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Gain Skills by Finishing Strong

Finishing strong. It's a phrase we hear every June as the Toastmasters year comes to an end. But what does it really mean?

When I was District Governor in the mid-2000s, we had a District statistician who meticulously tracked data year after year, and he shared how the majority of education awards were typically earned in the final two months of the year.

That kind of last-minute sprint was nerve-racking! The District's success at that time depended on four key goals, two of them being educational, yet for most of the program year, it was impossible to gauge where we stood since so much

of the activity came at the end. But that big push down the homestretch is worth it.

To stay on top of our progress, we closely analyzed Area Director reports, systematically checking if clubs were on track to meet their goals. If they weren't, we didn't just wait and hope—we followed up, encouraged, and supported them.

I learned how vital these efforts are, even when you're steps away from the finish line. On the final day of the Toastmasters program year, an Area Governor called me in frustration. She had tried everything to reach a club in her Area to make sure they renewed, but no one was responding. I figured I had nothing to lose, so I called and the Club President actually answered! I explained why it was in the club's

best interest to keep itself active, and walked them through the dues-payment process. That club renewed, and because of it, our District became Distinguished.

Toastmasters is a place to develop real-world skills. I have faced many deadlines in my career and have had to motivate my coworkers to complete tasks on time. While the workplace comes with career and financial consequences,

Toastmasters provides a space to hone these same skills in a supportive environment. We shouldn't treat deadlines and goals any differently in Toastmasters—what we learn here prepares us for success beyond

“Finishing strong” is more than a phrase—it’s a mindset that builds habits for lifelong success.

our organization.

I often hear District leaders say, “I just want to leave the District in a better place than when I started.” But that's a vague goal—and vague goals rarely lead to success. Imagine if I were paying for my daughters to go to college and they told me, “I just want to learn more than I knew when I started.” That wouldn't fly in the real world.

Success in Toastmasters isn't just for District leaders and club officers—it's for all members. When we push ourselves to meet our goals, we uplift the members in the District. “Finishing strong” is more than a phrase—it's a mindset that builds habits for lifelong success.

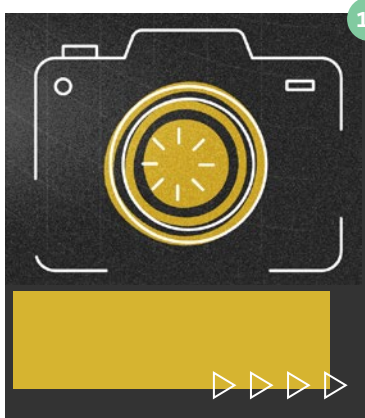
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International President



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Snapshot



Members of **Ezdan Oasis Toastmasters Club** in Doha, Qatar, compete in the Doha Marathon by Ooredoo to promote fitness, teamwork, and community spirit. The 2025 marathon was the largest in the event's history with over 15,000 runners.

Traveling Toastmaster



Saurabh Namnaik of Mumbai, Maharashtra, India, stops for a photo with the *Toastmaster* while on the Harihar Fort trek, a challenging trail known for its almost 80-degree vertically inclined steps, in Maharashtra, India.



Ebtehal Badawi of Clairton, Pennsylvania, poses for a photo near the Pyramids of Giza during her trip to Egypt, where she visited the Cairo Toastmasters Club and won the Best Speaker ribbon.

The Freedom To Be Yourself

LGBTQ+ members find community in their clubs.

By Emily Sachs, DTM

Dale Blagrove, DTM, embraced Toastmasters when he was introduced to it by an employer in the 2000s. As an active and enthusiastic member of a community club in midtown New York City, he spoke often and honestly, though not necessarily openly.

His speeches were littered with clues about his personal life, yet no one seemed to pick up on them. “A good buddy had no idea that I was gay. He just assumed when I was talking about my partner, I was talking about my business partner,” Blagrove explains.

Sensing that the timing and demand was ripe for a truly inclusive club in New York City, Blagrove chartered Pride Toastmasters in 2009. Today it is one of about a dozen Toastmasters clubs globally centered around lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning (LGBTQ+) individuals and their allies. Pride Toastmasters was the first such club in New York. One of the newest clubs just chartered in March 2025—Queer Voices Toastmasters Club in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

The clubs go by a variety of names—often including the words “Rainbow” and “Pride”—and they exemplify Toastmasters International’s mission to provide support and respect to speakers and leaders. (Rainbows, with their diverse colors, are a popular symbol for the LGBTQ+ community.)

Where pizzazz was once prized in public speaking, [authenticity now reigns](#). Leaders of LGBTQ+ clubs say they consider this a gift to both the speaker and the audience, who are able to shed the daily armor they say is required to

live life as an outsider. You don’t have to read the room to assess if you need to “come out again,” Blagrove says, nor do you need to invent creative explanations for a relationship or replace names or pronouns.

“When I’m in an environment that I know is a safe place—absolutely 100% safe for me—I can focus in on my communication skills and not waste that energy on wondering, ‘What are they going to think? Can I say it that way? Are they going to judge that? Are there going to be raised eyebrows?’” says Seldon Short, President of Leadership Lambda Toastmasters Club in Dallas, Texas, believed to be the oldest LGBTQ+ club in Toastmasters. “I can really gain that sense of confidence ... to become a better leader and a better communicator and not worry about, ‘Oh, am I going to be judged because of who I am?’”

Joining Together

Toastmasters International, which only began allowing women in 1973, has no rules against clubs forming around shared or special interests so long as there are no prohibitions against others joining based on criteria including gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation, according to the [Toastmasters International Club Constitution](#). Leaders of LGBTQ+ clubs say they welcome friends, family, and anyone supportive of their mission.

In these clubs, traditions range from the sweet to the serious. Rainbow Toastmasters in San Francisco awards members a string of “Mardi Gras” beads after their Ice Breaker



Giordano Fusco, DTM, a member of the Pride Toastmasters club in New York City, participating in a Pride March, an annual event celebrating the LGBTQ+ community

speech and presents a rainbow ribbon at each meeting to a member who goes “beyond the call of duty.” At Tokyo Rainbow Toastmasters Club in Japan, members take turns sharing a “rainbow moment” from their week.

The members celebrate their daily triumphs in Japan, which has no legal protections for gay marriage. “As the fight for same-sex marriage continues, I’ve noticed that there is more sharing about same-sex couples holding hands, going on trips together—living their lives with joy!” notes Tokyo Rainbow Vice President Public Relations CJ Hostetter.

Several of the Tokyo club members are active in local organizations serving members of their community, and Toastmasters has helped them create stronger bonds with each other in addition to more persuasive presentations, says Hostetter.

As identity becomes more politicized and polarized in many countries, having a powerful voice is becoming more critical. “I think a lot of people are going to find themselves being called upon to stand up and speak out about what they believe,” Short says. “And we feel like Toastmasters has a really vital role in helping educate people to be stronger communicators in this period.”

Yet politics isn’t a typical topic, despite the tenuousness of legal protections for members. Most speeches are general in scope, says Nancy Bateman, DTM, Leadership Lambda Toastmasters Club’s Vice President Education. “They’re about life’s journey and the silly things everybody has to deal with and the goofy people

we encounter and the problems we overcome. Just like every other club.”

History in the Heart of Texas

Leadership Lambda formed with 38 charter members in June 1997—fittingly, since June is Pride Month, which celebrates support of the LGBTQ+ community. The club formed as part of a professional development initiative for prominent and emerging gay leaders in Dallas during a period of increasing visibility in politics, nonprofits, and businesses there.

