THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | NOVEMBER 2026

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TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL®
9127 S. Jamaica St. #400, Englewood, CO, USA 80112
+1 720-439-5050
toastmasters.org

CONTACTING WORLD HEADQUARTERS

For information on joining or building a club, visit:
toastmasters.org/membership

Article submission:
submissions@toastmasters.org

Letters to the Editor:
letters@toastmasters.org

For general magazine questions:
magazine@toastmasters.org

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Who Are Your Two People?

Get a pen. I want you to write down one name. Ready? Who is the person in Toastmasters who made you better?

I'll go first. Mine is Jennifer.

Jennifer happens to be my wife, and she joined five years before I did. While she was at meetings, I was home on the couch playing video games, perfectly content. Then she needed a guest for guest night. And that is how I got involved: My wife made me. I've told that story to Districts all over the world and it always gets a laugh.

Here is the part I have never told.

Jennifer is the toughest critic I have. When a speech is not ready, she says so. When I do not feel like putting in the work, she calls that out. And she knows exactly how hard to push and when to stop, which is a skill most evaluators spend years trying to learn. She has always done it in private. Almost never in public.

Twenty-one years. I do not think I have ever said it to her plainly.

So, thank you, Jennifer. Out loud. In print. Where you cannot wave it off.

Now, look at the name *you* wrote down. Have you told them?

We assume they know. Then a member moves away, or a club closes, or something worse, and the sentence we never said stays unsaid. It is one sentence. It takes 10 seconds. This month say thanks for what you're given.

Then write a second name: Who in your club right now is where you used to be? Sitting in the back row. Not sure they belong. Not sure they are any good at this. They are waiting for someone to tell them what your person told you.

Be that person.

Be the person who helps their club too. At this year's International Convention, I challenged our District leaders to reach 55 Distinguished Districts. That's more than half of the Districts around the world.

> Who in your club right now is where you used to be?

However, District leaders don't decide to be Distinguished; clubs decide that. So here is my ask of every club: Do not aim for Distinguished. Aim for Smedley Distinguished.

Almost no club gets there. That is the point. Aim that high and even a short landing puts your club exactly where your District needs it to be. This works for you as well. Aim higher than you think you can achieve. You don't need an International President, a Board member, or a District leader to tell you how to be excellent. You need your fellow club members.

Two names. One you owe a thank you. One who is waiting for you.

Let's get to it.

Stefano McGhee, DTM
International President



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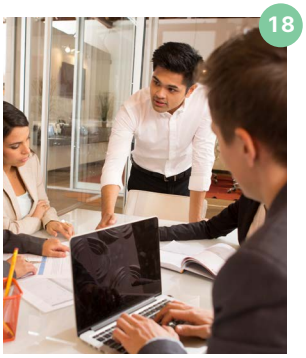
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Snapshot



The **Progressive Toastmasters Club** in Sibu, Sarawak, Malaysia, celebrates the installation of new club officers with a gala dinner and cake cutting.

Traveling *Toastmaster*



Karen Merritt of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, enjoys the centennial edition of the *Toastmaster* magazine during a trip to Naxos, one of the Greek islands.



N Sai Krishna Yadav of Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India, represents Toastmasters while visiting the Abu Simbel Temples in Egypt.

PERSONAL GROWTH

An Attitude of Gratitude

How positive thoughts can transform your life.

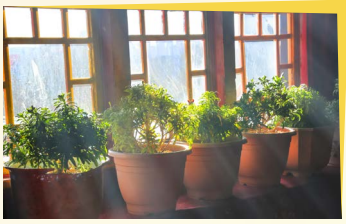
By Lauren Parsons, DTM, AS

Our thoughts are incredibly powerful—in fact, they shape our lives because the way we look at the world determines how we feel. If you think positively, you naturally feel more optimistic, even happier.

The good news is that the key to becoming more positive is as easy as becoming more grateful. Gratitude can boost your happiness and even improve your health. Simply being thankful can take you from pessimistic, depressive thoughts to feelings of happiness, joy, and contentment.

Cultivating a practice of gratitude reprograms the brain to scan the world for the positive rather than the negative. And according to psychologist Shawn Achor, when our brain is optimistic, we are more productive, less stressed, and feel more connected to others.

