riesco, who is the Speech-makers club’s vice president education. “I think it’s great that people talk about all sorts of interesting things at the meetings. It’s a glimpse into the things they really care about.”

The first Toastmasters group at Microsoft was chartered in 1990. Now Microsoft has three clubs at its Redmond campus – two for full-time employees, and one for other workers such as contractors and vendors.

The corporate behemoth allows its employees to use conference rooms for the meetings, which can be held during the work day. Microsoft also has Toastmasters clubs at its other office locations around the world, including Seoul, Korea, and Shanghai and Beijing in China.

Louie Lu, the president of the

▼ **Members of Microsoft’s MSSH Toastmasters No. 1 club in Shanghai, China, pose at a meeting.**



**“Toastmasters is a good forum for networking with Microsoft employees who work in other departments at the giant company.”**

MSSH Toastmasters No. 1 club in Shanghai, says preparing speeches for his group, and gaining the feedback of evaluators, has helped him in his work as a technical support engineer. “Now I can deliver more structured information to our customer and make sure we have no problem in understanding each other,” he says.

Lu’s Toastmasters club just started up this past February. The topics of the speeches he’s given reflect some of the cultural differences between China and the United States. For example, in one such talk he persuaded fellow Toastmasters to stop using throwaway chopsticks – an issue that probably isn’t discussed in American clubs, like those in Microsoft’s Dallas offices.

However, other subjects transcend geographical borders: Lu has spoken about how love can change a person’s life, and how one’s perspective on things affects their ability to find happiness.

Employees also say Toastmasters has helped them make the adjustment when switching jobs at Microsoft. Jim Bresler is an example. He recently went from being a software developer to a program manager at the



▲ Aaron Jiang, Linda Liu, Amanda Song and David Flumenbaum are proud members of Microsoft's MSSH Toastmasters No. 1 club in Shanghai, China.

Redmond campus in Washington. The latter job, he notes, involves much more interaction with customers and a more managerial role with colleagues.

"I think talking confidently to co-workers is very important, and Toastmasters has helped me a lot with that," says Bresler, who joined the Speechmakers club around the same time he began working at Microsoft, in the summer of 2005, and became its president last summer.

The Table Topics portion of the meetings has boosted his skills and confidence the most, Bresler says. "I rarely have to give a prepared speech [in my job]," he says, "but it's very common to have someone challenge a suggestion I make at work, and to have to think off the top of my head how to respond to it."

Black says learning the importance of practicing a speech over and over helped open up the world of public speaking for him. "I'll practice in my guest room," he says of his routine at home. "I'll take out my 7-minute timer and practice the speech, and just keep doing it until I get it right."

When he knows his talk really well, Black adds, it frees him to focus on other things such as eye contact and hand gestures.

Riesco says she'd eventually like to transition to teaching and training Microsoft employees – work in which communication skills are paramount. Toastmasters is helping her in this area. "I feel that now if I were to approach somebody [at Microsoft], to try to go from my current job to being involved with training, I'd feel more confident," she says, "because I know I gave all these speeches. I speak in front of everyone almost every week."

She adds that Toastmasters is a good forum for networking with Microsoft employees who work in other departments at the giant company. "So, for example, if you wanted to transfer to another department, you could tell [a department leader], 'I know so-and-so – we worked together in Toastmasters.'"

Bresler recalls how nervous he was the first time he gave a speech in front of his Toastmasters group – "I was visibly shaking." But the experience left him looking forward to the next time he would speak.

"People were so supportive," he says. "I look back and see so many things I did wrong with that speech – there must have been a dozen problems I had. I could have gotten hammered on my evaluation, but the evaluator had enough tact to give me a couple of positive suggestions that I could work on."

"I was eager to come back so I could practice those things."


Lu's Shanghai club, which has about 30 registered members, gathers at 6 p.m. on Thursdays in a company meeting room. Soon after forming, the club hosted a contest for humorous speaking at Shanghai's Microsoft offices. Lu says that event sparked great enthusiasm among Toastmasters members, who eagerly participated in the competition.

Bresler says one idea his group is pursuing is giving out some kind of T-shirt to members after they deliver their first speech. It's another way to provide support and positive re-inforcement.

For Black, Toastmasters has been a tool that's allowed him to communicate better in casual work meetings. "Table Topics has helped me to deliver concise messages on the fly," he notes. "It's great practice for that."

And for larger, weekly staff meetings, which involve employees who work outside of Black's immediate team and are structured a bit more formally, he says he plans beforehand the message he wants to stress to the group. "And then I'll wait until the right moment during the meeting and deliver it like a mini-speech."

This mindset is something he never could have imagined years ago, when the distressing memories of his high school class were all he associated with public speaking.

"What's most interesting is that now I'm actually seeking out speaking opportunities – which I never would have done before," Black says. "I would have thought, 'Why? What fun would there be to that?' I'm actually getting to the point now where there's some fun to it." 

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**Paul Sterman** is a freelance writer living in Orange, California.





