

the Toastmaster®

september 1995

HOW COMFORTABLE
ARE YOU WITH

Praise & Criticism?

WHAT DO YOU *REALLY* LOOK AND SOUND LIKE?
A Videotape Self-Evaluation Guide

MEET IAN EDWARDS, DTM
An Interview With Toastmasters' 1995-96 International President

Weasel Words



by Ralph C. Smedley

Theodore Roosevelt is said to have coined the phrase, "weasel words."

There are certain expressions which annoyed him. He said they sucked the life and force from speech, just as a weasel sucks the blood from its victim.

Among his favorite aversions were "in my humble opinion," "as you might say," and "in other words." When there was something to be said, he wanted it said plainly, without hedging or side-stepping.

Today we speak of such overused expressions as "trite," "hackneyed," or if we wish to be formal, we call them "clichés."

We get *trite* from Latin. There is a verb form, *tritus*, meaning to wear out by rubbing. In England, a *hackney* is a horse hired out, with the result that it is worn out by hard work. The word has come into common use to suggest the idea

of being put to commonplace or unworthy use. *Cliché* is a French word, meaning to stereotype.

The words we condemn as trite are in themselves good words. It is repeated use that makes them objectionable. We may take it as an axiom: "Any word when used too often is a bad word."

When you use even the best word over and over again, it weakens your speech. When you pick up a wisecrack or a slang phrase and keep repeating it, your speech becomes tiresome and you wear the listeners down.

"I wouldn't mind having Bill Neighbor loaf in my office," said a word-weary Toastmaster, "if he would just quit promising 'to make a long story short.' He can't talk about anything without dragging that phrase into it. And whenever he says, 'Well, to make a long story short,' I know that I am in for a long one."

People may be too polite to tell you, but they dread having to listen to your hackneyed talk.

The way to protect yourself against overuse of overused words is to set a watch on your daily conversation. When you find yourself giving any word or phrase too large a place in your talk, suppress it. Find other words to do the work. Fine yourself one cent every time you use one of the forbidden expressions.

Are things "simply out of this world" for you? Perhaps you are "sitting pretty," or maybe you are "shooting off your mouth," or you "sailed into" your opponent and "took the hide off" or "laid him out." And "last but not least": These are colorful phrases - once. They fade with repetition, and presently they are washed out, worn down, stereotyped.

If you were a poultry raiser you would chase the weasels out of your chicken yard. Being a word user, show at least this much consideration for your vocabulary. Kill the clichés. Clear up the detritus. Use fresh words.

This article by our organization's founder originally appeared in the May 1950 issue of The Toastmaster.

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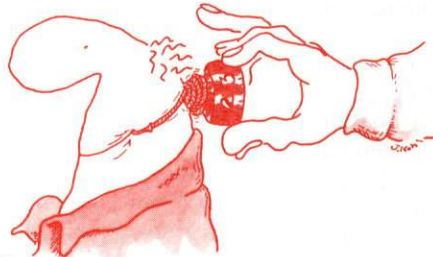
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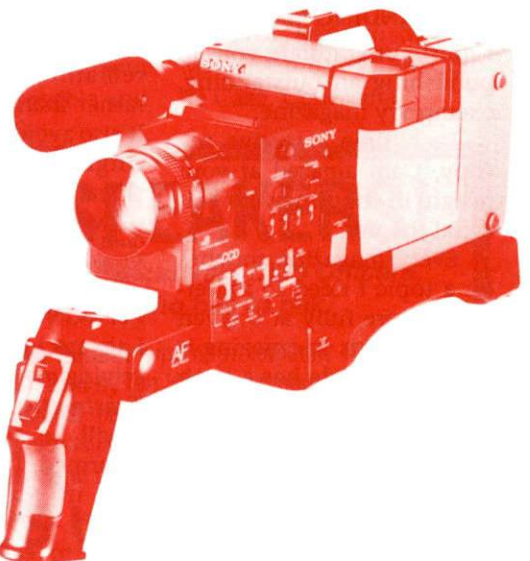
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A JOB WELL DONE

We sometimes forget to thank our colleagues for a job well done. Or we overlook the little things that build the foundation for success. With this in mind, I would be at fault if I did not commend the staff of *The Toastmaster* for its high quality work.

The Toastmaster has been a valuable educational tool for me. As a relatively new member of Toastmasters (my one year anniversary was in August), this power-packed magazine has helped me through many of my speeches!

My hat goes off to the staff of *The Toastmaster* for providing useful, timely and applicable information for those of us who are on the path of becoming effective communicators. I eagerly await the next issue of this remarkable resource guide.

Denise M. Bailey
SSA Club 2884-18
Baltimore, Maryland

OUTSTANDING MAGAZINE

I must congratulate you on publishing an outstanding, exemplary magazine.

Each time I receive my copy, I am amazed at your insight in choosing your editorial themes.

Every magazine touches on a topic I need to understand more fully at a given time. What is so amazing is that each article has a fresh outlook on a given subject without being redundant and boring.

I love Toastmasters International because it attracts people who share the same basic sincerity and motivation of wanting to become more

prolific, articulate speakers and dynamic leaders.

Thank you for producing a magazine I love and look forward to reading each month. The information is extremely helpful, workable, and intelligent.

Charla Brooks-Davis, ATM
Success for Singles Club 2330-12
Ontario, California

Editor's Note:

We're blushing. Thanks for your kind comments!

NO PIECE OF TOAST

Perhaps I missed the boat or came in late, but it seemed to me that Marion Amberg's contribution, "Let's Let Frosty Be the Odd Man Out" (February), was written tongue-in-cheek. As such, I read with amusement how serious some members are reacting in the extreme.

However, Carol Tanis touched a nerve when she reports her speeches begin, "fellow Toastmembers..." This form of address certainly avoids any outdated sexist language. For myself, I prefer remaining a ToastMaster rather than a piece of toast. It also avoids the need to distinguish between white, wheat or rye members!

Paul W. Hookey, DTM
Grand Prairie Club 6332-25
Arlington, Texas

CLEARING THE AIR

I always look forward to receiving my latest issue of *The Toastmaster* because I know I will be "edutained" and informed. The May '95 issue was no exception, with timely and useful articles galore to read and enjoy. The one exception was "The Cigar as a Prop."

This author is telling us to use an air befouling cigar to help make a point while giving a speech. His main reason for this is because George Burns and Groucho Marx successfully used their cigars as props. Furthermore, he tells us the cigar can also be used as a crutch (to take a puff to give us time to think of what to say next). I thought the lessons in Toastmasters were to get us away from crutches and show us how to effectively communicate without blowing "hot air or smoke."

Even if our goal is to become stand-up comedians, we would want to avoid offending the 50 or more percent of our audience who do not smoke.

Richard W. Landau, CTM
Top of Georgia Club 9798-14
Blairsville, Georgia

THE WRONG PROP

As a Toastmaster of more than six years, I look forward to the arrival of each new issue of *The Toastmaster*. I find most issues to be full of helpful articles and I gleefully steal some of the ideas for future speech topics.

However, in my opinion, your choice to publish an article proposing and extolling the use of a smelly, disgusting, filthy, cancer-causing, smoke-producing tobacco product was totally inappropriate. I was appalled at the author's suggestion that the use of a cigar "telegraphs a certain panache." In my humble opinion, a cigar telegraphs nothing but total ignorance and should

be avoided much for the same reason that flatulence should be avoided as a speaker's prop.

The article itself was very effectively written and Mr. Mott is to be commended for penning such a well-worded and structured piece. The article was so effective that, as a severe asthmatic, I found myself engaged in a coughing and wheezing fit before I finished reading the article!

Jim Curley, ATM
Wordsworth Club 4221-31
Hudson, Massachusetts

CLOSE, BUT NO CIGAR

Any prop, if used effectively, can be just the right thing for your speech. However, I am not sure that cigars are ideal as props due to their associated health hazards, such as mouth and throat cancer as well as lung cancer from second hand smoke. Why use a controversial prop when you can use a safe one like soap bubbles or other gadgets. Use your imagination!

Finally, the author's comment, "...fire it up. You've earned it. You must be going places, kid," implies that it is okay, even respectful, to smoke. Might I mention the addictive nature of tobacco and the "cool" Joe Camel character that is influencing kids to become addicted to tobacco?

Use props to get attention and focus your audience, but please do not promote the use of tobacco.

Ed Langmaid, CTM
Dynamic Club 457-5
San Diego, California



Dear Toastmaster:
Having a great time –
Wish you were here.

by Janet Whitcomb, CTM

A Message From Your Club

■ HEY, YOU OUT THERE! YES, WE SAID YOU – the inactive Toastmaster.

First of all, let's establish that you're a nice person and a worthwhile addition to our club. Otherwise we wouldn't even take the time to send this message.

But lately we haven't seen you at our meetings. Or maybe you've attended, but you've been so *quiet!* Oh, you get up if asked to participate in Table Topics. But other than that, you seem to be more of an observer than an actual club member.

We wouldn't be surprised, in fact, if you are reading this article only because someone has been thoughtful and caring enough to mail it to you personally. Go ahead – admit it – you've become so detached that you don't even browse through *The Toastmaster* magazine anymore!