Interested? Here are four practical ways to embrace an attitude of gratitude today:



Cast grateful thoughts backward and forward.

First thing in the morning, focus on something specific you are thankful for from yesterday and replay it in your mind. Then think ahead to something you are looking forward to today. Pair this practice with a daily task—such as showering, eating breakfast, or brushing your teeth—so you remember to do it.



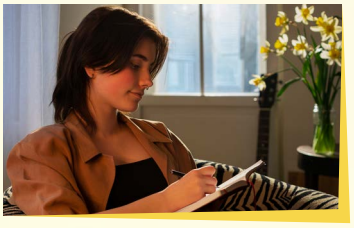
Share grateful words.

Find a time every day to share what you are most grateful for that day—this could be at the dinner table, or with a gratitude partner. Take turns describing in detail the best thing about your day and explaining how it made you feel and why. This allows your brain to replay the scene, and because your brain doesn't distinguish between the real and replayed version, you double your happiness factor.



Say thanks.

Make a point of thanking at least one person every day, whether by email, in a note, in person, or on the phone. You could praise a colleague, your boss, or a family member. Specific immediate feedback is one of the best management tools because people do more of what they are thanked for. Thanking people not only makes their day, it also boosts your own mood.



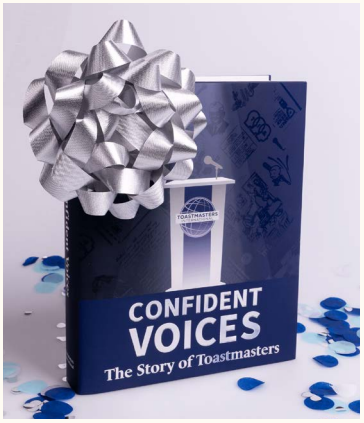
End the day by writing.

Before going to sleep, jot down three to five things you are thankful for. Journaling has a profound effect on happiness because it replays the positives, keeps you focused on what you want, and gives you a reference to look back on, which can be handy in challenging times. Once you start, you will often find that your list is longer than you first imagined!

Adapted from an August 2016 Toastmaster *magazine article.*

TOASTMASTERS NEWS

The Perfect Gift for a Toastmaster!



If you need a gift idea, consider *Confident Voices: The Story of Toastmasters*. This beautifully designed coffee table book describes and illustrates the first century of Toastmasters International. Learn how founder Dr. Ralph C. Smedley took the simple concept of learning by doing and grew a single club into a global communication powerhouse. His visionary idea has now helped millions of individuals develop speaking skills and grow self-confidence.

The book features 454 pages, 500+ images, vintage *Toastmaster* magazine images, a matte hardcover, a ribbon bookmark, and more.

Order your copy from the Toastmasters Online Store today.

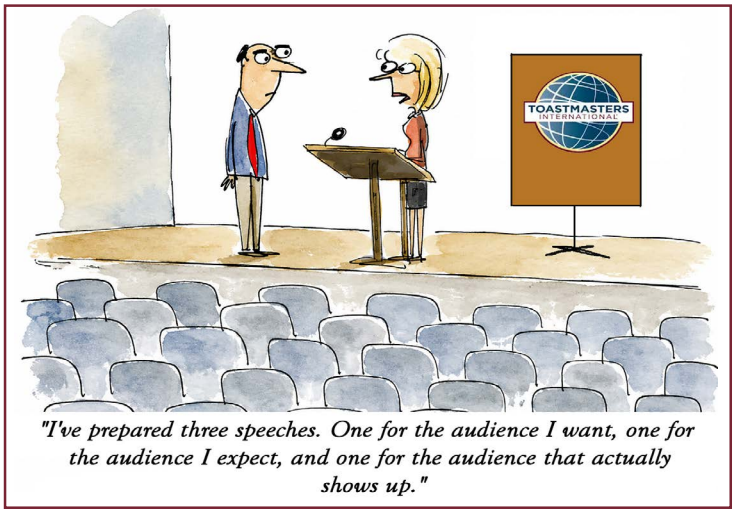
TABLE TOPICS

World Kindness Day Table Topics Questions

Every year November 13 is labeled World Kindness Day as a global reminder to be kind to everyone. You can participate by stopping to give a compliment to a stranger, lending a helping hand, or simply listening to a friend who has a problem. Inspire your fellow club members to share kindness in their lives with these Table Topics® questions.