Today, other than rainbow flags in their meeting room and on their club banner, unless someone is familiar with the historical association with the Greek Lambda symbol and gay rights, there is no overt reference to the LGBTQ+ community. The club adapted its own Leadership Lambda Promise from the Toastmaster’s Promise, including a pledge to celebrate diversity by welcoming all potential members, regardless of identity.

“We don’t ask people [about their sexual identity]. People reveal themselves,” says Scott Jordan, a Past Club President. The club’s officers think roughly half the club considers itself part of the greater LGBTQ+ community, or the “family,” as it is colloquially known. The other half are allies.

Officers have many stories of members who speak emotionally about their experiences of coming out of the closet or accepting their identities. And being able to speak about it in a welcoming audience, some of whom have shared in the same experience, is that much more powerful and affirming.

The club prides itself on its “radical inclusion.” And, based on the guest feedback they request at the end of each meeting, it is working. Responses strike a common theme: The club is positive, friendly, and welcoming. “They say, ‘I think this is going to be a great place for me,’” says Club President Short.

“It’s not just a story from people who I’ve later come to identify as being a straight ally. We’ve heard that from people who identify as trans, we’ve heard that from people who identify as gay or lesbian,” he adds. “It just seems

to be a universal desire to belong and want to be a part of a warm, embracing community where they can be themselves—no matter how they identify.”

The club is open to changing norms and recently decided to start including members’ preferred pronouns on their name tags.

Stronger Than Ever

Perhaps there is no better endorsement for the universality of acceptance than the member who pulled VPE Bateman aside for a private word several months after joining Leadership Lambda.

“Is this an LGBTQ club?” he asked. Bateman braced herself for what he might say after she happily confirmed his suspicions.

His response? “That’s awesome.” Though he admitted to being a little surprised, he has since become one of the club’s star members and contest speakers.

“He just knew a good club when he saw it,” Jordan says with a laugh.

Emily Sachs, DTM, is a freelance writer in Brooklyn, New York. She currently serves as the District 119 Director and is a regular contributor to the *Toastmaster magazine*.



“It just seems to be a universal desire to belong and want to be a part of a warm, embracing community where [members] can be themselves—no matter how they identify.”

—SELDON SHORT



Levi Richardson (left) and Scott Jordan, members of Leadership Lambda Toastmasters Club in Dallas, Texas

A First-Timer's Journey at Convention

How the four-day event left a lasting impression.

By Elizabeth Thomas

Have you heard the phrase “first impressions are lasting impressions”? That perfectly describes my experience as a first-time convention attendee at the 2024 International Convention in Anaheim, California. The memories I made at the event—the 100-year anniversary celebration of Toastmasters International—left an indelible mark on my heart.

The four-day program was filled with highlights. I treasured socializing and networking with other members, listening to inspirational and captivating speeches, and best of all, proudly representing my country the Commonwealth of Dominica, the Nature Isle of the Caribbean, in the convention's Parade of Flags.

When I first joined Toastmasters in 2022, I knew it was time to find my voice and improve my leadership and communication skills. Fear of public speaking had plagued me for years, from being scared to sing as a child to pretending to be sick to avoid presentations in high school. Although I had made some progress from that debilitating fear, I knew Toastmasters was just the thing to propel me forward, and I joined the Quincy Toastmasters Club in Quincy, Massachusetts.

In 2023, when I was Club President, I attended some of the hybrid events online for the 2023 International Convention in Nassau, Bahamas. I decided to attend the next convention in person.

Not long before the 2024 convention was to take place, I received an email from Toastmasters World Headquarters telling me I would have the honor of carrying the flag of Dominica during the convention's Parade of

Flags. I squealed with delight. In this popular annual procession, members from around the world—many of them in native attire—walk onstage carrying the flags of their countries.

I had set forth on a mission to ensure that the flag of my nation, a small island in the Caribbean, would be represented during the parade after I noticed it was missing at the 2023 convention. After a few emails to island dignitaries, the flag made its way to Toastmasters International.

Fast-forward to the Parade of Flags at the Opening Ceremonies of the 2024 convention. Standing in line backstage, next to the member carrying the flag of Denmark, I was attired in my national dress: the Wob Dwiyet, a traditional four-piece outfit—a petticoat, dress, shawl, and handkerchief—made with Madras cloth. I eagerly awaited hearing announcer Mark Brown say “Dominica.” When he did, I walked onto the stage to thunderous applause—a moment I will never forget. The honor of carrying my country's flag was priceless.

A Global Network

Another highlight was being able to network and connect with fellow members. When I first arrived in Anaheim, I was clad in my Toastmasters cap and centennial T-shirt. Putting on the organization's signature blue lanyard with the Toastmasters logo and name badge was all I needed to strike up a conversation.

During the convention's networking lunches, I met members from all over the world and shared and collected at least 58 business cards. I was also able to dine with leaders from my home District, District 31.



The honor of carrying my country's flag was priceless.

Attending the International Convention as a first-timer left me with so many magical moments—from learning about our founder, Dr. Ralph C. Smedley, at the Toastmasters Through the Years exhibit to watching the World Championship of Public Speaking. I also gained motivational nuggets from the presentations of keynote speaker Shawn Ellis and Golden Gavel recipient Lisa Sun.

With the confidence I built from Toastmasters, I even found myself participating in the popular Sing-Along on the first night of convention. I belted out the lyrics to Whitney Houston's “One Moment in Time,” a fitting tribute to my younger self, who loved to sing but was too afraid to do so.

The 2024 convention was four days of inspiration, education, and fun. I will forever hold dear the cherished memories of the 100-year celebration, and I pledged to take on the challenge posed by 2024–2025 International President Radhi Spear, DTM, to bring a guest to a club meeting by the end of 2024. Toastmasters is truly a gift to be shared by all.

Elizabeth Thomas is the Immediate Past President of the President's Distinguished Quincy Toastmasters Club, the first and longest running club in Eastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island. She is the current Area 64 Director, helping others to achieve their Toastmasters goals.



Boost Your Confidence and Comfort Level Through Toastmasters

Solutions for your questions and queries.

By Bill Brown, DTM

Often, new Toastmasters are reluctant to take on a meeting role or give a speech in their club. Maybe they don't feel confident in their abilities or are uncomfortable performing in front of more advanced speakers. Luckily, there are many ways to overcome these challenges.

EDITOR'S NOTE: If you have a question for The Answer Man, email it to magazine@toastmasters.org for a chance to be featured in an upcoming column.

Questions are occasionally edited for clarity and brevity.



Illustration by
Jerry King

How do I get over my reluctance to take on meeting roles and give speeches?

If you feel reluctant to take on a new role or give a speech, don't let that stop you. Instead, consider why you might be reluctant.

One reason might be the fear of making a mistake. But we all make mistakes. Take the Ah-Counter, for example. Many people in this role worry about missing some of the "ahs," but nobody catches them all. And I have yet to hear a member complain about a missed one.

Perhaps you are afraid of saying something foolish. Remember, many politicians say something foolish all the time—and still get reelected. Maybe you have a future in politics.

Another reason might be that you struggle with thinking on your feet. But many people start out with a 10-second Table Topics response. You get better with time.

Finally, do you duck out on speeches because you lack confidence in your speaking ability? Think about why you joined the club in the first place. In Toastmasters, you get cheered just for making the effort.

Regardless of your reason, dedicate yourself to getting better. The only way you will do that is by jumping in and practicing.

Your club can also push you to take that next step. Don't let the reluctant member off the hook. Encourage them to perform.

When all is said and done, repeat after me: Toastmasters have guts.

How can our club help new members feel comfortable around more advanced speakers?

Toastmasters is a place to learn. And one of the best ways to learn is to watch and talk with the more advanced members of your club. If that connection is weak, everyone suffers.

Newer members are often nervous or intimidated at the start, and advanced members sometimes convey a disinterest.