# How to Ask for Money

By Katherine Wertheim, CTM

## Tips from a veteran fundraiser.

As a fundraiser, I raise millions of dollars for charity, but my friend Rochelle raises hundreds of millions of dollars. Therefore, I was quite startled when I visited her house and her young son said to me, “I’m trying to raise money for my elementary school. Will you subscribe to some magazines?” I looked at Rochelle and asked, surprised, “You didn’t teach him how to just ask for money?”

If there is a cause you believe in, at some point you will be asked to raise money. While Toastmasters policy prohibits fundraising by clubs for any charity, as an individual Toastmaster you can practice persuasive speeches and learn how to ask for money so that you can help a charity of your choice outside your club. And you won’t have to sell magazine subscriptions

or host golf tournaments or produce fancy fundraising dinners where most of the money ends up going to the caterer.

We fear asking for money because money is a forbidden topic in most of the world. Think of your closest friends. Chances are, you know their views on politics and religion. However, you probably don’t know the size of their salaries

# Charity Begins at Home

**W**ould you like to hold a quick, inexpensive event where you can raise funds for a worthy cause? Try holding it at home.

It's best to have a team of two people. People like events with two hosts, because it means they will meet new people. They like events in other people's homes so they can see how others live.

The whole event should take an hour, including time for people to arrive, socialize, listen to the pitch, give money, perhaps drink some coffee or eat dessert, and leave.

Set a date about 10 days away. That gives it a sense of urgency. Both hosts should invite their friends – invite about five times as many people as the house can hold, because only 20 percent will attend. You can send an invitation by e-mail, perhaps using a service such as Evite ([www.evite.com](http://www.evite.com)). Otherwise, call your friends and invite them. The invitation should make it clear that it will be a fundraising event and that everyone should bring their checkbooks or money, but that there is no requirement to give and no minimum. There's no charge at the door. Whether you raise money depends on the effectiveness of the fundraising speech.

The best part of this event is that you can repeat it endlessly by having other hosts and going to new homes and new sets of friends. You can also do a lot of these events very quickly; in fact, you often see politicians do these kinds of events, because they can be held quickly, cheaply and frequently.

Good luck in your fundraising!

***“If you cannot  
become rich,  
be the neighbor  
of a rich man.”***

**– Armenian proverb**

or bank accounts. We rarely talk about money, even among our closest friends.

So when it comes time to ask for money for a charity, we may feel like our throats are closing. Think

you stand in front of a group of people and ask for money. This is the equivalent of a six- to eight-minute Toastmasters speech, and, in fact, you might want to practice it at your club first.

These problems are easy to understand and quick to state. You'll notice that each uses words of one or two syllables. A seventh-grade student could understand them. It doesn't take several minutes to understand each problem; you understand it in one sentence. Now, you are interested in knowing the solution. The first lesson is: People already understand the problems; they want to know what solutions you offer.

When you've stated the problem, you can move quickly to the solution the organization offers. What is your solution? This is where you might spend a minute – or even several minutes – explaining how the organization proposes to solve the problem.

If you want a dynamic opening statement, try beginning with the story of just one person. Here are some openings that match the previously stated problems:

***“You want to give them reasons to give,  
but first you want to touch their hearts.”***

about what makes you uncomfortable. Does it feel like you're begging? Are you afraid that, if you ask for money, you'll have to donate to someone else's cause in return? Do you fear being asked a question that you can't answer? Or is it just that you don't know how to do it? If you know what you fear, it becomes easier to face that fear, and some knowledge and practice will help. You can learn how to create a speech that will persuade people to donate.

The most common fundraising scenario is the “group ask,” where

There are a number of ways you can start this speech. You might want to pose a problem. For example here's a list of problems. Can you name organizations that might tackle them?

- “Millions of people worldwide will go to bed hungry tonight.”
- “No one should ever be paralyzed by polio again.”
- “Children who have nothing to do after school are likely to get into trouble.”



- Marielene was a struggling rice farmer, but she kept her family fed – until the cyclone hit.
- Rajesh contracted polio last year, one of 674 people in India to catch it. His legs will be paralyzed for life by a disease for which a vaccine was invented decades ago. He is only three years old.
- When Jack was first caught shoplifting, he said the reason he started was because he was “bored.”

For each of those stories, you find yourself wanting to learn more. Fundraisers call this use of stories “the Anne Frank principle.” While most people have heard that six million Jews died in the Holocaust, few know that an estimated 1.5 million were children. It’s hard to picture 1.5 million children being killed, but we can read *Anne Frank’s Diary* and picture the loss of one child, and cry over it, and then it will be more meaningful to think of 1.5 million children being killed. In the same way, you can talk about one person who needed your organization, and then go on to talk about how many others you are helping, or

whom you could help if you had the money.


People make decisions based on emotions, and then justify the decisions intellectually. You want to give them reasons to give, but first you want to touch their hearts. Beginning with an emotional appeal works best, but be sure to back it up with facts.

In an eight-minute speech, you might start by talking about one person who was in trouble, how that individual was helped, and how he or she is now successful. Then, you would talk about how many other people in a similar situation are helped by your organization. You would touch on the extent of the problem (“But there are still millions of children who go to bed hungry each night,” for example). Finally, you want to ask for money.