- Who is the kindest person you've ever met, and what made them memorable?
- What act of kindness are you most proud of?
- When was the last time you complimented someone and what was the compliment?
- Tell us about an act of kindness you witnessed that has stayed with you.
- What is the best compliment you could receive?
- What should people say or do more often to show kindness?
- What is one act of kindness anyone could perform at a club meeting?
- Explain why it is important to be kind.
- How can Toastmasters make people feel welcome and included?
- Is it harder to be kind to others or to yourself?

CARTOON



"I've prepared three speeches. One for the audience I want, one for the audience I expect, and one for the audience that actually shows up."

Illustration by Jerry King

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Gratitude is the healthiest of all human emotions. The more you express gratitude for what you have, the more likely you will have even more to express gratitude for."

—Zig Ziglar, American author, salesman, and speaker



Finding My Voice as an Educational Leader

How two Toastmasters clubs transformed my confidence.

By Wendy Downey

In 2021, after spending 21 years as a high school social studies teacher, I transitioned into a central office role in my school district. With this role came new responsibilities—and intimidating public speaking opportunities. I was required to regularly speak in front of school teams, including teachers who worked for my programs, fellow members of the central office leadership team, and, once, the school nurses.

Thinking back to the presentation for the nurses still makes me cringe with embarrassment. I watched other leaders speak confidently and wanted to do the same. However, my presentations were full of filler words, awkward pauses, and a lack of focus. Regardless of my preparation, I could not get the results I wanted, and I was frustrated with myself.

In February 2024, I experienced a profound loss with the death of my sister. For months afterward I thought about the fragility of life. Were there things I wanted to do but kept putting off? The answer was yes. Even though my public speaking had improved, I still had room for further growth. With the support of my family, I found a local Toastmasters club.

Northern Piedmont Toastmasters in Warrenton, Virginia, was small but incredibly supportive. The meetings were a bright spot on my calendar and a place to focus on my learning. As a result, my confidence and skills grew. It was comforting having a place to discuss how nervous or awkward public speaking could be and having the support of every person in the room who was also improving themselves.

Within six months I was elected Vice President Public Relations and started the club's first LinkedIn and Instagram accounts. I wanted everyone to know the skills and confidence the club was providing me were available to anyone who wanted to pursue their own learning path.

One club member and Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM) was incredibly knowledgeable and supportive. She was a master of evaluations, able to articulate both micro and macro points for improvement. She taught me how to pause and breathe when I had the urge to use a filler word. She also taught me about the power of structuring my speech around three key points to engage the audience. Her feedback was critical to my ability to build upon the strengths of each speech, identify areas of growth, and reach mastery.

After a few months, she inspired me to look for additional ways to grow in Toastmasters, and I began researching the DTM designation. It was a lofty goal and a serious commitment, but one I wanted to pursue.

In August 2025, I joined Hear Me Roar, an online and women-focused club. By joining an additional club, I improved faster and began to achieve the requirements necessary to earn the DTM designation. Plus, speaking in an online forum requires different skills from speaking in person. This club also has an incredible DTM who helped guide me through the uniqueness of online speeches.

My Toastmasters experience spilled over into my job as well. I became more comfortable presenting to large groups, speaking in front of division leadership, facilitating difficult conversations, and representing my programs with confidence. The techniques I learned through Toastmasters—impromptu speaking, reducing filler words, and delivering with purpose—have become essential tools in my daily work as an educational leader.

Joining two Toastmasters clubs has accelerated my growth in ways I never expected. I've grown into a stronger communicator and a more intentional leader. I've joined the boards of two local nonprofits and have taken on leadership roles, which allows me to speak on behalf of each organization and lead fundraising training. Additionally, I recently took on the Area Director role. As I continue working toward my DTM goal, I know each meeting, each speech, and each role brings me one step closer to the speaker and person I want to become.

Wendy Downey *is an educator, Toastmaster, and community leader who is passionate about helping others find their voice and grow as leaders. She serves in leadership roles within Toastmasters and several community organizations and enjoys mentoring, public speaking, and creating opportunities for others to succeed.*

Beyond SPREADSHEETS

Why accounting professionals need Toastmasters.