However, most advanced members enjoy helping newer members and are usually very open with information and coaching. Don't be afraid to ask. And sometimes it just takes time for new members to break in, especially in a large club. If you are a newbie, say hi at every meeting. Over time you will get noticed. If you are an advanced member, be sure to reach out to the newer member.

I remember years ago when I was at an organizational meeting outside of Toastmasters. The guest speaker was Stephen Cannell, a bestselling author and television script writer. Prior to the meeting, he was talking to other people, so I walked up and stood to his left. He then turned to me, stuck out his hand, and said, "Hi, I'm Steve." Not only did he bring me into the conversation, but he also introduced himself with just his first name to establish a personal connection. I still remember this 30 years later.

If you feel newer club members are having trouble breaking in and feeling comfortable, talk with the advanced members and encourage them to step in and introduce themselves. And once a newer member has a speech or two under their belt, assign an advanced speaker as their evaluator. That can jump-start the process.

As I said, advanced speakers are often willing to help in any way possible. Talk with them and see what they suggest. You just might find a creative solution.

Bill Brown, DTM, is a speech delivery coach in Gillette, Wyoming. He is a member of Energy Capital Toastmasters in Gillette. Learn more at billbrownspeechcoach.com.

Visualize Your Goals

Use a vision board to clarify aspirations.

By Karen Walrond



I've been committed to making vision boards for more than 15 years. In fact, as a leadership consultant and coach, I often recommend the practice to my clients.

If you aren't familiar with the term, a vision board is a collage made up of images, photos, quotes, affirmations, or anything that visually represents your goals, hopes, and dreams for the future.

I should clarify that vision boards are not magic; therefore, I do not create vision boards for magic-manifesting reasons. And I certainly am not convinced that if you think positively, then positive things will automatically happen to you. That said, a vision board is a powerful tool, one that can be used not just for planning the year ahead, but also for brainstorming major projects, solidifying book concepts, and yes, even mapping out keynotes and speeches.

Creating a vision board is a meditative way of visually clarifying your goals and objectives. Making one requires a certain amount of focus and concentration—it's not something that can be done in 30 seconds or a few minutes, it takes a bit of time. And when we focus and concentrate in a meditative way on what we want for ourselves, we begin to work toward our goals, both subconsciously and consciously.

The Brain and Visualization

There's science behind why vision boards work. Neuroscientist, medical doctor, and executive advisor Tara Swart is an advocate for using

vision boards as a tool, and explains that when done correctly, they "prime the brain to grasp opportunities that otherwise may go unnoticed."

Even more impressively, Swart maintains, "to the brain, there is little difference between a strongly imagined vision and the actual experience of the thing happening." According to experts at the professional therapy organization [BetterHelp](#), not only does visualization help alter our brain's pathways, it can actually help forge new connections that could be beneficial to making our desired outcome a reality.

Plus, did I mention that creating a vision board is meditative?

So, the next time you have an idea, project, or speech and find yourself a bit overwhelmed or unclear on the steps to take to make it happen, consider creating a vision board.

While there are many online platforms that allow you to create a vision board in a way that is both easy and convenient—such as Pinterest or Canva—I've always found that the tactile experience of putting one together by hand feels far more mindful and meaningful. Let's dive in and examine how to create one.

Gather Some Supplies

You'll want to have everything on hand ahead of time so once your ideas get rolling, you can dive in.

- A stack of old magazines, catalogs, or even old books with illustrations. It's a good idea to get as many different types of magazines as you can, with images that relate to your hobbies, or travel, or fashion, or business—whatever inspires you. But remember, you'll be cutting out the words and images, so make sure you're using publications you don't mind destroying. Check thrift stores, library sales, yard sales, and other similar places for these types of materials—even the pamphlets and print ads you receive in your mailbox.
- A flat surface. A poster board, a cork board, a magnetic bulletin board, or even a manila folder or journal opened flat—they all work as the basis of a vision board. Whatever you decide to use, make sure there's enough space to add many images to its surface.
- A pair of scissors. Note: This is optional—I've neatly torn out images in a pinch!
- Some sort of adhesive. This can be glue, tape, pushpins, magnets—whatever adhesive is appropriate for the board surface you've chosen.

Start Building

Once you have everything you need, it's time for the fun part.

1. Spend some time visualizing your project.

What are you trying to accomplish—a great year ahead? A successful project? A promotion? A specific goal? What is

Celebrate!

your ideal outcome and what might that outcome look like once you've achieved it—can you describe it in detail? How will it feel taking the steps to make that outcome happen—will you feel strong? Capable? And how will you feel once you've successfully completed your project or goal—confident? Powerful? Leveled up?

2. As you think of the answers to these questions, go through each page of your magazines and catalogs, and cut out any images, words, or phrases that feel reflective of those answers. Don't overanalyze the significance of each image or worry about collecting too many. For now, simply gather as many images as you can. Your images don't have to be literal. This isn't a purely intellectual exercise; it can also be an emotional one. For example, if the image is a picture of a Porsche sports car, you might choose it because of how the image makes you feel (e.g., empowered, exhilarated, wealthy), not just because hey-owning-a-Porsche-might-be-cool.

3. After you've exhausted your magazines and catalogs, take your stack of images and arrange them on your flat surface. There's no wrong way to do this: Arrange the images in a grid, or straight lines, or overlapping manner—however you'd like. Start with your favorite images—the ones that feel like they encapsulate exactly what you've envisioned—and then build off those with your other images. Once you like how your images are arranged, grab your adhesive and affix them to your board.

4. Examine your board (optional). When you've finished placing your images, grab some sticky notes or scraps of paper and jot down any thoughts that come to you as you look at your board. For instance, how do you feel when you look at it as a whole? Are you excited? Inspired?

Once you've finished building your board, take a moment to consider what steps you have *already* taken that make you feel like you've started moving in the right direction—for example, what lessons have your past successes taught you that you could use in the pursuit of this current goal? What experiences have you had that feel relevant to this new pursuit? What friends and connections do you have who can support you? Identifying these resources will show you that you're not starting from ground zero—you're already on your way.

Next, consider what steps immediately come to mind to bring what you've visualized to fruition. Write each individual thought on each slip of paper, and if any feel meaningful, add them to your board as well.

Finally, celebrate! Place your vision board where you can access it easily. For some of you, you might love what you've created and don't care if other people see it too, so you'll hang it somewhere prominent. For others, your vision board may feel very private, so maybe you'll hang it at the back of your closet behind your clothes so no one can see it—but you can still part your clothes and look at it whenever you want. For those of you who used a manila folder, perhaps you'll keep it in a file cabinet at work, to pull out whenever you need to look at it.

Creating a vision board is a meditative way of visually clarifying your goals and objectives.

But the point is to *look at it*. Frequently. Do this not only for the board to have its scientific visualization effects, but mostly because looking at the images should inspire tangible steps toward your goal. When this happens, add those steps to your daily to-do lists.

And then, over time, watch the magic that you create.

Karen Walrond is a leadership consultant, attorney, speaker, and author of *The Lightmaker's Manifesto: How to Work for Change Without Losing Your Joy*. She is trained in positive psychology coaching with the Wholebeing Institute and helps her clients discover their strengths, develop their leadership skills, and use them in a way that allows them to thrive. Learn more at chookooloonks.com.



Say “SMEDLEY!”

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ISO 250

The do's and don'ts of taking great photos.

By Bambi Cash and Blake Carver

A good photo tells a story—it informs, amuses, or inspires people. Photos bring life to words and can convey a sense of what an event (or a club) is about at a glance.

That is, good photos can do all that. Consider the image of two people shaking hands in front of a banner and then an image of two people with big smiles triumphantly showing their “Best Speaker” and “Best Evaluator” ribbons. Can you see how active, engaging photos inspire stronger reactions than static images?