It works best if you can ask for a suggested amount. Many fundraising appeals fail merely because no one actually asked anyone for anything. Talk about what specific amounts of money can do: “Just 60 cents of vaccine will protect a child from polio” or “Sponsoring a child for the after-school soccer program costs just \$23 per child.” People want to know a

suggested amount. You can use up to three suggested amounts, and then ask for other gifts, saying, “Every dollar helps. We appreciate whatever you can give.”

Even if you have lots of time to speak, you don’t want to take up too much. People have short attention spans. If it takes much longer than ten minutes, you are probably spending too much time explaining the problem and not enough on the solution. People understand most problems pretty quickly. They know we have problems in the world; they want to know your solution.

Everyone remembers the first time they asked for money, just like you remember your first Toastmasters meeting, or your first Ice Breaker speech, or your first time serving as Toastmaster. After that, each time is easier, until the day when someone says to you, “Asking for money is so hard! How do you do it?” 

**Katherine Wertheim, CTM**, is a member of Ventura Toastmasters club in Ventura, California and a professional fundraising consultant who has raised millions of dollars for dozens of organizations. Her website is [www.werth-it.com](http://www.werth-it.com).

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## Creating powerful introductions and conclusions.

# From Hello to Goodbye

In the development of a speech, you often know what to say about the chosen subject in the *middle* part. But how do you craft an introduction that captures the audience's attention and makes them eager for more? And when you have delivered your main message, how do you wrap it up to let the audience know the conclusion is coming? By deliberately planning the style and content of your hellos and goodbyes, the "frame" you build around your main message will be as satisfying as an appetizing salad before a tasty main course – and a fulfilling dessert after it.

For another food image to help your speeches, think of the main message – the body of your talk – as the meat in a hamburger. The introduction and conclusion are the bun parts, holding all the good stuff together. Old-fashioned approaches to public speaking advise, "Start off with a joke." But unless the rest of your speech is humorous, a joke may be inappropriate to your subject matter. Inappropriate humor would be like wrapping



cake frosting around meat – not exactly tasty.

The best openings and closings follow easy-to-learn patterns, and identifying the pattern is like follow-

ing a cooking recipe: Once you decide on it, the rest is easy. You will choose some favorite patterns (like recipes) that you use over and over because they work well for you or fit your style. Later, you might try a new one for variety or for a special-occasion speech. Look at the list below for ideas:

Remembering the hamburger bun example, the introduction and conclusion should follow the same pattern. For example, if you use a question in the introduction, refer to that *exact same question* in the conclusion. In the conclusion, restate what you said in the introduction. The listener will remember and recognize that you are moving to the conclusion.

Here are some well-established "recipes" to try:

### ■ Thought-Provoking or Intriguing Statement

**Introduction:** *"The leading cause of death to pregnant women is murder."*

**Conclusion:** *"So while the leading cause of death to pregnant women is murder, there are steps women can take to reduce risk. Please share this information with anyone you know who might use it."*



### ■ Startling Statistics

**Introduction:** *“One out of every three children in the United States is growing up in poverty. And yet, eight billion dollars a month is spent on the war in Iraq.”*

**Conclusion:** *“The United States can no longer afford to let a third of its children grow up in poverty. It’s time to stop the spending outside our country and focus on our own citizens.”*

### ■ Emotionally Appealing Short Story or Anecdote

**Introduction:** *“Let me tell you about the last time I visited the local animal shelter. . . . Old dogs, young dogs and puppies looked hopefully from behind bars to see if this human would take them home and love them. Brown eyes looked questioningly, and tails wagged hopefully, then stopped dejectedly as I walked past their cages. One dog, obviously distraught, lunged at the bars in fear of her life. She knew the chances of going home were next to zero.”*

**Conclusion:** *“If you do not neuter or spay your pet, I encourage you to visit the local animal shelter. Look into the eyes of the animals who did not choose to be born and then abandoned. As human beings, it is our responsibility to take care of the creatures who do not have the ability to control their own reproduction.”*

### ■ Question

Make sure it is an *open-ended* question, not a *yes* or *no* question. With a *yes* or *no* question, there is the risk of the listener mentally saying “yes” or “no,” and not listening to the rest of your speech. Open-ended questions use the words “how,” “what,” “where,” “who” or “why.”