By Wendie Swirski, DTM



When most people think of accounting professionals, they picture spreadsheets, calculators, and long hours spent analyzing numbers. What they often overlook is one of the most important skills an accountant can possess: the ability to communicate clearly and confidently.

After more than 30 years as an expense analyst, I learned that numbers alone rarely inspire action. Data matters, but how you present that data can determine whether your message is understood, remembered, or ignored altogether.

Every month, I delivered financial presentations to senior leadership teams. The reports included expense summaries, projections, budget variances, and performance analysis. While the information was important, many of the people in the room did not have accounting backgrounds. They depended on me to translate complex financial information into something meaningful and actionable.

Over time, I realized that even the best analysis can lose impact if it is delivered without clarity, confidence, or connection. That realization led me to Toastmasters.

Toastmasters helps accounting and finance professionals develop skills valuable at every level of a career, including:

- Speaking confidently in meetings and presentations
- Explaining technical information to non-financial audiences
- Thinking quickly when answering difficult questions
- Leading discussions with professionalism

After I joined in 2008, I learned week by week how to organize ideas more effectively, speak with greater confidence, and engage an audience instead of simply presenting information to them.

Through Toastmasters, I discovered how storytelling, relatable examples, and clear language could transform a financial presentation. Instead of overwhelming audiences with numbers, I learned how to guide them through the meaning behind the data.

I remember one moment that deeply affirmed that growth. After I presented a cost/benefit analysis regarding purchasing new corporate software, a media communications expert pulled me aside and said he had listened to years of accounting presentations and I was one of the few people who could make obscure analysis comparisons clear and easy to understand.

That comment stayed with me. It reminded me that effective communication is not about sounding impressive—it is about helping people truly understand what matters.

The change was remarkable. I realized I had value and was making an impact. The executive leaders in my company were actually listening to me. I didn't have to repeat myself, and discussions became more collaborative.

Most importantly, I gained confidence in my ability to communicate under pressure and explain difficult concepts—like unfavorable budget variances—in ways others could easily grasp.

Toastmasters also helped me develop leadership, listening, and relationship-building skills. For accounting professionals used to working quietly behind the scenes, Toastmasters can become a powerful catalyst for growth.

In today's business world, technical expertise alone is no longer enough. Strong technical abilities may open doors, but the ability to communicate with clarity and confidence—whether leading a client meeting or recommending cost-saving initiatives—often determines how far a career can grow. Organizations need professionals who can not only analyze information, but who can also communicate vision and inspire action.

Accounting professionals are often responsible for delivering information that influences major business decisions, yet many receive little formal training in public speaking or leadership communication. If you work in accounting, finance, or analytics and want to strengthen your professional presence, joining Toastmasters may be one of the best career investments you can make.

You may arrive hoping to improve your presentations. You may leave having discovered your voice.

Wendie Swirski, DTM, *is a member of Heart of the Rockies Toastmasters, an online club, and MVP Advanced, a hybrid club in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. She retired in 2024 after a long career as an accountant.*

Leading With STYLE!

Embrace and adapt your leadership style when working with others.

By Craig Harrison, DTM

You've got style! More than one, in fact. Consider how you walk, talk, dress, work, and play. You have styles for each.

And then, there is your leadership style. Every leader has a style. Yours is unique, but it still falls into a recognizable category of attributes.

It's liberating to learn there is no one right way to lead. You may be visionary and inspirational, or practical and detail focused. Maybe you follow proven paths, or maybe you prefer innovating. Some people seek consensus, others drive performance through strategy and coaching. The question is, *how* do you lead?

Uncovering Your Leadership Style

Do you know your leadership style? "Ask yourself: *Why do I want to be a leader?*" suggests Marilyn Manning, Ph.D., founder of The Consulting Team. "You have to know your own style, values, and belief system," she explains. "Once aware of your own motivations and style, you have fewer blind spots and can better manage challenging situations."

Toastmasters' Pathways learning experience highlights eight leadership styles: bureaucratic, authoritative, innovative, pacesetting, democratic, affiliative, coaching, and altruistic. Each of us has a natural leadership style that fits best into one of these eight styles. That's your core or default style. As you read about the eight styles, note which most resonates with you.



8 LEADERSHIP STYLES

BUREAUCRATIC: Do you establish and enforce rules and help create clear divisions of labor? Is your leadership approach top-down, and team culture hierarchical? Do you emphasize compliance and accountability? Some will welcome your clarity and decisiveness.