If you want to take better photos—for personal use, for your club website or social media pages, or to submit to the *Toastmaster* magazine—read on for tips to make your photos come to life.

Club or Large Group Shots



DON'T: Line people up in a long row with no organization. ★ Avoid having everyone's hands at their side. ★ Ensure people are looking at the camera and no one's eyes are closed.



DO: Line people in rows, based on height. ★ Bring people close together. ★ Position people on an angle facing toward the middle. ★ Make sure people's faces are clear in the shot, and no one's eyes are closed.

Pro tip: Take three photos in a row and use the best one. For posed photos, have everyone close their eyes at the same time, then say, “On the count of three open your eyes!” and take the picture.



Smaller Groups



DON'T: Have people stand in a line with uneven spacing between them.



DO: Move people closer together and show them engaged with each other.



DO: Try a creative setup!



DO: Show personality in posed photos.



DO: Incorporate your club banner in a clever way.

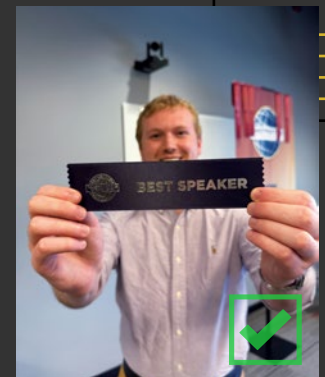
Speakers and Presenters



DON'T: Try to capture your entire club if you just want a picture of the speaker.



DO: Make the speaker the focus of the image.
★ Take a shot of something happening rather than a still image. ★ Sit or stand as close as possible to the subject rather than zooming in from a distance.



DO: Use unconventional (and eye-catching) displays or poses.

CLUB EXPERIENCE

Lighting



DON'T: Position people with their backs to the light source, such as in front of a bright window.



DO: Make sure the light source is shining on their face.

Selfies



DON'T: Hold the camera with the arm closest to the other people.



DON'T: Cover the camera with your finger. ★ Don't have people too low in the frame or looking in the wrong direction.



DO: Have the person with the longest arm hold the phone with their outside hand. ★ Stagger people so they aren't standing in a straight line. ★ Make sure eyes are open and people are looking at the camera, not the photo button.



PHOTO TIPS FROM PROFESSIONALS



- People don't need to be in a room. You can take shots in a park, outside your meeting space, or in a unique location.
- Cloudy, overcast days often have the best lighting. Bright, sunny days often leave harsh shadows and cause people to squint or blink. If it is a sunny day, reposition people as needed.
- To ensure the photo is level and not tilted, use a stable surface to prop up your phone (such as books on a table), or use a tripod and a self-timer.
- Fill the frame with your subject. To get closer, move yourself closer rather than zooming in with your camera as extreme zoom-ins cause pixelation. For best results, you should get closer than you think.
- Don't be afraid to take a vertical shot—not everything needs to be horizontal.
- Use the lock focus feature on your camera phone to ensure that the subject is in focus. On most camera phones, you simply need to press and hold down on your screen over the subject you want to stay in focus.
- Look for interesting angles and framing. Taking the picture directly in front of the subject results in a static and boring photo. Try standing on a chair and shooting from above. Or position the subject in an interesting place.
- Get creative! If you're taking a shot of one to three people in a beautiful setting, avoid positioning them in the center of the frame. Instead, position them slightly off center, which makes the image more natural and engaging (called "[the rule of thirds](#)" in photography). Most digital cameras have a grid that breaks up the image into nine quadrants. Place the most interesting or important elements near the corners of the gridlines.

Editor's Note: If your club has some engaging photos, share them with the magazine for a chance to be featured! Details can be found on the [Magazine Submissions page](#).

Bambi Cash is the graphic designer and event photographer, and **Blake Carver** is the senior video production specialist, for Toastmasters International.

CONVENTION

ENVISION YOURSELF

AT THE 2025 INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

JOIN US IN PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA, AND
PUT YOUR STAMP ON THE ORGANIZATION'S FUTURE.

By staff

Toastmasters International is entering a new era! In 2024, the organization celebrated 100 years of public speaking excellence, and this year, it's time to focus on the future. Join your fellow leaders and communicators where history meets innovation—Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Begin visualizing what the next century of Toastmasters will hold during this four-day event, August 20-23, 2025.

From the grandeur of the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall to the vibrant food, art, and culture scenes, Philadelphia is the perfect backdrop for personal transformation and connection. With the theme “Envision Your Next Move,” convention serves as a launchpad for your next chapter.

Keep reading to learn more about how you can put your stamp on the future of Toastmasters International.



Opening Ceremonies

The convention kickoff is always a favorite for members, showcasing the international spirit of the organization. The 2025 Opening Ceremonies will take place Wednesday, August 20, and will feature the keynote presentation, the introduction of the 2024–2025 Board of Directors, and the ever-popular Parade of Flags. The latter highlights the diversity of Toastmasters, with members from around the world—often dressed in native attire—carrying the flags of their countries.

Keynote Speaker

Anne Bonney is a National Speakers Association's Certified Speaking Professional, TEDx speaker, author, expert in change management, and former Toastmaster. After numerous careers and many moves around the world, Bonney has fully embraced dancing in the discomfort of change.

In her keynote address, “[Ignite Your Next Move: Courageously Dancing Into the Future](#),” she will share strategies for individuals to master the challenge of change. It all starts with a little “sassy backtalk,” bravery, and an open mind.

Learn more about Bonney in this [April 2025 magazine profile](#).

Hall of Fame

The annual Hall of Fame ceremony will celebrate the achievements of Distinguished Districts and individual members in the 2024–2025 program year. Districts around the world are recognized as Smedley Distinguished, President's Distinguished, Select Distinguished, and Distinguished. In addition, Presidential Citations are presented to members who exhibit exemplary service and dedication at the club, District, or International level.

Golden Gavel Award Presentation

Matt Abrahams is the recipient of the 2025 Golden Gavel Award. Abrahams is a lecturer in organizational behavior at the Stanford University Graduate School of Business, the author of two books on public speaking and communication, and the host of the podcast [Think Fast, Talk Smart](#), which has close to 3 million listeners around the world.

A former Toastmaster, Abrahams has been focusing on public speaking ever since he competed in speech contests as a teenager. He is acclaimed for his teaching and his myriad strategies regarding communication, which he has also shared in articles for the *Toastmaster* magazine over the years.





Abrahams, whose Golden Gavel speech is titled “[From Silence to Brilliance: How to Craft Compelling, Clear Communication](#),” is also a keynote speaker, communications consultant, and speaking coach. At Stanford, he teaches classes such as strategic communications and presenting online, as well as a workshop that emphasizes spontaneous speaking. That topic is also the focus of his most recent book: *Think Faster, Talk Smarter: How to Speak Successfully When You’re Put on the Spot*.

Read more about Abrahams in this [May 2025 magazine profile](#).

Education Sessions and Workshops

This year’s convention will feature an expanded speaker lineup with a broadened variety of education topics and workshops. With nine sessions and nearly 20 speakers, attendees will be able to choose two of the four concurrent traditional education sessions on Thursday, two of four concurrent Toastmasters Journey Workshops on Friday, and a larger session on Saturday morning.

Presented by experts, the education sessions include mastering video for brand building, storytelling and speechwriting, visual goal-setting, your role in a new era of public speaking, and tips for setting yourself up for a successful year.

New this year, Toastmasters Journey Workshops are presented by Toastmasters for Toastmasters and feature three experienced leaders per topic who will offer practical insights and strategies for yourself and your clubs. Topics include corporate clubs, adding value to your membership, growing your club on a budget, and tips for becoming a Distinguished club.