**Introduction:** *“What would you do if you won the lottery? Some people might go on a spending spree, while*

*others might book nonstop travel arrangements. Hopefully, a few might decide to donate to the charity of their choice.”*

**Conclusion:** *“So if you won the lottery after hearing about all these types of charities, which ones would you donate to?”*

### ■ Compare or Contrast

**Introduction:** *“While I grew up cooking with sugar, I’ve been experimenting with sugar substitutes for more healthful cooking. Not all sugar substitutes are equal (pun intended). Splenda, Equal, Sweet ‘N Low, honey and molasses are all slightly different in how they affect cooking. I’m here to tell you about my experiments in swapping out sugar with substitutes.”*

**Conclusion:** *“If you like to cook and are concerned about your sugar intake, or if you cook for a diabetic person, sugar substitutes have their pros and cons. It’s a discovery process in your very own kitchen. Have fun experimenting!”*

## “If you use a question in the introduction, refer to that exact same question in the conclusion.”

The aforementioned examples are by no means a complete list of introduction and conclusion recipes. They represent frequently used varieties. You can even combine them, such as including a startling statistic with an emotionally appealing story. Example: “Let me tell you about the last time I visited the local animal shelter. Shelter staff told me that about 12 tons of euthanized animals must be safely disposed of in any given year.” This blended approach offers the benefits of both types of techniques and often increases their impact beyond what each would have garnered alone.

### 10 Tips to Remember

- Plan and practice your introduction and conclusion as carefully as you do the body of your speech.
- Use the same words in the introduction and conclusion – that is, don’t use “sugar substitute” and then switch to “fake sugar.”
- Don’t apologize or complain. Example: “I didn’t have much time to prepare this speech,” or “The Toastmasters manual was not clear on how I was to prepare this speech.”
- Do not offer dictionary definition without good reasons.
- Do not assume your audience already knows some of your subject matter. Avoid professional jargon and acronyms.
- Do not say “In conclusion . . .” or other obvious statements like “To end this speech” or “This is the end.”
- Do not go on to a new topic as part of your closing. Example: “Now since you know about sugar substitutes, if you want to learn how to reduce fat in your cooking, here are tips.”

- Do not change from the meat of your speech. Example: “So while one child of three in the United States grows up in poverty, as long as my kids are okay I don’t really care.”

The examples above give you an idea of recipes, but they need to be lengthened in your real speech. Plump out your introductions and conclusions to give the listener time to mentally adjust to what is heard. **T**

**Sally Paige Kahle** is a freelance writer and member of Meadowlark Toastmasters in Topeka, Kansas.

By Patrick Mott

# Oscar Sound Bites:

How the Hollywood elite coo for the golden statue.

*The Sour, the Sweet  
and the Salty*

*They account for some of the most memorable and cringe-inducing utterances in modern history, a parade of the glib and the goofy, the erudite and the awful, all played out before the eyes of billions.*

They're both the dream and the nightmare of anyone who's ever spoken before an audience – and we can't seem to get enough of them. Good or bad, they're water cooler fodder for days and even weeks after the original words fade away. Some even pass into legend.

They're Oscar acceptance speeches.

And if you just smiled or rolled your eyes when you read that, that should tell you a lot about the place of this peculiar speaking tradition in the modern world. When the winner of an Academy Award mounts the steps to the stage, a huge auditorium full of celebrities, as well as millions of viewers around the world, wonder the same thing: Is that person going to say something dazzling, breathtaking, stunningly witty, impossibly dramatic, heartfelt and thoroughly appropriate to the occasion, or are they going to stammer blindly, thank their therapist and get unceremoniously played off stage by the pit orchestra?

Public speakers of all stripes can learn by watching the Oscar night telecast, even if it ends up being more

of a cautionary tale than a tutorial. The lessons, say long-time Oscar watchers, are among the simplest and display the most common sense, but putting them into practice when you're all alone in the spotlight and the beam is glinting off that gold statue in your hand, well...