AUTHORITATIVE: You confidently chart a long-term course for your team, inspiring enthusiasm for your shared mission. During times of change your steady style deftly guides your team. Clubs that are rebuilding often benefit from this style, which returns the club to productivity and vibrancy.

INNOVATIVE: Are you a visionary leader? Do you inspire and galvanize your team to boldly go in a new or different direction, encouraging others to innovate together? Creativity flourishes when innovation is embraced. By valuing others, your team creates an exciting approach to success.

PACESETTING: In settings requiring big changes, turnarounds, or high achievement, you rally others to move mountains or turn around underperforming teams. Productivity and accountability are emphasized in this accelerated environment where the team or club emulates your approach to achieve success.

DEMOCRATIC:
Are you a consensus-builder? Do you emphasize communication and collaboration among your team? By doing so, you motivate others to participate. Your democratic style assures everyone has a seat at the table and a say in the organization's or club's direction, increasing unity and cooperation.

AFFILIATIVE:
If you put people first, are collaborative, and focus on your teammates' emotional needs, your style is affiliative. You create positive personal relationships and tend to avoid conflicts. Depending on the leader you are following or club culture you're inheriting, this focus may bring healing, relief, or a renewal of commitment when you shine the spotlight on members' needs.

COACHING:
Like a strong educator, you prepare your team by building their confidence and competence, teaching skills, providing positive feedback, and often working one-on-one to help team members reach their full potential.

ALTRUISTIC:
You are committed to personalizing your approach with an altruistic style. Do you motivate others using an empowering, ethical approach? Do you derive purpose by focusing on each teammate's fulfillment? If so, your core leadership style as a servant leader is altruistic.

If you still aren't sure of your leadership style as it relates to these eight archetypes, the Pathways Level 2 project Understanding Your Leadership Style includes a survey to help you identify your style. Results may surprise you, or confirm your initial thoughts, as well as clarify what skills to sharpen, such as delegation or patience.

Embracing Situational Leadership

It's ineffective to force your leadership style on others—doing so can lead to resistance and resentment. Successful leaders embrace situational leadership, recognizing differing styles in situations—from high-stakes negotiations to leading a new leadership team, from engaging in tense budget meetings to addressing conflicts.

"Effective leaders should be multidimensional, adapting their core style based on the individuals and the situations, rather than relying on a single leadership style," asserts Karen Snyder, a trainer, facilitator, and coach for Concordia Consulting. "You will need to tailor your style to the person and situation you are managing."

In his third year in Toastmasters, future two-time District Director Bill Meyn, DTM, learned an important leadership lesson. As a new Area leader in Southern California, he visited a club whose statistics showed no educational accomplishments.

With an admittedly bureaucratic style, Meyn quoted policy and insisted all speeches should come from Toastmasters manuals. When members asked whether non-manual speeches were ever acceptable, he firmly answered, "No, you should never do that!" Club members quickly tuned him out.

Decades later, Meyn recognizes, "I could have taken a softer approach for better results." Factoring in the people and situation in his approach to this club's members and skill-building would have made everyone more amenable to working together.

Teams are full of people with different leadership styles. And that's a good thing. Learn to recognize other styles and shift yours when necessary for the most success.

"The best teams are the ones that are complementary, not similar in style," says Allison Tabor, author of *Work Your Assets Off: Stop Working So Hard in Business and in Life.* She cautions, "While you may be drawn to others who share your style, such teams can be one-dimensional, and accentuate biases of that style."

Presentation coach Michael Chojnacki, DTM, models the qualities of an affiliative leader. Drawing on his Aikido training, he helps clients foster teamwork and cohesion through positive relationships. At Surf City Advanced Toastmasters in Scotts Valley, California, Chojnacki practiced the Platinum Rule—treat others as they want to be treated—to strengthen trust among club members. He adjusted his language, pacing, and physical presence to help *others* feel comfortable and understood.

Chojnacki's methods demonstrate that trust and rapport flourish when leaders genuinely care about their teammates and communicate with empathy. Trust blooms when you truly care for your teammates, regardless of their differing leadership styles.

An easy way to understand your teammates' styles is simply to ask. At the beginning of your club officer term or when your project kicks off, share your style and ask others what theirs are. Keep those styles in mind as you work together in times of both calm and stress.