For more information, visit the [education session](#) page on the convention website.

New Leadership

Your vote counts! At the Annual Business Meeting on Friday, August 22, all members will have the opportunity to vote in person or by proxy on the [2025–2026 International Officers and Directors candidates](#), and the [proposed amendments](#) to the Bylaws of Toastmasters International and the Club Constitution. Onsite attendees can also meet and talk to the candidates for international office in the Candidate Showcase event on Thursday, August 21.

World Championship of Public Speaking

Who will be crowned this year’s top champion? Find out as the eight finalists in the Toastmasters International Speech Contest, representing different parts of the world, compete for the title in the 2025 World Championship of Public Speaking®. The semifinals take place on August 21 in four concurrent contests with seven speakers each. The top two from each contest will advance to the championship held two days later.

Accredited Speaker Program

Hear from professional speakers during the 2025 Accredited Speaker Program. Candidates for the designation speak on a specialized topic in their field; those who earn the coveted title combine expert knowledge with mastery of the spoken word. The candidates will give their final presentation before a panel of judges in Philadelphia on Friday, August 22.

To learn more, visit the [Accredited Speaker Program webpage](#).





Experience Convention Online

The convention will be a hybrid event. Events such as Opening Ceremonies, the Golden Gavel presentation, Annual Business Meeting, and the World Championship of Public Speaking will be livestreamed. Other events, such as the education sessions, will be recorded and available after the event has concluded.

The online convention experience can be accessed from any internet-connected device, including your phone, tablet, computer, or TV. Livestreamed events will be in real time; check the agenda, where they are listed in Eastern Daylight Time (EDT)/Coordinated Universal Time (UTC). On Demand replay will be available soon after the event.

Mix and Mingle

The annual convention offers members the perfect opportunity to network, socialize, and meet with fellow Toastmasters. Check out some of the social activities, where you'll have the chance to form connections and have fun. Most require a ticket, so make your selections when registering.



Social activities include:

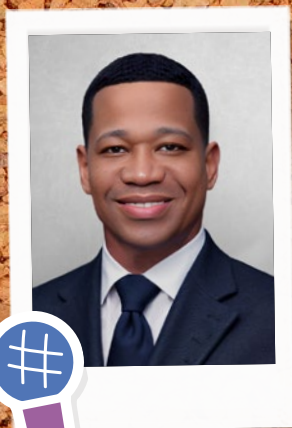
- President's Celebration, featuring dinner and dancing in celebration of the new International President
- Smedley Fund History on Wheels Tour, exploring Philadelphia's iconic landmarks
- Smedley Fund Sunrise Serenity Stretch
- First-Timers' Gathering
- Toastmasters lunches
- The Marketplace, which includes opportunities to meet the international candidates, visit the event sponsors, shop at the convention store, and more
- Sing-Along, a favorite convention tradition started in 1992 by Past International President Ted Corcoran, DTM, of Ireland.

Events and information are continually being updated; visit the [convention website](#) to view the agenda.

Ready to register? You'll meet a global network of Toastmasters during this exciting convention where you can learn, connect, and help get the next 100 years started.

The *Toastmaster* magazine staff is composed of four editorial team members.





Convention Information

The 2025 International Convention will be held August 20-23 at the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown and the Pennsylvania Convention Center in historic Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Go to the [convention website](#) to register and to learn more about the four-day event.

Need to justify the value and cost of the Toastmasters 2025 International Convention to your supervisor? Download, modify, and use [this letter](#) to convince your boss to let you attend.

There is also a [Letter of Invitation Request form](#) to potentially support your visa application.

Convention Time

The convention will take place in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and all events and activities will be in Eastern Daylight Time (EDT)/Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) -4, which is the local time in Philadelphia.

Accessibility

For information on accessibility details and scooter rentals, please refer to the websites at the two venues: [Pennsylvania Convention Center](#) and [Philadelphia Marriott Downtown](#).

PHILADELPHIA

Favs

2019 World Champ Aaron Beverly highlights his hometown's best.

By Aaron Beverly



Photos courtesy of the Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Shofuso Garden at Fairmount Park

If you're headed to the 2025 International Convention and want to explore Philadelphia, lifelong local (and 2019 World Champion of Public Speaking) Aaron Beverly has some favorite places to share. Turns out there's a lot more to his hometown than the Liberty Bell and the steps Rocky famously ran up.

JIM'S SOUTH STREET

Pat's King of Steaks and Geno's Steaks might be famous, but any native Philadelphian will tell you: That's not where we go. Jim's Steaks is an equally legendary spot and, in my opinion, has much better cheesesteak.

400 South Street, Philadelphia
jimssouthstreet.com

TASTE CHEESESTEAK BAR

Since Philly is known for the cheesesteak, I have to devote two entries. Taste is more of a gourmet cheesesteak spot, but it's top-tier. This place has the best chicken cheesesteak I've ever had in my life (no exaggeration).

1809 JFK Blvd, Suite B, Philadelphia
tastecheesesteaks.com

READING TERMINAL MARKET

One of the best food halls in the country, and it's right next to the convention center. Be sure to grab a roast pork sandwich from DiNic's and top it off with a milkshake from Bassetts Ice Cream—there are dozens of flavors to choose from.

1136 Arch Street, Philadelphia
readingterminalmarket.org

THE FRANKLIN INSTITUTE

My favorite museum anywhere (but I may be biased). This is Philly's most iconic science museum, full of fun, interactive, and inspiring exhibits for kids and kids at heart.

222 North 20th Street, Philadelphia
fi.edu/en

THE ACADEMY OF NATURAL SCIENCES

Right next to the Franklin Institute, this museum is home to dinosaur fossils and fascinating exhibits about wildlife and ecosystems. A great indoor adventure if you want to escape the August heat in Philly.

1900 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia
ansp.org

TANGO KARAOKE LOUNGE IN CHINATOWN

Chinatown itself is a destination; however, I'm a karaoke fiend, and Tango Lounge is my most frequented karaoke spot. If any Toastmasters want to do karaoke while you're in town, hit me up!

1021 Arch Street, Philadelphia
visitphilly.com/areas/philadelphia-neighborhoods/chinatown

FAIRMOUNT PARK

When you just need a quiet moment, Fairmount Park is free and a readily available spot for you to unwind. It also has miles of running trails, hidden statues for photos, and views along the Schuylkill River.

4700 States Drive, Philadelphia
myphillypark.org

LOVE SCULPTURE IN JOHN F. KENNEDY PLAZA

You've seen it in pictures, and it's a great spot to take your own. The LOVE sculpture is a must for that perfect Philly photo.

15th Street and JFK Boulevard, Philadelphia
visitphilly.com/things-to-do/attractions/love-statue



Reading Terminal Market



FASHION DISTRICT PHILADELPHIA

If you're looking to do a little shopping (or a lot), the Fashion District has everything under one roof. It's also home to entertainment options like movie theatres and bowling.

901 Market Street, Philadelphia
fashiondistrictphiladelphia.com

The LOVE sculpture is a must for that perfect Philly photo.

Aaron Beverly is the 2019 World Champion of Public Speaking, a presentation coach, and an award-winning storyteller. He is a member of the AI Articulators Toastmasters club and works as a corporate compliance consulting manager in Philadelphia, where he has been a lifelong resident.



LOVE sculpture
in John F.
Kennedy Plaza

Convention by the NUMBERS

Explore survey results and statistics from the 2024 event.

From engaging education sessions to the thrilling World Championship of Public Speaking®, the Toastmasters International Convention offers attendees the opportunity to learn new skills, hear from world-class speakers, and network with a global community.