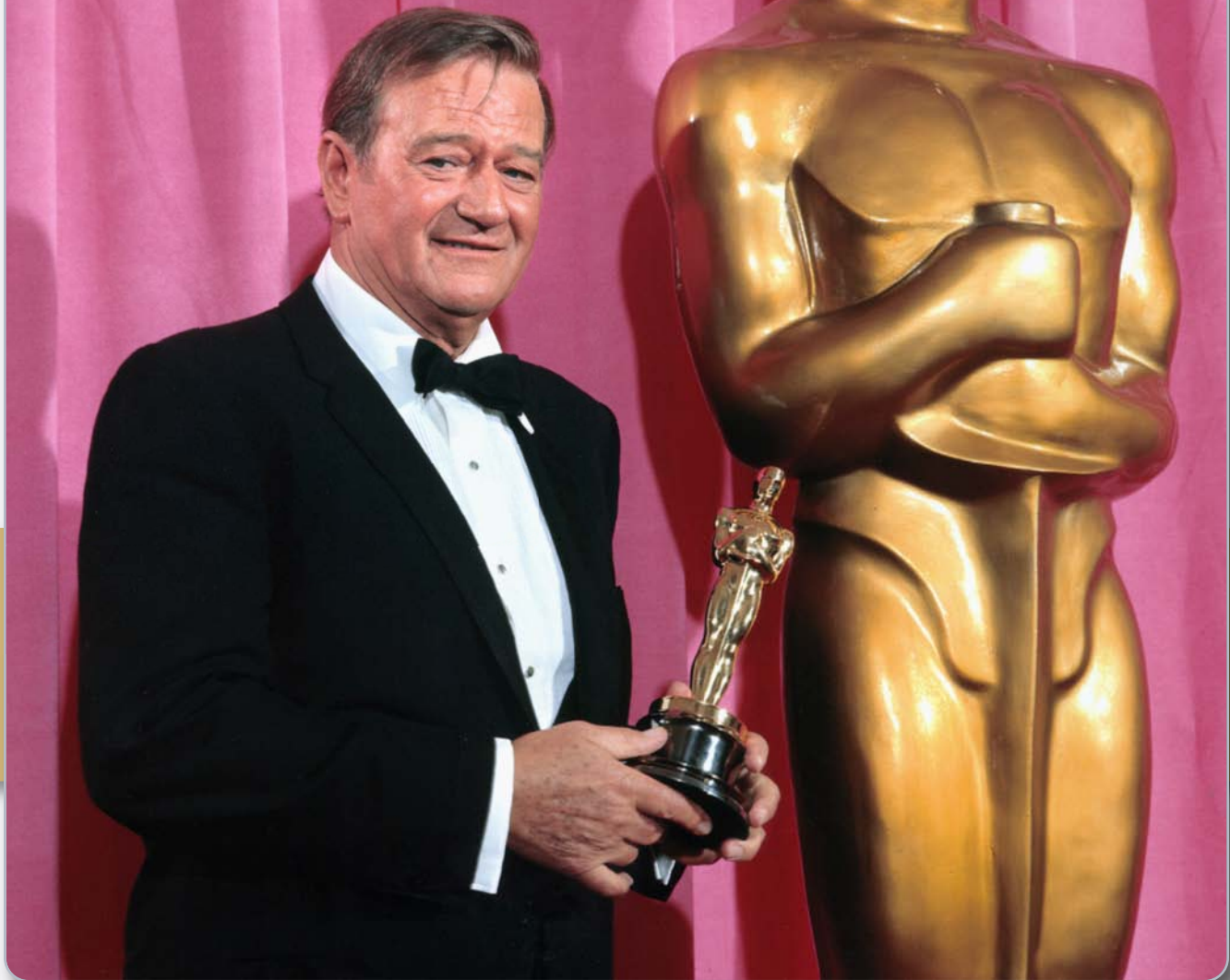
"I think it's difficult for the rest of us to know what it's like to get caught up in the whole publicity machine and the parties and all of the hubbub that surrounds the awards," says Dr. Kirwan Rockefeller. "It really is a whirlwind of activity. There's a lot of pressure on you, a lot of expectations, a lot of hope, a lot of desire, and it's just really a lot to handle."

Rockefeller, the director of the Arts and Humanities Continuing Education Program at University of California Irvine Extension, is a veteran observer of show business awards shows and can recall many of the best and the worst acceptance speeches over the years. He rejoices in the classics and is inclined to give a break to the clunkers.

"We tend to look at movie stars and celebrities as being much larger than life," he says. "We see them liter-



▶ John Wayne received the only Oscar of his career for his turn in the 1969 movie “True Grit.” When Barbara Streisand presented him with the Best Actor award for his performance as Rooster Cogburn, he had tears in his eyes and said, “I feel very grateful, very humble.”



ally 100 feet high on movie screens and they kind of take on mythic proportions. So we think that they're always calm and cool. But [on the job] they're usually working from prepared scripts. At the awards, they get caught up in the emotion. And in a way I think it's very endearing when we see them be humble and maybe stumble over their words.”

Nevertheless, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences runs a tight ship on Oscar night. The show's producers want the winner on and off quickly – ideally in less than a minute. Before the 2006 Oscar telecast, the Academy gave a video urging economy of words to all 150 contenders for the award. Narrated by Tom Hanks, it

exhorted the nominees to address the audience with “wit, flair, creativity – or at least with brevity...Use a little of that Oscar-winning creativity to make your speech entertaining.”

The 8½-minute video, titled “An Insider's Guide: What Nominees Need to Know,” featured clips of speeches considered to be good and not-so-good – including Jack Palance's famous one-armed push-ups in 1992 after winning an Oscar for *City Slickers* and Gwyneth Paltrow's 1999 crying jag after winning for *Shakespeare In Love*.

Hanks, on the video, also exhorts nominees to “lose the list” of people to thank. His final piece of advice: “Maximize your moment.”