Your self-management, social skills, and empathy are invaluable in gleaning the essence of those you are partnering with. Observe their body language, speaking style, pacing, and vocabulary. You will learn far more from listening and observing than by speaking. Asking open-ended questions like "What do you think?" or "What ideas do you have about accomplishing this objective?" and listening intently will open others up and build rapport and trust.

You've taken the lead in understanding your style as a leader and embracing the styles of others for the benefit of shared goals. Allow me to lead the applause for you, a leader of style!

Craig Harrison, DTM, *is a past District Director, professional speaker, and servant leader who found adapting his style to others was a force magnifier for him in multiple aspects of his life.*

Read the Room While You Speak

Five ways to assess your audience's reaction and adjust before you lose them.

By Pamela Meyer



Piranhas. That's what the audience at Philadelphia's Laff House Comedy Club must have felt like one Tuesday night in 2006.

Comic after comic walked onstage and got destroyed. Hecklers shouted insults. Dollar bills flew and drinks followed. From the back of the room, a young Kevin Hart, who would later achieve fame as an actor and comedian, watched an established local comic bomb and realized he would soon have to face the same crowd.

When Hart finally took the microphone, he saw what had been going wrong all night. The other comedians had been trying too hard to get the audience on their side, and the crowd could feel it. The harder the comics tried, the more the crowd attacked them.

So, Hart abandoned the battle.

"This has been weird all night, guys," he told them. Instead of trying to power through his set as planned, Hart talked about what was happening right there in the room. He described watching the crowd tear into the other comics and admitted he was scared. When he did, a few reluctant laughs started to come through, and the mood in the room began to shift.

Hart later described the difference simply: He was speaking *to* the audience, not *at* them. It wasn't his funniest set, but it worked and at the end of the night he was the only comedian who made it offstage without being humiliated.

Every speaker prepares speeches, but great speakers are also prepared to change them based on audience engagement. Reading an audience well requires noticing patterns, especially when those patterns change.

Here are five places to start.

1 Establish the room's baseline. Before you start speaking, take in the room. How quickly do people settle down and take their seats? Are they focused on you, or still talking among themselves? A baseline vibe provides a reliable reference point for noticing changes later.

Maybe the audience starts out making steady eye contact and looking relaxed. Then, five minutes into a more technical section, several people look down at their phones.

Make sure you notice these changes and are prepared to respond if the room feels as if it's contracting.

2 Read the crowd, not the individual. One audience member yawning can shake a nervous speaker's confidence, but try not to read too much into it. Look for clusters of behavior from the whole group instead.

If one person checks their phone, just keep going—it's an isolated incident. If a group of people do it within a minute, it's time to pay attention. If someone looks confused, it could just be that they missed something, but if an entire section of the audience starts furrowing brows or looking at the slide and then at one another, your explanation may need work.

3 When attention drops, change the pattern. Once you notice a shift in the audience's behavior, such as people looking down, shifting in their seats, or whispering to one another, resist the temptation to simply talk faster. Change something more significant; move deliberately to another part of the stage. Research on presentations suggests that changing your physical position when attention is slipping can help bring audience members back, provided you move with purpose rather than pace nervously.

You can also change the audience's role.

Ask for a show of hands. Give them a question to consider. Ask them to picture themselves in the situation you're describing. Techniques like polling, reflection, and imagination exercises are excellent ways to break up a monologue and sustain attention.

> Every speaker prepares speeches, but great speakers are also prepared to change them.

Changing the pattern is a crucial public speaking device that re-engages a flat room. We underestimate how useful it is to have engagement tactics ready to offer up.

4 Use your voice and gestures to hold attention. Your audience responds to both what you say and how you say it.

If the room starts to flatten, listen to your own delivery. Has your voice settled into the same pitch and volume? Have your gestures disappeared, or become repetitive?

Skilled speakers vary their pitch and volume throughout a presentation rather than staying in one vocal register. Timing matters, too. Gestures are most useful when they arrive just before or at the same time as the words you want to emphasize. When gestures lag behind the words, audiences remember less.

So, if you notice attention beginning to drift, don't automatically try to add more content. Instead, change the delivery, put more emphasis into the sentence that matters, vary your volume, let a gesture underline the point.