Of course, when you told us about the changes in your life a few months ago, we certainly understood. You've been busy at work. There's a new baby at home. Those extra night classes take every bit of extra energy you can muster.

Many of us go through times when we have to temporarily suspend our Toastmasters involvement. But the longer we stay away, the easier it becomes to let legitimate reasons become long-term excuses. Has this happened to you?

The truth of the matter is that we want you to be a part of the group again! Your individual style, your unique set of experiences and viewpoints, give our club real sparkle and pizzazz. And we have a lot to offer you as well. Getting involved in your Toastmasters club provides a wonderful opportunity to develop one of life's most important experiences: self-expression. And, as you know, Toastmasters clubs offer excel-

lent interaction with a variety of people who wish to improve their speaking abilities – and have fun doing so.

If you've been away, we encourage you to make time for us again. If you attend but shrink from participation, we want you to get involved. Remember, our club is an interactive experience – no chair potatoes allowed! If we ask for your help or input, honor us – and yourself – with your enthusiastic contribution. And if we are remiss in engaging your talents, let us know. Talk to the Vice President Education about scheduling your next speech assignment. And be ready with a thoughtful quote, a hip-pocket speech or some Table-Topics-to-Go if a scheduled meeting participant is unable to attend.

Which brings us to another related subject. Please don't take us lightly! Being a member of a Toastmasters club means being part of a team. Once you've made a commitment, we know you'll do your darndest to come through for your fellow club members. And if something else must take precedence, we depend on you to contact us as soon as possible and

maybe even arrange for another club member to take your place. You are important to the success of our meetings, and we rely on your sense of responsibility.

Well, the cat's out of the bag. You thought your absences and silences didn't really matter. But now you know about that gap you've left in our otherwise terrific club. We miss you! And once you rejoin us, we have a feeling you'll recognize the difference that being an active Toastmaster makes in your life. Don't keep us – or yourself – waiting much longer!

Janet Whitcomb, CTM, is the Vice President Public Relations of Rancho Speech Masters Club 9113-F in Coto de Caza, California.

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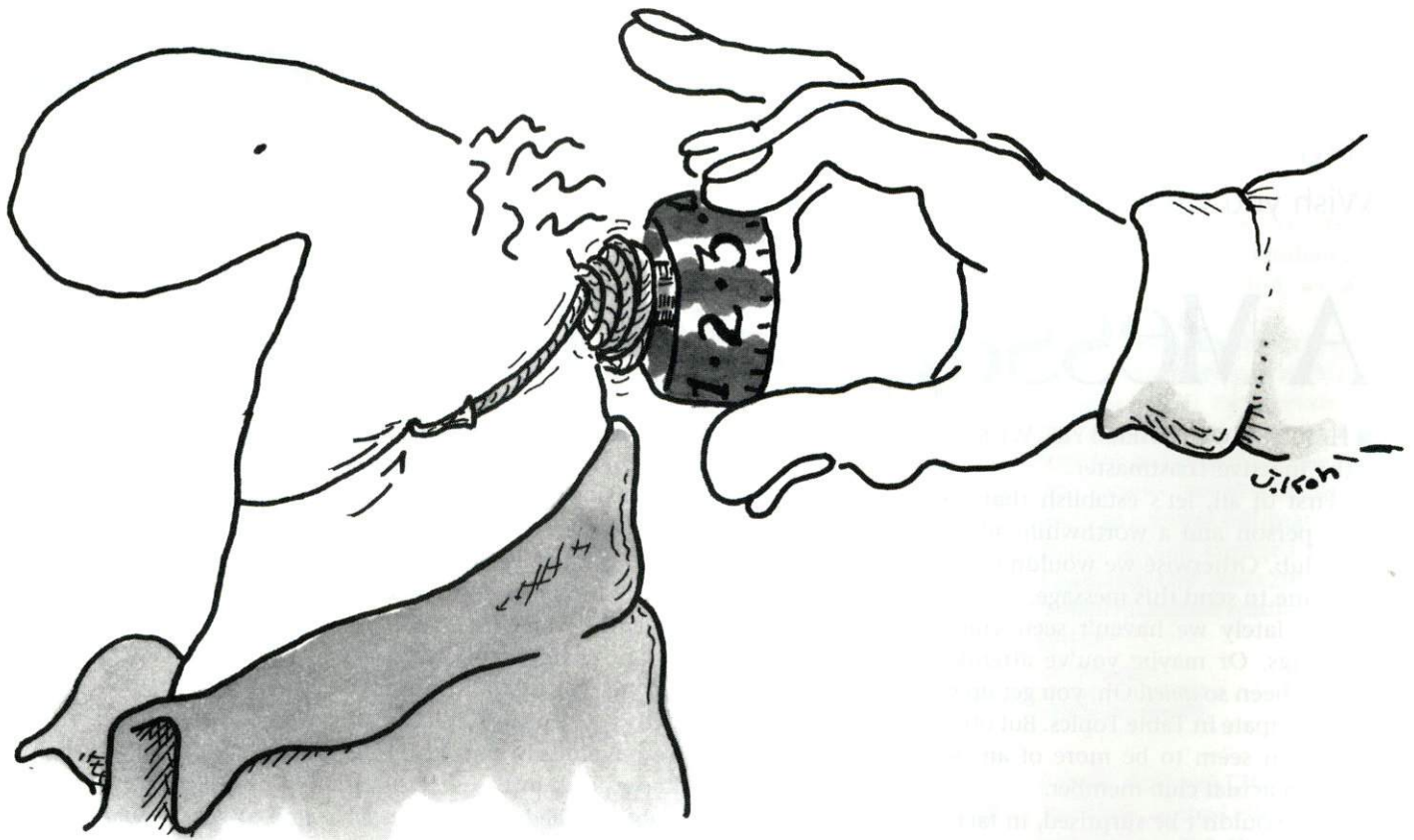
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by Charles Dickson, Ph.D.

Do You Need An **ATTITUDE** All

Our attitudes are like compasses of behavior pointing us in certain directions of thinking and acting.

A new arrival in a mid-size community asked an old man who'd been a life-long resident, "What kind of people live here?" The native responded by asking, "What kind of people lived in the town you came from?" The newcomer quickly replied that they were mostly mean-spirited, self-serving and hard to get along with. "That," asserted the old native, "is the kind of folks you'll find living here too."

Shortly thereafter, another newcomer asked the same man the same question, to which the old man again replied by inquiring as to the type of people living in his home town. The second newcomer boasted, "They were basically good folks;

caring people who would lend a hand to someone in need." "That," added the native, "is the kind of folks you'll find living here, too."

This story illustrates that we find just the kind of people we look for and the qualities in them that we look for. Each newcomer had found distinctively different characteristics in previous relationships and it is likely they would continue to find the same patterns in future acquaintances. It's all about attitude.

Our attitudes are like compasses of behavior pointing us in certain directions of thinking and ways of acting. Webster's Dictionary defines attitude as "a state of mind,

behavior or conduct as indicating one's feelings, opinion or purpose."

Sometimes we fail, not because the cards are stacked against us, as we might like to use as an excuse, but because we approached the problem or person with the wrong attitude. If we are to turn our fortunes and our lives around, we may need a major attitude adjustment.

Attitudes are feelings expressed by our behavior. That's why they can be obvious even without a word being spoken. Have you ever noticed the "pouter" who just sulks, or the "juttled jaw" of a determined person? Psychologists estimate that we give 1,400 nonverbal communications each day.

A person or company can have the best product, the best marketing techniques, the best location and the best customers, but if a bad attitude persists, it is setting itself up for failure.

What are the elements of an attitude check we can use to ensure our outlook toward people and situations is on the right track? Consider the following points:

Make sure you are thinking rationally. Two elementary school students were discussing an assignment by

Don't try to defend actions against all odds. It's much like the case of the farmer who defended the inordinate amount of time he spend fishing by saying, "Look at a map of the world. It shows the earth is two-thirds water and only one-third land. That means a fellow should fish two-thirds of the time and farm the other third."

Sometimes we place ourselves in awkward positions by going to extremes to justify our thinking and actions. This results in our nurturing a defensive rather than open attitude. So a second element in making an attitude adjustment is to make sure we are not going to unreasonable lengths to justify our actions.

Know what you are looking for. Two kinds of birds fly over the California desert: the hummingbird and the vulture. All the vulture can see is rotting meat because that's what it looks for. It thrives on that diet. But the hummingbird ignores the smelly flesh of dead animals and instead looks for the tiny blossoms of the cactus flowers. It buzzes around them until it finds the colorful blooms almost hidden from view by the rocks. Each bird finds what it is looking for.

"Sometimes we fail, not because the cards are stacked against us, as we might like to use as an excuse, but because we approached the problem or person with the wrong attitude."

7)

ADJUSTMENT?

their teacher to write a paper on a subject of interest to each of them. The one girl said to her friend, "I'd like to write about my pet chihuahua, but I don't know how to spell it." The second girl replied, "Why don't you ask the teacher?", to which her friend responded, "How would she know the words like that? She's only a fourth grade teacher."