# A Few of the Best and the Worst

- **Woody Allen:** “Thank you very much. That makes up for the strip search.”
- **Sally Field:** “I haven’t had an orthodox career, and I’ve wanted more than anything to have your respect. The first time I didn’t feel it, but this time I feel it, and I can’t deny the fact that you like me, right now, you like me!”
- **Jane Fonda:** “There’s a great deal to say, but I’m not going to say it tonight.”
- **Ron Howard:** “I’m not a good enough actor anymore to be able to stand up here and make you believe that I haven’t imagined this moment in my mind over the years and played it out over a thousand times.”
- **Maureen Stapleton:** “I want to thank everybody I ever met in my entire life.” (She didn’t do it, thankfully.)
- **Sir Laurence Olivier:** “In the great wealth, the great firmament of your nation’s generosity, this particular choice may perhaps be found by future generations as a trifle eccentric, but the mere fact of it – the prodigal, pure, human kindness of it – must be seen as a beautiful star in that firmament which shines upon me at this moment, dazzling me a little, but filling me with warmth and the extraordinary elation, the euphoria that happens to so many of us at the first breath of the majestic glow of a new tomorrow.”
- **Cary Grant:** “You know that I may never look at this without remembering the quiet patience of directors who were so kind to me, who were kind enough to put up with me more than once, some of them even three or four times. I trust they and all the other directors, writers and producers and my leading women have forgiven me for what I didn’t know. You know that I’ve never been a joiner or a member of any particular social set, but I’ve been privileged to be a part of Hollywood’s most glorious era.”
- **Joe Pesci:** “It’s my privilege. Thank you.” (Second-shortest speech in Oscar history.)
- **Clark Gable:** “Thank you.” (Shortest speech in Oscar history.)
- The longest speech ever given by an Oscar winner? That distinction goes to actress **Greer Garson**, who accepted her 1943 award at a little past 1 a.m. – and proceeded to deliver a seven-minute oration, thanking everyone, including “the doctor who brought me into the world.”

The “thank-you” list is a perennial problem for the show’s producers and a searing pain for the audience, says veteran Oscar-watcher Toby Miller, a professor of media and cultural studies at the University of California Riverside.

“I want to thank my therapist, my boyfriend...there’s a hyper-performance quality to it,” he says. “When there’s an endless list of names, it makes everyone sort of sit on their hands, or go outside for a cigarette or run to the restroom.”

Preparation, he says, is key. “You’ve known for some time that you’re a nominee,” he says, “and you’re right there in the room, so it shouldn’t come as a complete shock to you if you win.”

Within the entertainment industry, however, preparation can be seen as a problem, says Rockefeller.

“It’s considered a little bit of a no-no because if you look like you prepared, it comes off seeming like you expected to win, and nobody likes that. Still, I think if you can jot down a couple of notes on an index card or something like that, that’s fine. When Julie Christie won a Screen Actors Guild award recently she had a little card in her purse with names of people to thank and it was very elegantly and subtly done.”

Wit and a bit of brass can even defuse discomfort over the thank-you list, he said. When Julia Roberts won her Oscar in 2001 for *Erin Brockovich*, Rockefeller says he “thought she was charming when they started playing the music [indicating her time was up] and she said, ‘No, no,

no...I may not be here ever again. Give me my time.’ She did it in such a charming, humorous, funny way and I think then people wanted to hear what she had to say.”

Meryl Streep accomplished much the same thing in 1981 when she won her Oscar for *Sophie’s Choice*: “I have a lot of people to thank,” she said, “and I’m going to be one of those people that tries to mention a lot of names, because I know just two seconds ago my mother and father went berserk and I’d like to give some other mothers and fathers that same opportunity.”

What one quality can carry the day? Heartfelt emotion, say both Rockefeller and Miller. For once, if it looks like they’re not acting, actors can appear at their best.

“Brevity is good,” says Miller. “Having something to say is good. Really being aware of your audience. And realizing that the words you say are going to be remembered. So you want [the speech] to be remembered not for a lot of ‘ahs’ or ‘ums’ but for having one particular point.

“I think if you’ve got a very, very small amount of time, if you want to make a particular point other than simply saying thank you, make that point at the beginning. Then you give a bit of supporting evidence, you sum up at the end, and you try to do it, even if there’s something serious there, with a sense of humor.” **T**

**Pat Mott** is a Southern California-based writer and regular contributor to this magazine.



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Putting online communication skills to work in a corporate club.

## Recruiting via E-mail

✦ Recently, I used my Toastmasters intuition at work. It happened when I read an article written by a guest director for our department's Intranet. She and a group of staff members had traveled the prior weekend to a conference in a neighboring state. She wrote that the three days were filled with intensive training and networking. She ended the article by writing that there had been small group, in-depth discussions about what they were learning.

I thought of that group of attendees – a few of whom I knew on a casual level. My intuition told me that some of them had probably experienced struggles with communicating to the group. Because it was known I was in Toastmasters, I believed I would hear from at least one person who attended that conference. Was I ever correct!

By 10 that morning, I received an e-mail:

*"I would like to participate in the Toastmasters program in our building. Can you point me to information on the program? Are you a member? If yes, tell me about your experience. Thanks, Selina."*

I quickly responded:

*"I would love to have you join us at our meeting today at noon. It is right here in our building, room 4070. I did a write-up for the Intranet that will be published this coming Thursday. How about I send you a sneak peek? After you read it, if you have any questions, I would be happy to share more."*

She must have liked what she read because she answered:

*"I will be there. Looking forward to it."*

It was a great meeting with a few last-minute role assignments, but that's typical in the summertime. We had only one speaker giving an Ice Breaker, and plenty of lively

I followed up with an e-mail that afternoon:

*"I am so glad you could join us today. I was impressed that you jumped right in and took your turn at Table Topics. I hope you will read through the packet you were given today and decide to join this group. As I said in the article I sent you –*