5 Keep a story in your back pocket. Facts may support your message, but they don't always hold the room.

As many speaking experts have noted, stories are more memorable than statistics. Yet when attention starts to fade, speakers often respond with another number, another chart, or another explanation.

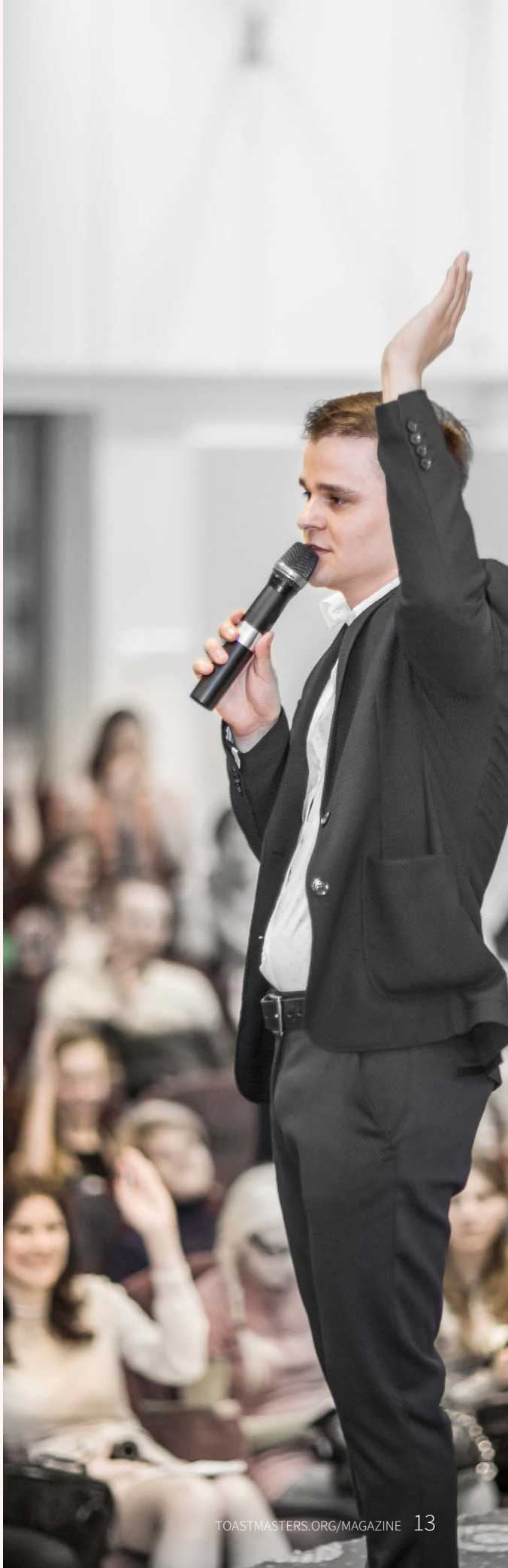
Prepare for that moment before you step onstage. Keep one or two short stories in your back pocket that illustrate the point you want to make.

Then watch the room. Give the audience a human experience to attach to.

Kevin Hart survived the Laff House because he noticed that the performance all the comics had prepared for was failing, and he changed his.

That is the peculiar challenge of public speaking. Hundreds of eyes may be watching you, but you still have to watch back.