Too often we have unrealistic and prejudicial thoughts about others. This not only affects our attitudes, it also inhibits us from accomplishing goals that otherwise would be attainable. The first element in making an attitude adjustment is to make sure we're thinking rationally.

Look at both sides of an issue. George V. Denny, Jr., founder and moderator of the Town Meeting of the Air, had a little ball he liked to display when the question of differences between people came up for discussion. Grasping the ball tightly in his hand he would ask, "What color is it?" The person questioned would take a quick look and answer, "black." Denny then shook his head. "The part I see is white." He would then give the ball a twist - the other half was white. "We could never agree on the color of this ball," he pointed out, "unless you knew my point of view."

How many disagreements could be settled if only we tried to look at things the way

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Introducing **Ian Edwards** DTM

An interview with Toastmasters' 1995-96 International President.

To our newly elected International President, Ian Edwards, DTM, lifelong learning, leadership development, and the quest for excellence in oral communication are the three major benefits of Toastmasters membership. "Our organization's founder, Dr. Ralph Smedley, often expressed the notion that we never really 'graduate' in the field of public speaking," Edwards says. "There is always a higher peak to climb and a new goal to accomplish."

Ian Edwards comes to our organization's highest office with a wealth of international experience. Born in Cape Town, South Africa, he grew up in Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia), obtained his B.S. and M.S. degrees from the University of London, and earned his Ph.D. in genetics and plant breeding from North Dakota State University. Ian has spent 30 years working in genetic research in Europe, Africa and North America. He is a Worldwide Crop Research Director for Pioneer Hi-Bred International, the world's largest agricultural seed company with operations in more than 60 countries. Last year he was elected a Fellow of the Crop Science Society of America. He has served two terms as Chairman of the National Wheat Improvement Committee and is currently Vice-Chairman of the U.S. Wheat Quality Council.

Mr. Edwards joined Toastmasters 18 years ago in Fargo, North Dakota, to become better at communicating his science to the general public. He quickly became interested in the leadership opportunities within Toastmasters and served as District 20 Governor in 1984-85; his district achieved Distinguished status during the three years he served in top district office. He has climbed the ranks to the organization's top position by serving as International Director (1988-90) and then as Third, Second and Senior Vice President. Ian lives in West Des Moines, Iowa, with his wife Pat, who owns and runs an interior design business. Their daughter, Julie, is studying genetics at Iowa State University.





Invited by the Manama Toastmasters Club to attend its 30th anniversary celebration last October, Ian Edwards and his wife Pat were received by the Amir of Bahrain as official "State Guests," an honor indicating the Amir's high esteem for our organization. From left: Artist Tissa Hewavitarne, Toastmaster Mohammed Iqbal Butt, Pat and Ian Edwards, HH the Amir Shaikh Isa bin Sulman Al Khalifa, Toastmaster Yakoob Hermes, Manama Toastmasters Club President Annie D'Costa, a member of the Bahrain royal family, and the Bahrain Information Minister Tariq Amoayed.

Toastmasters: How did you select your theme: "Toastmasters: Share the Vision of Excellence," and what is its message to each member?

Ian Edwards: To truly benefit from our programs, each member needs to give his or her very best in all assignments. This means not only a commitment to personal excellence, but to a climate of excellence within the club. The value of vision is powerful – it enables us to live out our imagination, rather than our memory. It is a preview of what lies ahead. Ours should be a vision of excellence – for the individual, the club and the organization. To make this vision a reality requires "buy-in" – it needs to be shared by our members. We need to talk about it and make it tangible.

What do you hope to accomplish during your term as President?

I would like to accomplish many things, but I will focus on four key objectives at this time. First, let's build 750 new clubs by June 30th, 1996. Second, let's establish an increase in club size by asking each club to gain at least six new members during the year and maintain a member retention level of no less than 80 percent. Third, let's make

membership growth the consequence of doing the right things in our clubs, by creating a climate of excellence at our meetings and excitement among our members. Finally, let's improve our training programs at club, area and division levels. We need to be more proactive in identifying our leaders of tomorrow, giving them the best training possible and serving as mentors for them.

When did you join Toastmasters and what were your personal goals? Have you accomplished them?

When I joined Gate City Club 759 in Fargo, North Dakota, in 1977 my immediate goal was simple. I had been accustomed to teaching and speaking in front of groups, but I knew I could do a lot better. I wanted to be more effective and lucid in communicating my research. Have I accomplished my goals? It may surprise you but the answer is an emphatic no! At the time of joining my goals were limited. I believe few of us really join Toastmasters with a clear-cut set of goals. One of the real benefits of Toastmasters is that we become better at setting and accomplishing goals. The Communication and Leadership Manual is a great goal-setting tool. We also learn that there is a lifetime of opportunities for growth. Thus we develop new goals and reach for new heights. When I have finished my term as

President my next goal will be to become an Accredited Speaker. Since this goal is now in writing, I am already halfway there!

Has the leadership experience you've acquired in Toastmasters helped you in your career?

Definitely! From a personal standpoint, I have become a much better listener than I used to be, and this has had enormous benefits.

I first obtained a leadership position in the National Wheat Improvement Committee because of the parliamentary procedure skills I had learned in Toastmasters. People became aware that I could run effective meetings and handle conflicting viewpoints.

Today I have to communicate with the leaders of our company's business units around the world. Effective communication skills, coupled with a sensitivity to cultural differences have been of vital importance to me. I also have had to build a team composed of individuals of different nationalities – the team-building skills that we learn in Toastmasters have had immense practical value.

Many members leave Toastmasters after a year or two. What has kept you active and committed for the past 18 years?

Early on, I was fortunate to have a mentor who convinced me there really is a life after the CTM award. Over the years my wife and I have built lasting friendships among Toastmasters and these are important to us. I also derive a lot of satisfaction from seeing others grow and develop within the club.

But it's the leadership aspects of Toastmasters that has kept me interested. I believe with the coming of a clearly defined leadership program for our members in July 1997, coupled with new materials such as the High Performance Leadership Manual, we are seeing the start of something that will attract a significant new market segment to our organization. These new opportunities will benefit me both in my career and in the other volunteer services I perform.

I believe strongly in lifelong learning. The study and practice of leadership in a time of great change is a worthy pursuit.

How has Toastmasters changed since you joined?

The greatest changes I have seen have been in the range of programs we offer to our members. In 1984 we revised the Communication and Leadership program and added the ATM Bronze and Silver awards. The new Success/Leadership modules have been tremendous, but now the

Successful Club and Speaker series add a new dimension. The membership also has more than doubled since I joined, and I expect to be a member when it doubles again!

I believe the greatest test of an organization is not how we do during good times but how we respond to adversity and the need for change. The downturn in the North American economy during recent years had an impact on volunteer organizations like Toastmasters. While we have fared better than most, our challenge now is to increase membership per club through quality and excellence. There is much to be proud of, and I believe the changes that have been put in place these last few years will stand us in good stead in the future.

Why does Toastmasters spend so much time emphasizing growth, new members and new clubs?

We have a mission to make effective oral communication a worldwide reality. Implicit in this is the need for growth. Growth is the lifeblood of our organization, bringing with it new faces, new ideas, new leadership potential, more enthusiasm and excitement at club meetings. Growth in the number of clubs is the district mission – we need to expand our network! I feel sorry for those many people who have never heard about Toastmasters – they don't know what they are missing! Let's do something about it!

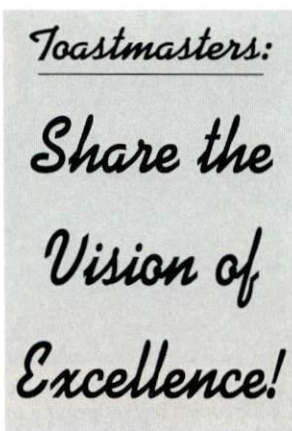
There is also a very sound economic reason – we never could have offered the range of programs we do today without the growth we have experienced. Costs of printing and mailing are continually rising and so are administrative costs. The reality is that organizations have a choice – grow or die!

What personal goals do you encourage new members to set?

New members must be given the latitude to set goals consistent with their work schedules and personal lives, but it is important that they do set goals. The CTM should be their first goal and, through the member interest survey and with the help of a mentor, they should be encouraged to expand their horizons. Goals should be reviewed on an annual basis as they move forward in their club. Every member needs a support system if they are to be successful in accomplishing their goals.

What do you believe are the responsibilities of each member to the organization and to his or her club?

I strongly feel that it is a privilege to be a member of Toastmasters International, and with that privilege comes



responsibility. While, in the words of our founder "...we are an organization dedicated to the individual," this can only bear fruit if individuals acknowledge their responsibility to the club.

The "Toastmasters Promise" is printed in the front of all our officer manuals. It includes the three basic responsibilities, namely to 1) regularly attend club meetings; 2) prepare all speeches to the best of one's ability; and 3) willingly prepare for and fulfill meeting assignments. There are others, but I believe it is also our role as leaders to encourage excellence. As members we have the power to determine our club environment, through our own enthusiasm and acknowledgement of personal responsibility.