Last year, the convention celebrated the organization's centennial anniversary. Held in Anaheim, California, near the site of the first Toastmasters club meeting, the event featured a 1920s theme, a Toastmasters history exhibit, and numerous opportunities to celebrate the organization's impact.

Here's a closer look at some findings from this memorable event.

2,350

Number of people who registered for the 2024 International Convention

**OVER
86%**

Registrants who were Toastmasters members

87

Number of countries represented by registrants

**OVER
73%**

Onsite attendees who said their convention goals were met

40%

Registrants who reported this as their first convention

**OVER
50%**

Heard about the convention from their Toastmasters club

**OVER
80%**

Registrants who said having fun was one of their convention goals

**OVER
92%**

Respondents who are interested in future Toastmasters International events

**OVER
77%**

Attendees who visited the Convention Store

**OVER
94%**

Registrants who said networking was one of their convention goals



World Championship of Public Speaking

Attendees' favorite part of convention

Statistics provided by the Toastmasters International Research and Analysis Department.

Official Notice of Vote

Vote for the
Board of
Directors
candidates.

Your International Officer and Director Candidates for the 2025–2026 Board of Directors

You will have the opportunity to vote for the International Officer and Director candidates of your choice at the Annual Business Meeting on Friday, August 22, at 4 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT)/Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) -4, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and online.

The International Leadership Committee nominated International Officer candidates for the positions of

International President-Elect, First Vice President, and Second Vice President. International Director candidates were nominated from Regions 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, and 13. The Committee's nominations are presented in accordance with the [Bylaws of Toastmasters International, Article VIII](#). Visit the Toastmasters International website to [view the qualifications](#) of each officer and director nominee.

International Officer Candidates



INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT-ELECT
Stefano McGhee, DTM



FIRST VICE PRESIDENT
Gauri Seshadri, DTM



SECOND VICE PRESIDENT
Jean Gamester, DTM



SECOND VICE PRESIDENT
Melissa McGavick, DTM

International Director Candidates

Region 1

Michael Bown, DTM
Abhijeet Joshi, DTM

Region 5

Andrew Horberry, DTM
Jing Humphreys, DTM

Region 9

Katrina Letargo, DTM
Hani Nur Zaihanirah Zaini, DTM

Region 13

Suganthi Periasamy, DTM
Charles Tan Chia Lih, DTM

Region 3

Chris Raneri, DTM
David Storey, DTM
David Woodcock, DTM

Region 7

Ramona Baylor, DTM
Vickie Goodman, DTM
Victoria Noethling, DTM

Region 11

Patrick Oluyide, DTM
Nikki Quinn, DTM

It is the right and duty of all Member Clubs to participate in the vote at the Annual Business Meeting through a proxyholder, either from their membership or the organization's membership. Voting delegates may make additional nominations from the floor for International Officer and Director candidates who were evaluated by the International Leadership Committee in this election cycle.

2025 Proposals

Make your
voice heard.

At the 2025 Annual Business Meeting in August, every Toastmasters club will have the opportunity to vote on proposed amendments to the Bylaws of Toastmasters International and the Club Constitution.

The Toastmasters International Board of Directors presents and endorses these amendments, which are outlined in Proposals A through H. Why are these changes being recommended? Ultimately, to modernize, clarify, and update the governing documents as well as give members a stronger, more effective organization.

To learn more, read about these proposals and the benefits they provide to members. The Board of Directors asks for your support and recommends that your club vote in favor of all proposals.

**The Board of Directors
asks for your support and
recommends that your
club vote in favor of all
proposals.**



To view the full text of the amendments for Proposals A through H, [click here](#).

- c. Article V, Section 7.c
- d. Article X, Section 2
- e. Article XII, Section 3.e
- f. Article XIII, Section 10.a

PROPOSAL B

Remove Unnecessary Cross-References: Bylaws of Toastmasters International

One of the organization's primary methods to convey information to members and leaders is written communication. A section in the Bylaws describes what constitutes a "written" message (or a message "in writing"); however, cross-referencing every reference to "written" or "in writing" in the Bylaws (over 30 in total) to that particular section would be cumbersome.

The proposed amendments to the Bylaws would remove all these cross-references and provide a single cross-reference to the appropriate section at the initial mention of the words "in writing."

Proposed Amendments

Bylaws of Toastmasters International

- a. Article III, Section 4.a.2
- b. Article V, Sections 3.b, 3.d.2, and 3.f
- c. Article V, Section 5
- d. Article X, Section 8
- e. Article XIII, Section 9

PROPOSAL C

Disciplinary Process

Toastmasters has an established procedure by which the Board of Directors takes action with respect to a member's good standing with the organization. This is a fully internal process and not the equivalent of a court of law. The Board proposes amendments to the Bylaws to clarify this distinction—specifically, to change the term "charged member" to "member at issue," and "persons charged" to "persons involved." If approved, related Policies and Protocols will be amended accordingly.

Proposed Amendments

Bylaws of Toastmasters International

- a. Article III, Section 13

PROPOSAL A

Updated Language: Bylaws of Toastmasters International

The Board proposes a series of amendments in the Bylaws updating language to be more clear, modern, and in line with current practices, as well as more general in nature to accommodate future operational changes. The proposed amendments would include removing unnecessary words and restructuring relevant paragraphs.

Proposed Amendments

Bylaws of Toastmasters International

- a. Article I, Section 2
- b. Article III, Sections 4 and 8.b



PROPOSAL D

Composition, Notification, Duties: Board of Directors

The Board proposes amendments to clarify how the Board of Directors is constituted, the preferred method for providing notification for Board meetings, and the duties of the Board. The proposed amendments would include restructuring text and revising relevant wording in the Bylaws, as well as recognizing written communication as the preferred method for providing notice to the Board Members.

Proposed Amendments

Bylaws of Toastmasters International

- a. Article V, Sections 1, 3.b, and 4

PROPOSAL E

Update Language to Reflect Current Practice: Annual Business Meeting

The Board proposes amendments that update language in the Bylaws to reflect current practice regarding the Credentials process and the Annual Business Meeting.

The sections in the Bylaws regarding voting and the Annual Business Meeting (ABM) were written based on fully physical, onsite processes. As technology has advanced and the organization has grown, other methods for voting and conducting the ABM have been introduced. The use of an electronic voting system ensures that any candidates nominated from the floor during the meeting can be instantaneously added to the balloting process.

Considering the number of voters, and the now-hybrid format of the ABM, it is no longer practical to conduct the Credentials process at the meeting itself. The process is now entirely electronic and conducted in the days leading up to the meeting.

Proposed Amendments

Bylaws of Toastmasters International

- a. Article IX, Section 3
- b. Article X, Section 3

PROPOSAL F

Updated Language: Club Constitution

The Board proposes amendments throughout the Club Constitution updating the language to align with current practice and using modern phrasing. The proposed amendments include acknowledging the availability of many meeting roles beyond that of “speaker”; the removal and replacement of words or phrasing that might be difficult for non-native English speakers to understand; and the recognition of common duties shared by Immediate Past Club Presidents in the club.

Proposed Amendments

Club Constitution

- a. Article I
- b. Article II, Sections 2, 3, 4, and 5
- c. Article III, Section 4
- d. Article VI, Section 4
- e. Article VII, Section 8
- f. Article X, Section 7

PROPOSAL G

Readability and Clarity: Club Constitution

The Board recognizes that large blocks of text containing complex lists can be difficult to read and understand. One way to make content more accessible is to create bulleted lists. Another way is to remove excess words to simplify the sentences.

The Board proposes amendments to the Club Constitution to increase readability and clarity.