*it will feed your hungry mind and serve as a wonderful practice audience for those presentations for your job."*

She replied:

*"Thanks for your kind words and support. I have decided to join the group. It is something I have wanted to do for a long time. The convenient location and time make it possible now! Thanks again."*

She will be a great addition to our group. Tomorrow will be our first meeting since my article was published. Will others show up? Will we meet their expectations? Time will tell. My intuition tells me there are many others in our department

who could benefit from all that Toastmasters has to offer. It's time to check my e-mail! 📧

**Gwen Whipple, ACB** is a member of City Toasters club in Seattle, Washington.



Table Topics. Selina volunteered to answer a Table Topic question, and did a great job. I talked to her briefly once the meeting ended, and I was pretty sure she was hooked. I saw she had one of our new member packets in her hand.

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✦ Congratulations to these Toastmasters who have received the Distinguished Toastmaster award, Toastmasters International's highest recognition.

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Toni Berkowitz 7800-1, Culver City, California  
Greg Regester 656338-2, Seattle, Washington  
Raymond S. Roman 720948-2, Bellevue, Washington  
Lee Ann Aronson 4630-3, Phoenix, Arizona  
Holley Allyson Kinnear 3524-5, Del Mar, California  
Marjorie M. Johnson 5252-6, Prior Lake, Minnesota  
Robin L. Eberlein 5554-6, Center City, Minnesota  
Maria R. Lee 678-7, Vancouver, Washington  
Roberta Anderson 9793-8, Scott Air Force Base, Illinois  
Steven A. Hand 9793-8, Scott Air Force Base, Illinois  
John Eltzroth 7039-10, Chardon, Ohio  
Michael Jay Scott 1309-11, Fort Wayne, Indiana  
Ronald Jones 9580-14, Warner Robins, Georgia  
Faith McGee 8826-19, West Des Moines, Iowa  
Marilyn K. Champoux 4296-24, Lincoln, Nebraska  
Robert F. Lucht 798-26, Cheyenne, Wyoming  
James J. Naramore 665919-26, Gillette, Wyoming  
Paul E. White 5986-27, Annandale, Virginia  
Scena B. Webb 7667-28, Detroit, Michigan  
Heidi A. Roundy 3759-32, Gig Harbor, Washington  
Susan J. Popke 4955-35, Franklin, Wisconsin  
Susan D. Schick 4889-36, Potomac, Maryland  
Sharon Atkins Hill 6391-37, Thomasville, North Carolina

Linda L. Schreiber 197-39, Redding, California  
James A. Brenza 8119-40, Cincinnati, Ohio  
David A. Watkins 6110-42, Edmonton, AB, Canada  
Shelley L. Musfelt 9035-42, Calgary, AB, Canada  
Dale M. Keating 748806-42, Regina, SK, Canada  
Marcus J. Brooks 2895-46, New York, New York  
John F. Diaz 3042-47, Melbourne, Florida  
Lisa G. Hill 5569-50, Plano, Texas  
Danni C. Babik 8631-50, Dallas, Texas  
Jessica Liew Lee Kee 6895-51, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
Laurie Heermance 3570-54, Bloomington, Illinois  
Jill Moffitt 8411-56, Houston, Texas  
Jim Hudson 5706-57, Richmond, California  
Errol A. Johnson 4373-60, Toronto, ON, Canada  
Michael Proudlock 583417-60, Brampton, ON, Canada  
Sherral Kahey 8855-68, St Gabriel, Louisiana  
Christopher Simon Parminter 1281-69, Bribie Island, QLD, Australia  
Delphine L. Parminter 1281-69, Bribie Island, QLD, Australia  
Michele F. Keighley 3887-69, Mitchelton, QLD, Australia  
Marianne Joan King 3558-70, Wollongong, NSW, Australia  
Lucia Hughes 7491-71, Carlow Co Carlow, Ireland  
Teresa S. Dukes 714161-71, Martlesham, Suffolk, ENG, United Kingdom  
Stanley Tridon Blackford 714166-73, West Lakes, SA, Australia  
Judith M. Leano 7739-75, Baguio City, Benguet, Philippines  
Randy Nelson S. Cabahug 1067638-75, Cebu City, Cebu, Philippines  
Esin Gershaw 1919-77, Eglin Air Force Base, Florida  
Brian J. Logsdon 291-78, Great Falls, Montana  
Mohan Varghese 2910-79, Doha, Qatar, Qatar  
Krishna Kumar Srinivasan 635300-79, Dubai, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

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Energizers 2439-15, Clearfield, Utah  
Waco Tale Twisters 2348-25, Waco, Texas  
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Bell Tower 1048-37, Chapel Hill, North Carolina  
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Harris Communicators 363-47, Melbourne, Florida  
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Daybreak 1005-58, Charleston, South Carolina  
Strictly Speaking 3025-62, Kalamazoo, Michigan  
Cereal City 3462-62, Battle Creek, Michigan  
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Danville 3305-66, Danville, Virginia  
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Lucan 1896-71, Dublin Co Dublin, Ireland  
Dawnspeakers 1749-72, Dunedin, Otago, New  
Zealand