How can we encourage more members who have achieved their CTM to continue working toward the ATM and DTM awards?

Members need exposure to the programs we offer and to the options available. This can best be done by an experienced member taking time to explain the programs, i.e. being a mentor. I am excited about our new Successful Club module, because it can play an important role in club excellence. Furthermore, the Supply Catalog can really stimulate interest – it is the best kept secret in many clubs and never seems to get circulated at meetings. Some excellent clubs have an "Idea Fair" at their meetings, in which the advanced manuals and a number of other items are displayed. The DTM has seemed a very difficult award to many of our members. The new DTM award structure to be implemented in July 1997 will more clearly define the pathway to successful completion of the award. We have not lowered our standards – in fact we have raised them – but we have found a way to reward members more frequently en route. This should encourage greater pursuit of the DTM goal.

What makes a strong club, and how would you define excellence within the club?

Show me a strong club, and I will show you a club with strong leaders! The greatest investment we can make for our organization is in the quality of training we give to volunteer leaders. Training is an ongoing necessity – not just for the top three district leaders but for all our club officers. I believe that mentors within the club can be a great help here, too.

Excellence within the club is taught through the Successful Club module "Moments of Truth." I believe this module should be conducted at least once a year by every club to reinforce these standards of excellence. The

quality of our programs, the conduct of our meetings and the first impressions we make on guests are vital to a club's success. Membership growth is simply the consequence of excellence in the club.

What qualities do you most admire in a Toastmaster member and club leader?

In members I most admire the willingness to try something new; to take on a task that stretches their abilities. In leaders I most admire those who understand they have a responsibility to serve, but they also have a responsibility to lead. Consistency in a leader is essential; so are a clear set of values and the willingness to live by those values.

//
*Organizations
have a
choice –
grow or die!*
//

Half of all Toastmasters clubs are in corporations. Why is this?

Executives around the world recognize the value of Toastmasters training and what it can do to help build their corporate leaders of tomorrow. They also appreciate how inexpensive and effective our program is. Furthermore, teamwork and team decision making are becoming increasingly important in the marketplace, and our program fosters teamwork.

As we look to the future we need to understand that corporations will remain a key growth area, and we need to gear an

appropriate proportion of our new products and programs toward this market.

What do you hope to accomplish during visits this year?

I look forward to meeting and talking with as many members as possible during my visits to 12 districts next year. I want to hear what is important to them and also what we can do to make our organization better.

I also wish to visit with our district officers and advise them on how to lead their districts to success through motivating members to join the team. I wish to raise the profile of our organization through visits with corporate leaders, media interviews, and the opportunity to address a number of groups. Finally, I want to convey the message that the clubs are the heart of our organization, and success will come from focusing on our mission.

If you had one single message to impart to every Toastmaster, what would it be?

Make excellence a habit in all you do. Set new goals, reach for new heights and "Share the Vision of Excellence" with other members.

11)

1



how to

As a leader, you have the job of figuring out what people can't do for themselves. Are they stuck in their comfort zone? Do they lack confidence? Do they need different skills and knowledge to be successful? Effective leaders help people who can't change on their own.

The three most common ways leaders help people succeed include: challenging them to reach goals, building their confidence and coaching them on *how* to reach their goals.

hypothetical scenarios penetrate the routine and plant seeds for new possibilities. "What if we try to design this widget in two months instead of our typical time of 12 months?" Or, "What if only one person were available to run this process?"

A third way leaders can challenge comfort zones is to point out examples of top performance. My 14-year-old son Andrew plays basketball. Every once in a while I take him to a high school or college game

Leadership— Helping People to Succeed

12

Leaders first need to figure out what their people can't or won't do for themselves.

Why do leaders need to challenge people? We all like to operate within our "comfort zones." Within the area of familiar responsibilities, we understand how things work and how to succeed. The word "comfort" says a lot – it implies that which is safe, secure, known and predictable. People set goals and objectives in or close to their comfort zone. "Last year we had 4.4 inventory turns; let's shoot for 4.7 this year." Yet the marketplace usually requires steep improvements significantly outside most people's comfort zones: Not a 6 percent improvement, but a 60 percent improvement. When people are stuck in their comfort zones as evidenced by their thinking, attitude or behavior, a leader must step forward and challenge them to think and act "outside the box."

I. THE CHALLENGE

Challenges can take several forms. A leader may state a stretch goal such as "increase sales by 50 percent." Dennis Gormley, CEO of Federal-Mogul Corporation, says that an impossible goal forces you to rethink everything and break away from old habits and traditions.

Another more subtle type of challenge involves asking "what if" questions. These

to watch a top player perform. Seeing top performance presents him with a challenge to improve. Business leaders can do the same thing by frequently pointing out benchmark performances.

Assume you challenge an individual or team and they achieve success. Will that success lead to future successes or failures? Many companies like General Motors, IBM, Sears and Digital were very successful in the past, but then experienced failure. Some companies tend to look backward to their glorious past rather than ahead to future challenges. They remain in their comfort zones and don't change.

In 1982 Tom Peters and Bob Waterman published *In Search of Excellence*. In this best-selling book they highlighted 42 companies they considered excellent. Five years later only 20 of them were still excellent. What happened? Max Depree, CEO of Herman Miller Co., says that success can close a mind faster than prejudice. Success often produces complacency – you stop questioning and improving. Or you become very conservative and stop taking the risks required to keep you ahead of the pack.

by Paul B. Thornton



J. K. O'SI

On the other hand, some people, sports teams and companies keep piling up one success after another. The main reason for this is that they keep challenging the status quo and continually set new – seemingly impossible – goals.

Successful leaders set high standards and challenge people to do more. A sign on the desk of T. J. Rogers, CEO of Cypress Semiconductor, says “Be Realistic – Demand the Impossible.” Whatever happened to setting goals that are “challenging but attainable”? Attainable equals comfort zone. Impossible goals force people to be innovative, to reinvent, to achieve quantum leaps in performance.

When people face a challenge, their confidence drops. Self-doubt is common. “Do I have what it takes?” By definition, getting outside one’s comfort zone is scary. So the leader must help restore or build confidence in the individual or team. Jack Welch, CEO of General Electric, has said that confidence must be driven to all parts of the organization because “only confident people face reality as it is without distorting it.”

The opposite of confidence is fear. When people are afraid, they don’t take risks, show initiative or try to improve the product or

process. When people are motivated by fear, they wait to be told what to do and then do just that and nothing more. This behavior is the exact opposite of what’s needed to succeed in today’s marketplace.

2. BUILD CONFIDENCE

Here are several things you can do to strengthen the confidence of those around you:

- **Recognize good or improved performance.** When you recognize someone, you’re saying, “I’ve noticed” (extra effort, improved results, a new attitude, etc.). Most people want to feel appreciated and valued. And when they do, their confidence grows.

- **Empower people.** When you give up some of your authority, you’re saying, “I have confidence in your judgment and ability to get the job done.”

- **Build people’s knowledge and skills.** When people feel prepared, their confidence increases. When facing a challenge, the leader should first focus on the people, not the challenge. Make them believe they can

When people are stuck in their comfort zones, a leader must step forward and challenge them to think and act “outside the box.”

"An impossible goal forces you to rethink everything and break away from old habits and traditions."

perform. Make sure they have up-to-date knowledge and skills. Build confidence first, then discuss the challenge.

3. COACHING

A third area leaders need to focus on involves coaching. An excellent first step in any coaching situation involves showing trainees what good performance looks like. Give them a concrete example to follow. A demonstration of how to make a presentation, write a report, run a meeting or fix a machine takes a lot of the mystery and guesswork out of exactly what performance is expected. But keep in mind that good performance doesn't stand still. What was "good" or "excellent" last year may only be "average" this year. Leaders must continually benchmark and find examples of what top performance looks like.

Perhaps the toughest part of coaching involves giving feedback. The best leaders provide feedback in a way that it is helpful and productive. Here are some suggestions on giving feedback effectively:

- **Be timely.** Observing performance in January and providing feedback on it in July isn't helpful. Generally, the sooner you comment on someone's performance, the better.
- **Be specific.** Vague, general feedback like, "You made a poor presentation," or "I didn't like it," isn't helpful.

- **Be realistic.** Are you willing to totally change some aspect of your personality or behavior? Probably not. But you would attempt a 5 or 10 percent change. Tell people what you'd like to see "more of" or "less of." For example, "Joe, I'd like to see you show more initiative in expressing your viewpoint at our weekly meeting."
- **Offer suggestions for improvement.** "I've pointed out a few things that need improvement. Now, here are a few ways to make that improvement."

These three variables – challenge, confidence, coaching – interrelate. As you build people's knowledge and skills through coaching, their confidence increases. Confidence continues to grow as you recognize accomplishments, validate skills and empower associates with additional authority. As people become more and more confident, they willingly take on bigger and bigger challenges.

Leaders first need to figure out what their people can't or won't do for themselves. Do they lack confidence, knowledge or skills? Are they stuck in their comfort zones? Leaders then need to provide the required advice, challenge, guidance, support and coaching to help their followers achieve success. **T**

Paul B. Thornton, of Chicopee, Massachusetts, is a keynote speaker on leadership and the author of *The Answers Are On The Office Wall* (Monochrome Press).