Proposed Amendments

Club Constitution

- a. Article II, Sections 4.b and 5

PROPOSAL H

Club Standing Committees: Club Constitution

Club committees were established as a helpful resource for the club officers and a way for members to engage in club operations; however, having five required standing committees could be more of a burden than a benefit for some clubs. As with meeting format, the Board wants each club to find what works best for its members.

The Board proposes amendments to the Club Constitution to make the Club Executive Committee the only required standing committee for a club, with other committees optional at the Club President's or Club Executive Committee's discretion.

Proposed Amendments

Club Constitution

- a. Article VIII

If you have any questions, please email boardcontact@toastmasters.org.

HOW TO PERSUADE PEOPLE

Use these techniques to gain business and add club members.

By Diane Windingland, DTM

Have you ever wanted to score a new client, sign up a new Toastmaster, or just convince your cat to stop sitting on your keyboard during Zoom calls? I can't help with the cat—we all know cats don't negotiate. But luckily, people are more persuadable.

There are powerful persuasion techniques that can help you gain new clients or new club members. But first, let's address the elephant in the room. Is persuasion manipulative?

Persuasion vs. Manipulation

At its core, persuasion is about guiding others toward a decision using honesty and the idea of mutual benefits, while manipulation relies on deception or exploitation for self-serving gain. For example, imagine talking with a guest at a club meeting. A persuasive approach might involve explaining how Toastmasters can help improve the person's confidence and communication skills, aligning with their personal goals. A manipulative approach, on the other hand, might involve saying, "If you don't join today, you'll miss out on a life-changing opportunity forever," creating unnecessary pressure.

By applying persuasion ethically, you can build trust while motivating meaningful action.

The Seven Principles of Persuasion

To apply persuasion effectively, it helps to understand the core principles behind it.

Robert Cialdini, in his 1984 book *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, identifies seven key principles:

1. **Liking:** People prefer to say yes to those they like.
2. **Social proof:** People are influenced by others' opinions.
3. **Authority:** People respect experts and those in authority.
4. **Reciprocity:** People are more likely to give back when they've received something first.
5. **Scarcity:** People fear loss and desire what's limited.
6. **Commitment and consistency:** People like to stay consistent with their commitments, even small ones.
7. **Unity:** People are motivated by shared identities and values.

The first three principles—liking, social proof, and authority—help establish trust and credibility. This article will focus on the last four: reciprocity, scarcity, commitment and consistency, and unity. These principles are designed to inspire action—the ultimate goal when persuading prospects to become members or clients.

Reciprocity: Give a Little, Get a Lot

Reciprocity is the idea that people feel a natural urge to give back when you give them something valuable. Here's a story to illustrate.

On a trip to Ocho Rios, Jamaica, my husband and I were searching for hearing aid batteries. A local man, Dino, noticed we appeared lost, approached us, and went beyond giving directions—he walked us to the store, gave me a flower for my hair, and offered an impromptu tour. Dino's generosity inspired us to reciprocate, and as we left him, we gladly handed over a \$50 tip.

In my coaching business, I apply reciprocity by offering free consultations with actionable advice that prospects can use immediately. For organizations like Toastmasters, inviting prospects to a free meeting, offering a personal testimonial, or buying them a cup of coffee can all build goodwill and inspire action.

Takeaway: Reciprocity builds goodwill. Start the cycle by giving value first.





For organizations,
emphasizing limited-
time incentives
or exclusive
opportunities can
motivate prospects
to act.

Commitment and Consistency: Small Yeses Lead to Big Results

This principle hinges on the idea that people prefer to stay consistent with their commitments. Even small steps can pave the way for bigger actions.

Have you ever signed up for a free trial of a streaming service to watch one show? Fast-forward six months and you're still subscribed. Or maybe you attended a club meeting and took on a small role, like timer. Before long, you were saying "yes" to larger roles—from club officer to District Director.

In my coaching business, I use the phrase "Based on what you told me ..." to align solutions with client goals. For Toastmasters, asking a prospect why they came to the meeting, and showing how membership is consistent with their goals, can spark that first "yes." Even something as simple as participating in Table Topics® can build momentum toward membership.

Eleos Theofilus Gandawidjaja, a member of World Travelers Toastmasters Club in Singapore, shared an example of this concept in action. He encouraged a club guest, Lisa,

to try Table Topics, reassuring her it was a low-pressure way to get involved. Lisa agreed and told a story about overcoming a tough personal challenge.

"The room lit up with applause and encouragement," recalled Gandawidjaja, "and I could see her confidence grow in real-time." After the meeting, he told her, "Lisa, that was a fantastic story! You've already got the natural storytelling skills we love here. Why not stick around and keep building on that with us?" That moment of encouragement and small commitment sealed the deal—Lisa joined the very next day.

Takeaway: Use small actions to build commitment over time.

Scarcity: Nothing Sparks Action Like the Fear of Missing Out

Scarcity creates urgency by highlighting limited availability or time-sensitive opportunities. Here's an example.

When my family was house-hunting, we found a perfect home. Our initial offer was accepted—until the Realtor called to say there was a higher offer. The seller gave us a

chance to match the higher offer within hours. That scarcity—the fear of losing the house—motivated us to act quickly.

While I don't often use scarcity in my coaching business, I occasionally mention limited coaching availability during busy times. For organizations, emphasizing limited-time incentives or exclusive opportunities can motivate prospects to act.

Another way to leverage scarcity is the "Why delay transformation?" approach. Instead of focusing on external limitations, this method encourages prospects to recognize the cost of waiting. You can use phrases such as, "The sooner you join, the sooner you'll start seeing results," or "Imagine where you could be in a couple of months if you start now." This creates internal urgency by highlighting the benefits of immediate action rather than focusing solely on what might be lost.

Takeaway: Use time or quantity limits to create urgency, or frame action as an opportunity for transformation.

Unity: Belonging Inspires Belief

Unity is about fostering a sense of shared

identity and values. When people feel they belong, they're more likely to take action.

When I joined Toastmasters, I discovered it wasn't just about improving my speaking skills—it was about being part of a group that genuinely wanted to help each other succeed. That sense of belonging kept me coming back.

You can foster unity with prospects by using a three-step format.

1. **Ask a question:** "What's driving you to pursue [the goal] right now?"
2. **Acknowledge unity:** "I love that you're focused on [the goal]. That's something I care about, too."
3. **Position yourself as a partner:** "We'll work together to make sure your goals become a reality."

Bob Palmer, DTM, a member of the online Prime Time Toastmasters club based in Riverside, California, strengthens Toastmasters unity through follow-up communication. At each club meeting, he captures a screenshot

of the Zoom session, highlights participants' names (including guests), and promptly emails it to the visitors with a warm "Come back soon" message. This simple gesture makes guests feel seen and welcomed, reinforcing their connection to the club.

Takeaway: Build a sense of shared purpose to inspire belonging and action.

Applying Principles of Persuasion

Let's recap how these principles can work for you.

- **Reciprocity:** Give value upfront to build goodwill.
- **Commitment and consistency:** Use small "yes" moments to build momentum.
- **Scarcity:** Highlight urgency to prompt immediate action.
- **Unity:** Create belonging through shared values and purpose.

These principles aren't just theories—they tap into human nature. By applying them, you

can convert prospects into clients or members—or persuade people about other issues that you care about—more effectively.

So here's your challenge: Choose one principle to apply this week in your club or business. Whether it's offering a free resource, asking for a small commitment, or creating a sense of belonging, you'll see the power of persuasion in action.

And who knows? You might even persuade your cat to cooperate—because, hey, you're persuasive now!

Diane Windingland, DTM, is a communication coach from Spring, Texas, and a member of two clubs: *Frankly Speaking Toastmasters* in Spring, Texas, and *PowerTalk Toastmasters* in Minnesota. Learn more at virtualspeechcoach.com.