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Steamboat 2043-11, Jeffersonville, Indiana  
Image Masters 6875-15, Salt Lake City, Utah  
Green Country Neighbor 2337-16, Tulsa, Oklahoma  
Auto Motivators 4614-18, Glen Burnie, Maryland  
Cutting Edge 3060-19, Sioux City, Iowa  
Eastgate 387-23, Los Alamos, New Mexico  
Rosslyn Speak E-Z 780-27, Arlington, Virginia  
Landmark Toasters 6854-27, Reston, Virginia  
High Noon 6852-37, Raleigh, North Carolina  
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Dixon 6870-39, Dixon, California  
Nationwide 2718-40, Dublin, Ohio  
Telecommunicators 2158-42, Edmonton, AB,  
Canada  
Gas City Square 4682-42, Medicine Hat, AB,  
Canada  
Northside Post Toaster 3702-43, North Little Rock,  
Arkansas  
Omni 6861-47, Heathrow, Florida  
Talk of the Tower 4601-55, San Antonio, Texas  
Santa Rosa's Toastmasters Lunch Bunch 4069-57,  
Santa Rosa, California  
Delta 6872-57, Antioch, California  
Deer Park 6859-60, Toronto, ON, Canada  
Maitland 4424-70, East Maitland, NSW, Australia  
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# Are You Competing in the Contest? Do You Want a Competitive Edge? Do You Want to **WOW** the Audience?

From the desk of World Champion, Darren LaCroix

Dear Fellow Toastmaster:

"How do I write a world-class speech?" Toastmasters from around the world ask me this question all the time because of my accomplishment. I wish there were a "secret pill" that, when swallowed, would instantly allow us to "own the stage." Ironically, that's *exactly* what I wished for when I was competing in the contests. With no luck finding such a pill, I re-committed myself to becoming a dedicated "student of public speaking."

I wish I could spend a day with you! I'd love to sit down and show you exactly what my two speaker coaches taught me. But, I can't.

If you're anything like me... I wanted to know, "How do world-class speakers approach a presentation? How do they make it look so easy? What do they do? What don't they do?" What I realized is that I needed to learn a World Champion's "perspective."

If you were sitting across from me, the first thing I'd say is "you're looking at it wrong." You're spending way too much time trying to write that "magic" speech that's a surefire winner. A "great" speech is one that's synergistic with the presenter. That the message *is* the presenter: they are **one in the same**.

The second thing I would tell you is that you're trying to persuade *before* you connect. A winning speech is one that emotionally connects with the audience. You must connect **before** you can persuade. If you want to connect, you must speak from your own experiences rather than about some "hot topic."

A comment I hear over and over again from people is, "I've got a good speech... I just need to add some humor." As fellow World Champion, Craig Valentine, would say, "You don't add humor, you uncover it!" Humor isn't something to be "added." Telling a joke unrelated to the main point doesn't make somebody a world-class speaker. The problem is not usually "lack of humor." It often lies within the *structure* and *focus* of the speech. I personally had many problems while creating my championship speech. My coach was quickly able to point them out. It was easy for him to see my problems. Why? His *perspective*. Mark Brown had been there before and had won the World Championship.

I was an experienced speaker, so I thought I knew "enough." I was comfortable, I could hold the audience's attention, and I could even make them laugh. I just needed that *secret speaker pill*.

Well, I have finally discovered the secret! The secret is *perspective*. If you want to be a world-class speaker, you need a world-class *perspective*.

I really wish I could spend a day with you. Instead, why not *two* days? Why *just me*? Why not get the perspectives of *seven* World Champions (including Mark Brown, my coach) and the eight comedians who taught me to be funny?

I created the Master Presenter Pack for **you**. It's designed so you can just pop us into your CD player, or load us into your MP3 player and take us all on a ride with you. Not quite as fast as a pill, but *much more powerful* and *longer-lasting*. **If you're serious about your speaking... invest in yourself**. Invest for your audience. Invest for your future as a speaker. You'll never look at presentations the same way again. Darrenteed!

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- My "speech creation process" by my coach, Mark Brown
- Ed Tate's 4 H's to great speaking — only *one* is optional!
- The 4 commonalities of ten World Champions
- How to change the pace to keep the audience involved!

What fellow Toastmasters have said:

"They are *the best, most detailed, and most easily understood* programs on public speaking that I have seen."

~ Michael Erwine, Eaton Rapids, MI

"I was able to take a good Area Contest winning speech, and turn it into a great Division Contest winning speech."

~ Mark Perew, Huntington Beach, CA

"After the contest, one of the audience came to me and said, 'I saw your improvement, and you are totally different!'"

~ Hubert, Taiwan

Stage time, Stage time, Stage time.



Darren LaCroix  
2001 World Champion of Public Speaking

P.P.S. Your presentations will never be the same. Darrenteed!



*P.S. Go online and get the world-class "perspective" pill!*

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