14

HELP YOUR CLUB & Keep the Benefits Coming!



Your Club Officers are now working hard to collect dues for October 1 through March 31 and they need your help. Clubs that submit complete semiannual reports that are received at World Headquarters by October 10 receive credit toward recognition in the Distinguished Club Program.



Speak with your Club President or Treasurer and get your dues in early. Contact members who have been absent and encourage them to get back into the Toastmasters program of learning, achievement and growth. Toastmasters provides a maximum return for a small investment.

Continue investing in your future today!



by Robert N. Riter

Oh No, It's '60 Minutes'!

■ MY WORST NIGHTMARE IS TO OPEN THE front door and find Mike Wallace of *60 Minutes* pointing a microphone in my face while a camera crew films away. No matter what he might ask me, I'm afraid my reply would sound both guilty and ridiculous. Not that I've done anything terribly wrong, mind you. But it would scare the life out of me to attempt to explain, on camera, even the most minor of transgressions.

All of us are placed on the defensive from time to time, so the ability to respond coherently and persuasively is a useful skill. For that reason, our Toastmasters club has a Table Topics session called "60 Minutes Comes to Toastmasters," which is designed to provide members with the opportunity to practice responding to confrontational and hostile questions.

A Table Topics session that asks potentially threatening or embarrassing personal questions to individual Toastmasters is unlikely to be a pleasant experience for any-

one. To make the questions less personal and more entertaining, the session is built around role-playing – the questions are addressed to public persons such as politicians, celebrities, etc., whose roles are assumed by the members present. Since the questions are directed at the public figure and not at the individual Toastmasters, both the participants and the audience can relax and enjoy the staged confrontations.

When a Toastmaster is called on to participate in this Table Topics session, he or she walks to the front of the room and finds an array of notecards, each listing one notable public figure. (Our past sessions have included Bill Clinton, Donald Trump, Madonna, Queen Elizabeth, Ross Perot and the Chairperson of the National Rifle Association.) The participant selects one role to assume, informs the audience of that choice, and then responds to the topic leader's question as though he or she were that person. The Topicmaster's job,

of course, is to do his or her best imitation of Mike Wallace by asking challenging questions that are designed to place the respondent on the defensive. If the respondent answers evasively, the Topicmaster reserves the right to ask follow-up questions.

The first "60 Minutes" topic session was so enthusiastically received that it has been adopted as an annual event. Consider giving it a try in your own club! **T**

Robert N. Riter is a member of Washtenaw Club 3054-28 in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Are you **GOOD ENOUGH** to be a **PRO?**

Toastmasters' Accredited Speaker Program
is now accepting applications for 1996.

The Accredited Speaker Program is designed to recognize those Toastmasters who have attained a professional level of excellence in public speaking.

To qualify, you must be an Able Toastmaster (ATM) and a member in good standing of a Toastmasters club.

You must have completed a minimum of 25 speaking engagements outside the Toastmasters club environment within the past three years. Then, you must pass a rigorous two-stage judging process.

Those Toastmasters who earn the prestigious title of Accredited Speaker will receive widespread recognition both inside and outside Toastmasters International. They will have taken the steps that can launch them on exciting careers as professional speakers.

Only a handful of Toastmasters have what it takes to become Accredited Speakers. If you think you're one of them, write to World Headquarters for details on how to apply.

The deadline for the 1996 Accredited Speaker Program is November 1, 1995.

Learn To Give & Take

Praise

&

If you've never examined your response to giving or receiving criticism and praise, here's your chance.

My main objective in joining a local Toastmasters club three years ago was to build my confidence as a public speaker. Little did I know this experience would offer lessons in other areas of my personal growth as well – how to accept and offer evaluations, for example.

What is your reaction to receiving criticism or praise? How do you feel when club members evaluate your speeches? How honest and genuinely helpful are you when critiquing someone else? How free are you with praise for others?

If you're uncomfortable with aspects of doling out or accepting criticism or praise, the following may help. If you've never examined your thoughts on this subject, here's your chance.

THE VALUE OF CRITICISM

This exchange occurred during the evaluation portion of a recent Toastmasters meeting: "I liked your speech, Joanne, but it bothered me when you turned your back to the audience."

"I *had* to turn my back," Joanne quickly retorted. "How else could I write the points of my speech on the board?"

When the other club members attempted to address her question, Joanna became even more defensive. To the suggestion, "Maybe if you angled the board more to the left, you could acknowledge your audience as you write," she curtly responded, "Speak while I'm writing? That would be pretty awkward, don't you think?"

When someone suggested, "I like to write out my points ahead of time on a flip chart," Joanne replied, "I don't happen to have a flip chart in my hip pocket."

Another club member stepped in with, "Joanne, I think your speech was well-organized and I liked the examples you used. I'd like to see you use more examples to illustrate some of the other points."

Obviously still on the defensive, Joanne blurted, "Do you know how hard it was to come up with that one example? Anyway, with more examples, I would have had to shorten my speech and there's no way I could do that and still make all of my points."

It didn't matter how gently Joanne's peers critiqued her speech, nor how helpful their suggestions, she reacted as though she was being attacked and she was prepared to resist and defend to the end.

How comfortable are you with criticism? When fellow Toastmasters evaluate your presentations, do you:

- Quickly defend yourself as Joanne did?
- Avoid saying anything, but feel a little (or a lot) that it is a personal attack?
- Feel resentment toward the critic?
- Disregard all unpleasant criticism as invalid?
- Graciously accept the evaluation and learn from it?

Most of us don't feel particularly comfortable being criticized. It makes us feel as though we're doing something wrong, and it makes us doubt our ability to make good decisions. Ultimately, too much criticism can shake our self-esteem. And our negative reaction to criticism can alienate us from anyone who might offer it. In fact, we often react to what we consider unpleasant or unfair criticism as Joanne did, by quickly defending ourselves. This is a reflex action. When we react through our reflexes instead of our thought processes, the situation becomes emotional rather than productive.

Here's how to effectively handle evaluations at a Toastmasters meeting:

by Patricia L. Fry, CTM

Stop yourself before speaking.
If you hear something that makes

Criticism

you feel defensive, hold your tongue. You might be able to change the way you feel, but you can't take back your words. Further, if you start to verbally defend yourself and make excuses, you will block your ability to listen and learn.

2 Change the way you feel. If someone says, "I'd like to see you use more vocal variety," yet you gave it your all and you start to tense up, STOP! Notice how you feel. Listen to your thoughts. Are they productive? Will they help you grow? If not, try changing them on the spot.

Instead think, "My peers, who have known me for several months, believe I can use more vocal variety." Find ways to test the validity of the critique. Tape your speech and evaluate yourself, for example, or ask for other opinions.

4 Evaluate the evaluator. An evaluation, whether it involves criticism or praise, is only an opinion. You have the freedom to accept or reject that opinion. You may be more inclined to accept criticism from someone you respect and trust than from someone you don't know well or don't like. You will make a better decision about using criticism if you do it from a place of acceptance rather than defensiveness.

ACCEPTING PRAISE

Anyone can understand why criticism is hard to take, but why do some of us have trouble accepting praise? My friend Jake speaks for many when he says, "Sometimes I just don't feel I deserve it."

At a recent Toastmasters meeting, a fellow member said to him, "Good speech, Jake. I especially liked your use of

"It didn't matter how gently her peers critiqued Joanne's speech nor how helpful their suggestions, she reacted as though she was being attacked and she was prepared to resist and defend to the end."

3 Open yourself up to learning. Ask if anyone can suggest an exercise for increasing vocal variety. Start listening more carefully to the speeches of fellow members and see what you can learn from them. By rejecting your automatic defense mechanism, you will be better able to listen, learn and grow.

If you reject criticism on the spot, you may be rejecting an opportunity for growth.

According to Hendrie Weisinger, Ph.D., in his book, *The Critical Edge: How To Criticize Up and Down Your Organization and Make It Pay Off*, "The most immediate way to increase your receptivity to criticism is to look at it as information that can help you grow."

gestures." Jake exclaimed, "Gestures!?! Now there's one of my real weak spots. Gesturing while speaking feels so unnatural to me. If you saw me doing it, it was probably a fluke. I don't know the first thing about using gestures."

I sat across from Sylvia at a Toastmasters training seminar. Things weren't going well, and Sylvia offered an idea to help move the process along. The team leader was grateful and complimented Sylvia for her good idea. Sylvia's response surprised most of us. She looked down self-consciously and mumbled, "It wasn't my idea. It's something we do at work."

Later that morning, another trainee commented on her beautiful handwriting. Sylvia brushed off that compli-

ment, too, by saying her writing was chicken scratches compared to her sister's handwriting.

The inability to accept praise stems from a lack of self-confidence. If you don't feel good about yourself, no amount of opinion from others will convince you of your qualities.

How do you feel when praised? How do you react? Do you:

- ▶ Deny and counter any attempts at praise?
- ▶ Ignore the compliments and start talking about something else?
- ▶ Feel uncomfortable or embarrassed and don't know what to say or do?
- ▶ Feel you don't deserve it?
- ▶ Reject compliments because you suspect they are just a means of getting something from you?