PERSUASION AND PATHWAYS

The "Persuasive Speaking" project (Level 3 in the Presentation Mastery path) provides a framework for crafting persuasive speeches:

- A. Capture Attention** – Start with a strong hook.
- B. Describe the Need** – Highlight the problem or opportunity.
- C. Define Solutions** – Present practical, convincing solutions.
- D. Mitigate Objections** – Address concerns proactively.
- E. Visualize the Change** – Show the impact of your solution.
- F. Call to Action** – End with a clear, compelling next step.





Happy Father's Day!

A proud dad on communicating with his daughter.

By Paul Sterman

What do I want for Father's Day this June? I already have it: the daughter that my wife, Joelle, gave birth to 17 years ago—Hannah Rose.

Hannah began communicating with me with her first primal screams, which eventually gave way to cooing smiles, words and phrases, and the addictive singing of "Wheels on the Bus." Non-verbal communication too: snuggling against my chest as I read stories to her in bed, *The Seven Silly Eaters* being a particular favorite.

No "hello" will ever match the greetings I got from Hannah when she heard me coming through the front door every day after work: the excited yells of "Daddy, Daddy!" echoing down the hall and a little girl racing into my arms to squeeze me tightly—a hug that said *I'm so happy you're here, I can't wait to play with you, and I love you unconditionally.*

She was my little love bug. Today that love bug is a teenager, and our connection continues, though the communication is, well, a little different.

The modern teenager is a beautiful but mysterious creature, dictated by moods that shift like daily weather patterns. There are days when Hannah and I happily chat away about music; spend an inordinate amount of time reveling in our cuddly dog, Charlie; and hunt for chocolate milkshakes when the need arises. Other days I find myself speaking to a pair of earbuds that don't speak back. Or I get a quick thumbs-up to my questions—which, translated

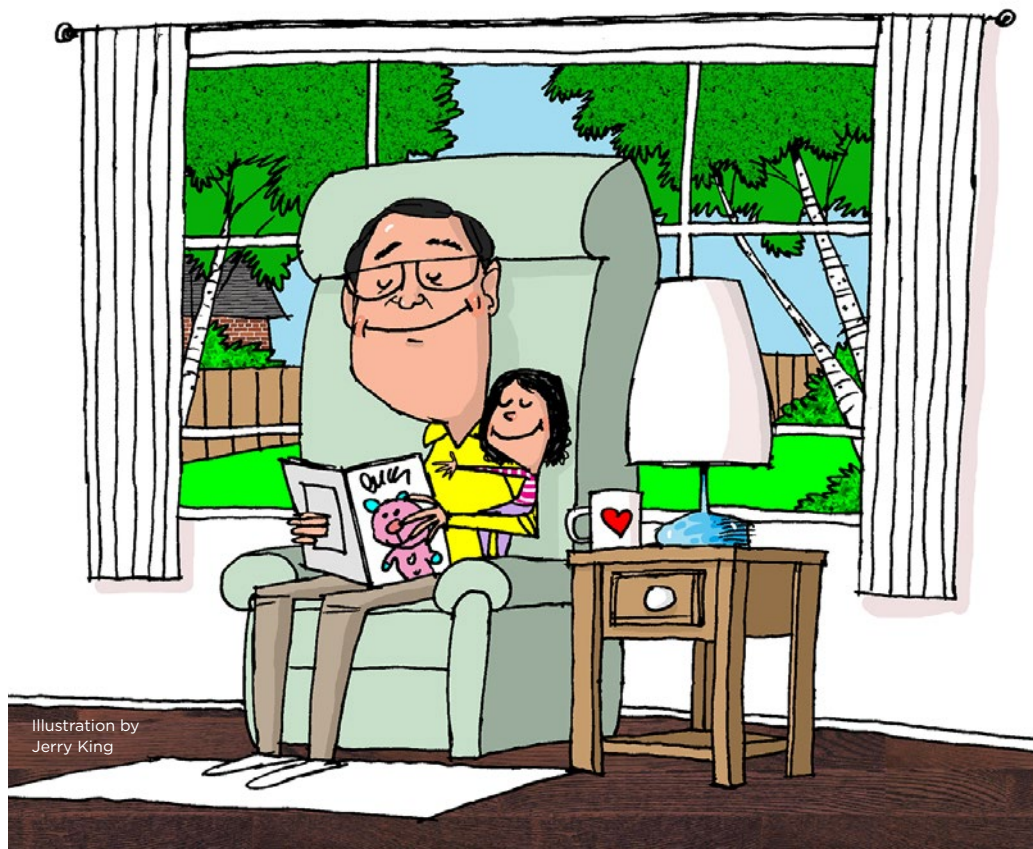


Illustration by
Jerry King

My playful teasing and dazzling jokes apparently annoy, rather than entertain, my daughter.

from teen-speak, means "I am signaling yes to you right now instead of saying words, which will then require conversation."

The adulation in those little-girl embraces? Oh, that ship sailed years ago. The cute parroting of what her parents think and say? Also long gone. Hannah, believe it or not, is rather dismissive of our cumulative life knowledge. "How do you not know that?" is a familiar refrain from our seen-it-all 17-year-old.

Teenagers represent transition. They come with newly independent behavior and opinions of their own. So I communicate with caution and care. As we say in Toastmasters, know your audience.

When delivering my message to Hannah, I aim for brevity above all else. Expound on life lessons? Uh, no. Incorporate humor to drive home my point? Very tricky. My playful teasing and dazzling jokes apparently annoy, rather than entertain, my daughter. It's like doing a standup comedy routine and hearing an exasperated heckler. "Dad, just stop."

Expressing curiosity about her life is another balancing act. If I toss a flurry of questions her way right after school—probing queries like "How were your classes today?"—my reward is a stream of monosyllabic answers. But when I wade gently back into the waters—or, even better, play it cool and let her come to me—the payoff can be a delightful conversation. Sharing political opinions, laughing at family members, listening to each other.

Joelle and I love seeing the caring, intelligent, happy person Hannah has become. And the journey continues. In less than two years, she'll be leaving home to go to college. I hope I'll be getting regular phone calls, Hannah eager to tell me about her new campus and what she's learning. And if she calls to say she's homesick or struggling, I'll be there to listen.

She is the Father's Day gift that keeps giving. No better present exists than the bright smile of the daughter who enlivens my every day. My Hannah. My love bug.

Paul Sterman is senior editor, executive & editorial content, for *Toastmasters International*. Reach him at pssterman@toastmasters.org.

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CLIENT SPOTLIGHT - BO BENNETT, DTM

You might know Bo as the creator of FreeToastHost, the host of the Toastmasters Podcast, or the Founder of eBookIt.com. Or perhaps you never heard of the guy. Either way, you will enjoy his latest book, *Some Really Personal, Yet Entertaining Stories From My Life That You Will Enjoy and May Even Find Inspiring*.

What is a "normal childhood?" Does it include almost being murdered by your sister with an ax? Speeding around town in the back of a station wagon because your mom is chasing an "alien spaceship"? Being busted by the police for intent to light a pond on fire? Tackling your mom to the ground and wrestling a knife out of her hand because she was trying to kill your dad? While my stories may be unique, readers will be able to relate to the broader themes that are part of a normal childhood such as sibling rivalry, eccentric parents, doing stupid things, and frequently preventing one's parents from literally murdering each other.

Although some of the subject matter is not something one would generally laugh at, you have my permission to laugh. Social rules don't apply here; my rules do. It works for me, and who knows, after reading the stories from my past, you might be inspired to see your own screwed up past in a more humorous light.

Some Really Personal, Yet Entertaining Stories From My Life That You Will Enjoy and May Even Find Inspiring by Bo Bennett is available in ebook, paperback, and audio, at 

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