Learning to accept praise requires just as much work as learning to accept criticism, and it is nearly as difficult. It involves changing the way you feel about yourself.

1 Replace negative thoughts and beliefs with positive ones. Instead of saying or thinking, "I can't do that," "I'm not a good speaker" or "I'll probably goof up," say or think instead, "I can do that," "I am a good speaker" or "I will succeed."

2 Start a program of positive affirmations: Every day, several times a day, say to yourself, "I am a successful, worthwhile person," "I am likeable" and "I feel good about who I am."

3 Accept praise. From now on, when a fellow Toastmaster compliments an aspect of your presentation, stop the habit of denial. Don't say the first thing that comes into your head. Say, instead, "Thank you." And say it sincerely.

Think about it: When you reject praise, you are in effect insulting the intelligence and devaluing the opinion of the giver. If you have one iota of respect for someone, you will graciously accept their words of praise.

If you question the validity of the praise (which is, after all, just an opinion), ask others, "Do you agree with Tom that this is an effective presentation to give to the sales team at work?" And ask, "If so, why?" or "If not, why?"

Participation in Toastmasters is an exercise in self-discovery and an opportunity for personal growth. And learning to receive criticism and praise are stepping stones to this end.

WHEN YOU'RE ON THE GIVING END

Evaluating or critiquing someone's performance is a responsibility that should not be taken lightly. It is important to

be sensitive and honest. And remember that what you have to give is only your opinion.

When you are evaluator strive to:

- ▶ **Offer criticism and praise that is helpful.** Don't be judgmental or overly critical or even overly complimentary just for the sake of having something to say.
- ▶ **Soften criticism with a compliment.** For example, you might say, "I found your topic really interesting and you had a strong beginning, but I began to feel lost when you started talking about your escapades in Europe."
- ▶ **Be honest but not brutal.** Instead of telling a speaker that her voice is annoying, point out that her voice is clear and melodic when she's engaged in casual conversation, but that she seems to strain her voice when she speaks before a group, causing it to lose its natural pleasing quality.
- ▶ **Remember that this is just your opinion** – your personal reaction. Use personal statements. Say, for example, "It seemed to me," or "I felt that," instead of, "You should have (shouldn't have)."
- ▶ **Keep your remarks in perspective.** You wouldn't critique a beginner who is giving his Icebreaker the same way you would a seasoned speaker. Keep in mind the speaker's experience level, his purpose (is he preparing to be keynote speaker for a group of 1,000 or does he just want to feel more confident in front of his Sunday school class?)

Do compliments sometimes stick in your throat? Do you feel that by saying anything complimentary to someone else, you're devaluing yourself? It's common for individuals with low self-esteem to avoid handing out praise because, to them, it feels like they're giving something up – that the compliment is taking something away from them.

In reality, to give is to receive. Try it and see what joys it brings you.

- ▶ Look for praise-worthy traits and achievements in friends, family, co-workers and fellow Toastmasters.
- ▶ Give honest, not contrived, praise.
- ▶ State why you feel this person's effort or achievement is worthy of praise.

By re-evaluating your ability to give and receive both criticism and praise and by taking action to improve where you may be lacking, you will foster your personal growth and greatly enhance the quality of your club membership. **T**

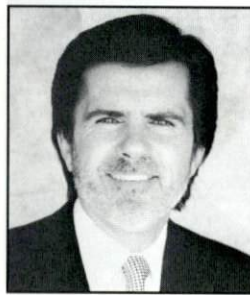
Patricia L. Fry, CTM, a member of Pro Speakers Club 7256-33 in Ventura, California.

"When you reject praise, you are in effect insulting the intelligence and opinion of the giver."

YOUR '95-'96 DISTRICT GOVERNORS



f Hank Kunkel, DTM
Tustin, CA



1 Robert Stevens Morey, ATM
Marina Del Rey, CA



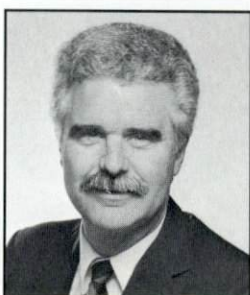
2 Diann M. Hitzel, ATM
Bellevue, WA



3 Lee Wagner, DTM
Tucson, AZ



4 Karrie C. Allen, DTM
Sunnyvale, CA



5 Terry M. Hewins, DTM
San Diego, CA



6 James D. Miller, DTM
Burnsville, MN



7 David C. Hiller, DTM
Beaverton, OR



8 Floy C. Westermeier, DTM
Rolla, MO



9 Edwin Allen Keeney, ATM-S
Richland, WA



10 Patti Nossias, DTM
Akron, OH



11 Melody S. Deal, DTM
La Fontaine, IN



12 William J. Cortus, DTM
Ontario, CA



13 Charles J. Wilson, ATM
State College, PA



14 Russ C. Foss, DTM
Marietta, GA



15 Nancy G. Makey, DTM
Idaho Falls, ID



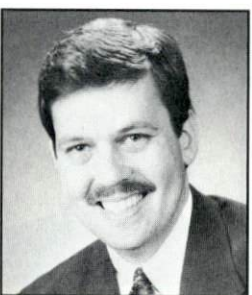
16 Debra A. Burdeaux, DTM
Tulsa, OK



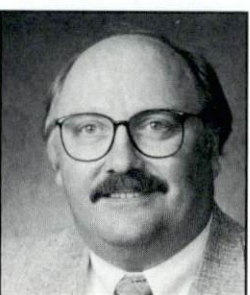
17 Alea M. Lohr, ATM
East Helena, MT



18 Selwyn M. Julien, DTM
Bear, DE



19 Timothy A. Conrad, ATM
Spirit Lake, IA



20 Keith A. Phillips, ATM
Moorhead, MN



21 Susan Niven, DTM
Langley, B.C., Canada



22 Kathleen F. Steece, ATM-B
Kansas City, MO



23 Thomas E. Chenault, ATM
Las Cruces, NM



24 Paula L. Williams, DTM
Omaha, NE



25 Brenda F. Waddoups, DTM
Bedford, TX



26 Elizabeth Matzek Boaz, DTM
Thornton, CO



27 Barbara L. Hunt, DTM
Arnold, MD



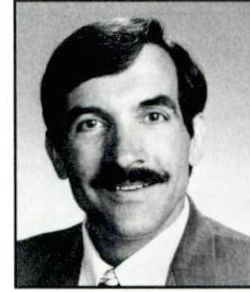
28 Marilyn S. Albee, DTM
Redford, MI



29 Marjorie J. Kennedy, DTM
Pensacola, FL



30 Toni F. Rodgers, DTM
Evanston, IL



31 Daniel S. Jones, DTM
Westboro, MA



32 Philip Moeller, ATM
Olympia, WA



33 Robert L. Mitchell, DTM
Winton, CA



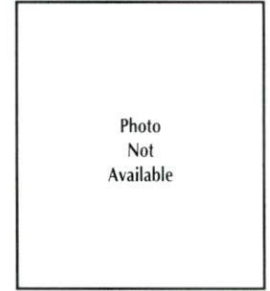
34 Alfonso Tessada, DTM
Guadalajara, Jal., Mexico



35 Helen R. Beale, DTM
Madison, WI



36 James C. Ronning, DTM
Clinton, MD



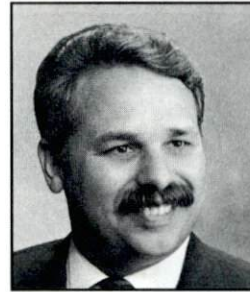
37 Margaret E. Beach, ATM-S
Morganton, NC



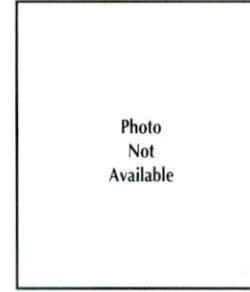
38 James R. Boswell, ATM-B
York, PA



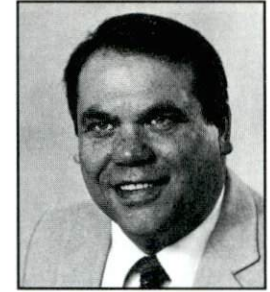
39 Marvyn L. Drake Jr., DTM
Sacramento, CA



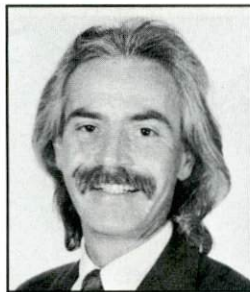
40 Anthony T. Bonina, ATM-B
Westerville, OH



41 Karin Jean Simpson, CTM
Rapid City, SD



42 Larry Andrews, DTM
Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada



43 Ronald E. Walls, DTM
Little Rock, AR



44 Rose Stubbs, DTM
Abilene, TX



45 James A. Heeren, ATM
Concord, NH



46 George M. Sepsie, ATM
Mt. Arlington, NJ



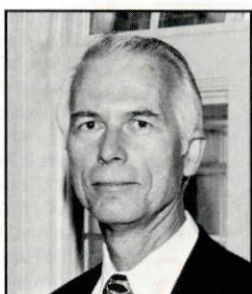
47 P. Samuel Bain, DTM
Nassau, Bahamas



48 Ann E. Willard, ATM
Tuscaloosa, AL



49 Violeta Mata, ATM-B
Honolulu, HI



50 Richard D. Rose, ATM-S
Dallas, TX



51 Augustine Lee, DTM
Singapore



52 Daniel E. Kopolusky, DTM
Covina, CA



53 Roger H. Brown, DTM
Windsor Locks, CT



54 Peter J. Taraboletti, DTM
Canton, IL



56 Lynda L. Shaw, DTM
Magnolia, TX



57 James J. Doyle, ATM-S
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"Nervousness puts me in the best of company, prompts me to prepare and gives my speech or performance an edge."

by Richard Gordon, ATM

Thank God I Get Nervous

■ WHEN I SPEAK IN PUBLIC, I USE MY special nerve-control formula. I discovered it while playing a couple of string quartet performances – one a dismal failure and one an unqualified success.

One might think that, after years of conducting and playing professionally, stage fright and nervousness wouldn't be problems. Frankly, they were. And frankly, they still are.

As I tuned my viola before the performance in which I played so badly, I could feel the shakes coming on. That made me angry. The angrier I became the more nervous I became – and vice versa. The performance was a disaster. I lost my place several times. My friends covered for me as best they could, but when we stopped playing, I swore, "That's the last time. No more playing in public for me!"

Despite my resolve I got talked into playing again. This time, as I began to get nervous, I said over and over to myself, "Thank God I'm nervous, thank God I'm nervous." The performance was a success. I played accurately, expressively and better than ever.

Thank God I'm nervous? What kind of thing is that to say to yourself? Where's the logic? Why should it help? The answer is that nervousness is not the problem. The problem is the way one perceives it.

In the disastrous performance, I had been thinking in dictionary terms: "Nervousness is an excitable, uneasy, apprehensive condition that may cause shaking hands, quivering voice and lapse of memory." I had all these symptoms. My hands shook. My voice

quivered. I lost my place in the music, not once, but a couple of times.

In the successful performance, my thinking changed. I remembered having read somewhere: "Nervousness is a physical/mental manifestation of an intense desire to do a good job." To want to do a good job is admirable. Intensely wanting to do a good job even more commendable. Suddenly I began to relish nervousness. I began to respect it, and I began to respect myself.

From further reading and experience, I found that nervousness:

- puts one in the best of company
- prompts one to prepare
- and gives one's performance an edge

Puts one in the best of company? Yes. For instance, the biographies of opera greats like Feodor Chaliapin and Gladys Swarthout reveal that they were so nervous before performances they paced, prayed and even vomited.

Prompts one to prepare? Definitely. In my 50 years of teaching violin and viola, I have observed that nervous students were and are typically my best. Casual students tend to be less attentive and conscientious. Many of my students are preparing to audition for the California Youth and the San Jose Youth symphonies. Are they nervous? Definitely. Are they practicing? Endlessly.

When I have a speech coming up, nervousness keeps me from resting or sleeping until my notes are organized and my speech practiced.

Gives the performance an edge of expectancy?

True. It entices the speaker to keep searching for the right word, inflection or dynamic level. And nervous energy can be expended in gestures and body movement, which can make the presentation more visually interesting. A nervous speaker is prone to stand on the balls of the feet and lean forward aggressively, invoking the audience to sit up and listen. The adrenaline flowing through the speaker is communicated to the audience, creating an edge of expectancy.

So now when I speak or play in public, I use my thank-God-I'm-nervous control formula. I remember that nervousness puts me in the best of company, prompts me to prepare and gives my speech or performance an edge. Nervousness is my friend and I wouldn't want to be without it. Thank God I get nervous. **T**

Richard Gordon, ATM, is a member of Willow Glen Club 5815-4 in San Jose, California



How Do You

Really

Look and Sound?

Use this self-evaluation guide to review your videotaped speech.

Nearly one out of four American homes now has a video camera, according to the Electronics Industries Association, and while no one is keeping score, it seems likely that ownership might be higher among Toastmasters than the general public. The reason: many Toastmasters recognize that video cameras – the popular name for what manufacturers prefer to call camcorders – are a valuable tool to help improve speaking skills.

Indeed, "Using a video camera to evaluate is one of the best ways to dramatically improve your speaking skills," says Miriam Otte, in her article, "You're on Candid Camera!" in the August 1994 issue of *The Toastmaster*. That article presented helpful tips on how to obtain and use a video camera. This article presents the next step: evaluating videotaped recordings of your speeches.

That's not as easy as it first may seem. The problem: most people, especially the first time they look at themselves on videotape, concentrate on insignificant details. They worry when they spot a crooked tie, hair that needs cutting, a facial blemish and such.

Focusing on those aspects diverts your attention from the truly important features of your speech, such as:

- ▣ Appearance of self-confidence
- ▣ Effectiveness of your body language
- ▣ And the three most important factors of a productive speech: content, organization and delivery

To help you concentrate on those features, use the Videotape Self-Evaluation form at the end

by **Leon Fletcher**

of this article. Make photocopies of it and use the form each time you see a videotape of yourself speaking. Here's how:

Set aside a folder or binder in which to file your self-evaluations. Then, after you've taped and assessed a few of your speeches, you'll be able to review your first judgments, compare them with later ones and pinpoint your improvement.

Fill out the evaluation form by noting in the first blank, "Speech," either the name of your speech or the content. The more specific your statement, the more precisely you should be able to recall that particular speech without having to view the videotape again.

Be sure to make the distinction between how you *looked* and how you *felt* when evaluating your self-confidence.

Then, on the next two blanks, write in specifics. Don't answer the statement with something vague like, "Someone viewing this speech could tell I was confident by noticing that I wasn't nervous." Instead, write a precise evaluation such as "...looked at individual listeners, smiling often in a way that projected assurance." Be realistic. Don't write, "Someone viewing this speech could tell I was nervous by noticing my 'knees shaking.'" Of course, your listeners couldn't see that. You may well think they can, but you certainly won't see on the videotape your skirt or trousers fluttering!

In checking the various points about your body language, consider "movement" as more than just gestures. It is the place to evaluate your effectiveness in, for example, stepping out from behind the lectern, walking closer to your audience or moving over to any charts or visual aids you may use. This is also the place to judge yourself on any inappropriate movements such as pacing, hands in pockets or lack of eye contact.

In assessing your voice, again, avoid generalities. Don't respond with simplicities such as "good," "strong" or "deep." Rather, note specific features such as "communicated authority," "easily heard by all in the audience" or "clear and hale despite the cold I had."

Content

Next, evaluate the three main factors of a speech. In looking and listening to the content of your speech, ask yourself questions such as:

- ▣ Did the subject appropriate, relevant and interesting to your listeners?
- ▣ Did you present your own ideas and interpretation?
- ▣ Were your points and data clear and significant?
- ▣ Did you get to the central idea of your speech quickly?
- ▣ Did you present a variety of information – statistics, personal experiences, human interest stories, quotations, humor, etc.?
- ▣ Did you use audiovisual aids appropriately?
- ▣ Did your data adequately support your conclusions?
- ▣ Did you include smooth transitions from one point to the next?
- ▣ Did you emphasize the main points of your speech enough to help your audience remember them?

Organization

To review the organization of your speech, reflect on these questions:

- ▣ Did you begin with an effective attention-getter?
- ▣ Did you preview your subject or viewpoint?
- ▣ Did the body of your speech include two to five specific points?
- ▣ Were those points presented in a logical sequence?
- ▣ Was each of those points supported with data?
- ▣ Did the conclusion of your speech review your subject, viewpoint or discussion points?
- ▣ Did your speech end with a memorable statement or appeal?

Delivery

To assess the third important factor of your speech, delivery, consider these aspects:

- ▣ As you approached the lectern, did you project confidence?
- ▣ Were your notes, aids, microphone and other equipment in place before you began to speak?
- ▣ Did you connect with your audience from the start and then maintain that connection throughout your speech?

- ▣ Did you begin without referring to your notes?
- ▣ How often did you refer to your notes?
- ▣ Did your speech sound extemporaneous and not as if you were reading or reciting it from memory?
- ▣ Did you avoid verbal crutches, such as ahs?
- ▣ Did you maintain good posture?
- ▣ Did you speak loud enough to be heard easily by all your listeners?
- ▣ Did you enunciate clearly and pronounce words correctly?
- ▣ Did you vary the volume and pitch of your voice and your rate of speaking?
- ▣ Did you present your audiovisual aids effectively, so they supported your points and could be seen or heard easily by everyone in your audience?
- ▣ Did you project enthusiasm and confidence?
- ▣ Did you appear to enjoy speaking?
- ▣ Did you seem concerned that your listeners understood, learned from and enjoyed your speech?
- ▣ Did you handle errors with composure?
- ▣ Did you wait until your speech was completed before packing up your notes or equipment?
- ▣ Upon concluding, did you move away from the lectern (or from wherever you were standing) with confidence?

“Using a video camera to evaluate is one of the best ways to dramatically improve your speaking skills.”

Don't try to respond to all of these questions at once. Rather, in each of the three factors, concentrate on the two or three questions of greatest concern to you.

When considering the remaining points on the evaluation form, don't be too hard on yourself and don't be too lenient.

Just be honest, specific and fair.

Videotapes can be a great help in improving your speeches. But you'd be wise to realize that those tapes may not impress your grandchildren. As pointed out in the Nov. 21, 1992 issue of *The Economist* magazine: "If Athens had possessed video recorders, some of its orators would now seem no more than curiosities. To modern ears and eyes, Hitler already seems merely bombastic. People playing Reagan tapes in the future, their blood unstirred by the events he was talking about and the mood of the time, may wonder why he was called the great communicator." T

Leon Fletcher is Emeritus Professor of speech at Monterey Peninsula College and author of the book, *How to Speak Like a Pro*.

Videotape SELF-EVALUATION GUIDE



Instructions: As you view a videotape of one of your speeches, fill in the following. Your answers need not fit in the spaces provided; use extra pages as you see fit.

Speech _____ Audience _____ Date _____

I looked: completely relaxed fairly relaxed somewhat nervous very nervous

I felt: completely relaxed fairly relaxed somewhat nervous very nervous

Someone viewing this speech could tell I was confident by noticing that I _____

Someone could tell I was nervous by noticing that I _____

My body language included my: hands arms eyes face head

My movement was effective/inappropriate because _____

My voice was _____

MY EVALUATION OF MY SPEECH IN TERMS OF:

Content: _____

Organization: _____

Delivery: _____

The best feature of my speech was _____

My speech could have been better if it _____

The next time I speak, I'll improve by _____

Furthermore: _____

Do You Need An ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT

continued from page 7



others see them. Or as the old native American proverb goes, "Never criticize a man until you have walked in his moccasins for two weeks."

Admit your prejudices. A man sitting in a passenger car at a railway station in India looked out through the window of the coach and saw people who appeared to have distorted bodies and extremely ugly faces. He couldn't believe what he was seeing, but to remove his doubts he dropped the glass window down only to discover that everyone was normal. The differences were caused by the poor quality of the windowpane through which he had been looking.

Likewise, we sometimes develop prejudices against people and situations because our perceptions are distorted. When this happens, we need to admit these shortcomings. Doing so will ultimately improve our attitudes.

Perform a little self-analysis. A businesswoman in a large American city tells of living in an apartment with another apartment building only a few feet away. She

could look across an alley into the same floor as hers and see an old lady sitting by her window each afternoon sewing or reading. After several months it seemed the old lady's windows were getting dirty. "I wonder why that old lady doesn't wash her windows; they look dreadful and don't let in much light," thought the businesswoman. Then one afternoon after the businesswoman had done her own housecleaning, including washing her windows, she sat down by the window to rest. What a surprise! Across the way the old lady sitting by her window was clearly visible. While she had been criticizing the old lady for dirty windows, it was her own that needed cleaning.

Aren't there times in all of our lives when we blame others for problems while neglecting to look at ourselves and our own activities as causing the conflict? If we are to adjust our attitudes, a little self-analysis may be necessary.

Our attitudes develop over years of experience. Sometimes they serve us well, at other times they lead us astray. If we are willing to review this checklist periodically, it will go a long way toward keeping us on a positive track. Ed Walker, president of Conifer Concepts, penned some words we could do well to remember in dealing with others in either personal or business relationships:

*"What is an attitude?
It is the advance of men of our true selves
Its roots are inward, but its fruits are
outward
It is our best friend or our worst enemy
It is more honest and more consistent than
our words
It is a thing which draws people to us or
repels them
It is never content until it is expressed
It is the librarian of our past
the speaker of our present
the prophet of our future."*

If we discover our attitudes are not serving us well, maybe we need to consider making some adjustments. **1**

Charles Dickson, Ph.D., is a chemistry instructor, clergyman and writer living in Hickory, North Carolina.

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Cue Card

Surprised to see an empty seat at the Super Bowl, a diehard fan remarked about it to a woman sitting nearby. "It was my husband's," the woman explained, "but he died." I'm very sorry," said the man. "yet I'm really surprised that another relative, or friend didn't jump at the chance to take the seat." "Beats me," she said. "They all insisted on going to the funeral."

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People have asked what qualifications are needed to hold International Office. Following are the qualifications:

FOR INTERNATIONAL OFFICER:

- active member of a Toastmasters Club during the entire 12-month period immediately preceding nomination.
- served a two-year term on the Board of Directors.

FOR INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR: (DISTRICTS WITHIN REGIONS)

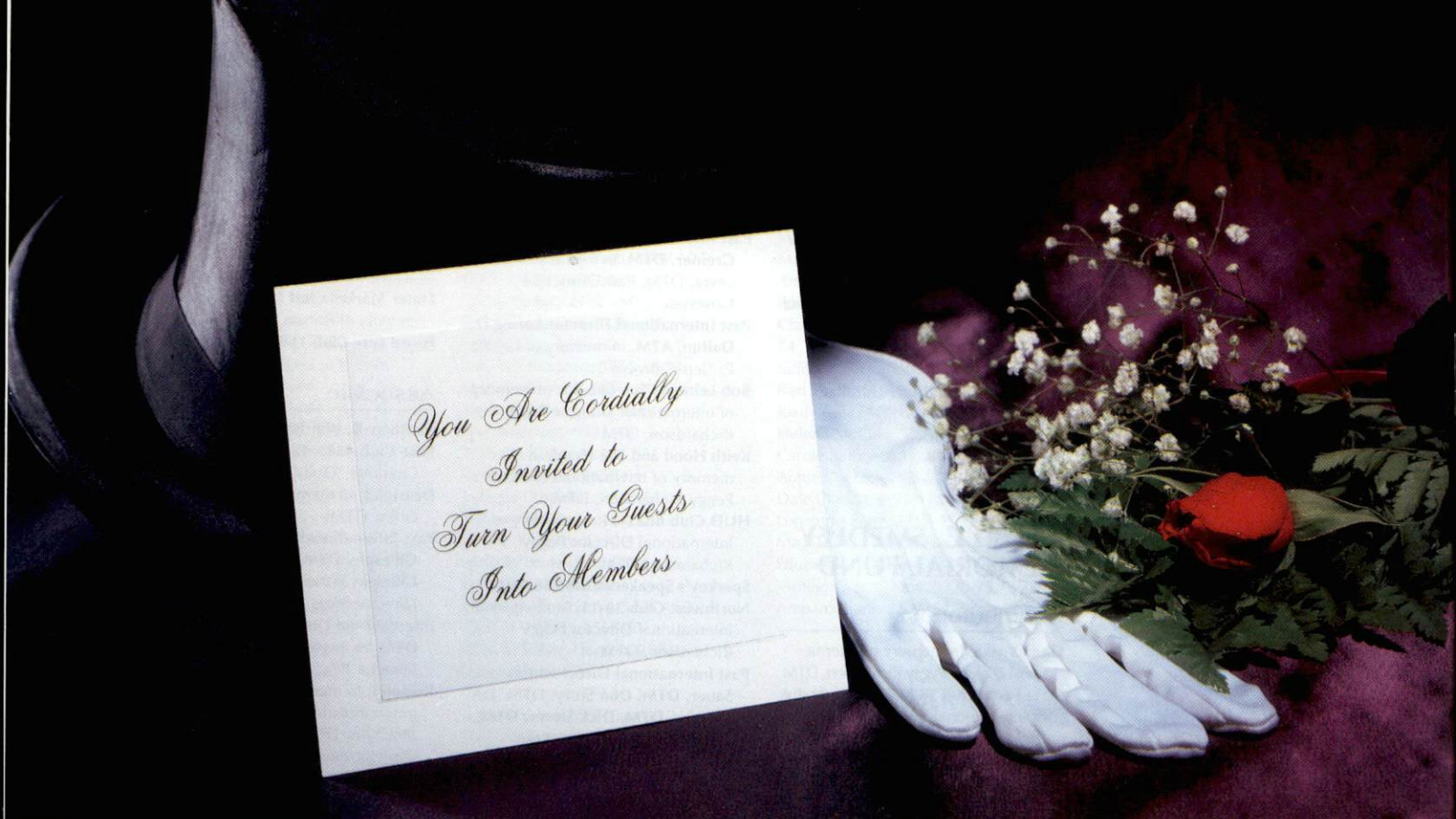
- active member of a Toastmasters Club during the entire 12-month period immediately preceding nomination.
- served an entire term as District Governor at the time of election.

- not more than one of the elected Directors may be from any one Club or any one District.

FOR INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR AT LARGE: (DISTRICTS OUTSIDE REGIONS; ELECTED IN EVEN-NUMBERED YEARS)

- active member of a Toastmasters Club during the entire 12-month period immediately preceding nomination.
- served an entire term as District Governor at the time of election; or Chairman or Chief Officer of a non-District administrative unit during the entire administrative year immediately before the unit became a District or Provisional District; or as District Governor during the entire administrative year in which the unit became a District of Provisional District.

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