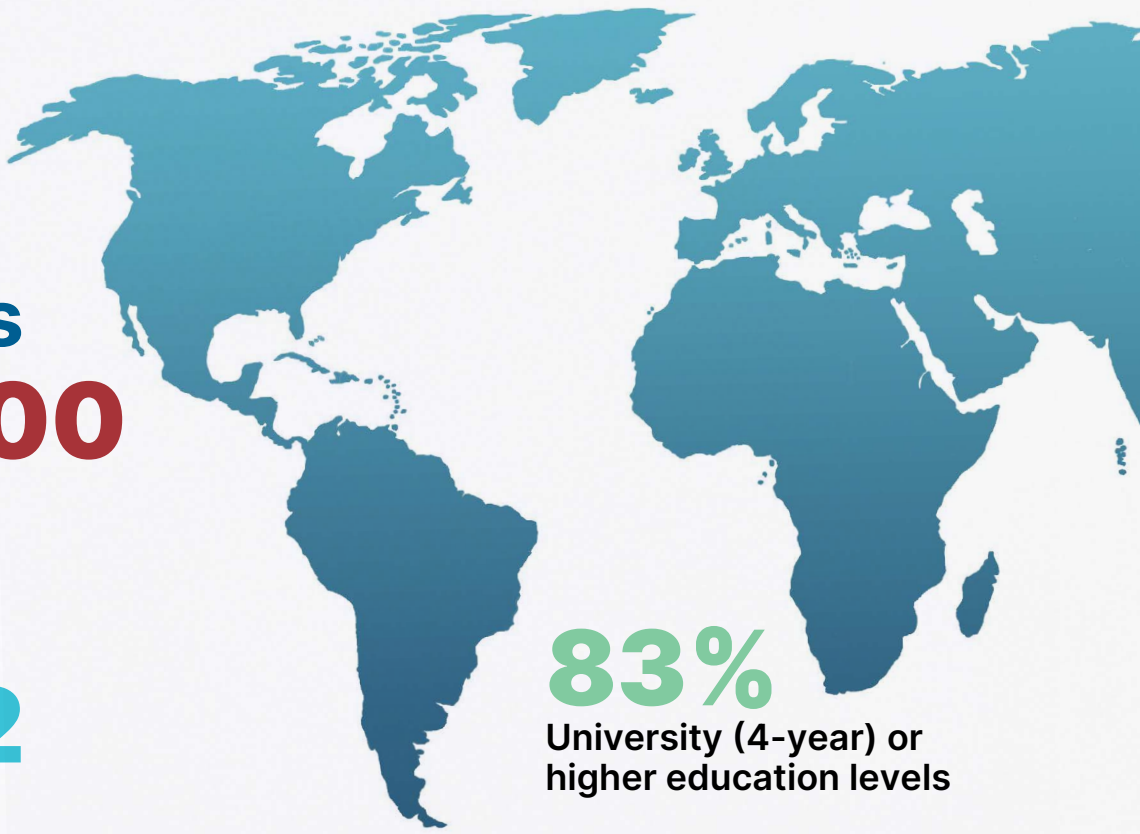
Pamela Meyer *is the author of* How to Read the Room. *Her TED Talk "How to Spot a Liar" has been viewed more than 30 million times. A leading speaker and expert on deception detection, she is CEO of a Washington, D.C.-based firm that trains executives and institutional leaders in information elicitation and insider threat mitigation. She also teaches a Masterclass on identifying deception. Visit* pamelameyer.com *to learn more.*



Toastmasters by the NUMBERS

Dive into fascinating FACTS about our members, our clubs, and our journeys.

Discover more about the Toastmasters community! Here are some highlights from recent research gathered by the World Headquarters Research and Analysis Team. To learn more, visit the Statistics and Data Hub on the Toastmasters website.



Members
265,000

Clubs
14,282

83%
University (4-year) or higher education levels

New Clubs
932
(2025–2026)

Global Reach

54% Clubs outside of North America

150 Countries

Who are Toastmasters?

Members

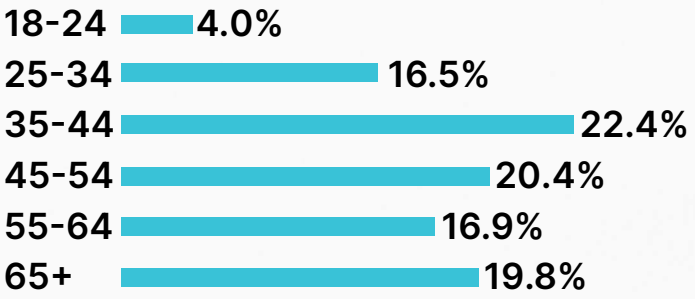
49.08

Average age

55.9%

Identify as female

Age of our Members





Clubs

18.1 Average club size

3.3 years

Average member tenure

48.1%

Clubs are Distinguished

13.9% Smedley Distinguished

Pathways

109,200

Paths started in 2025–2026

43.8%

Presentation Mastery path

(the most popular path for members in Pathways)

Why people join.

Top 4 reasons people join Toastmasters

1. Build confidence for public speaking
2. Become a more effective speaker
3. Improve presentation skills
4. Professional goals

Real progress. Real results.

85% Improved public speaking
Alumni

93% Would recommend Toastmasters
Alumni

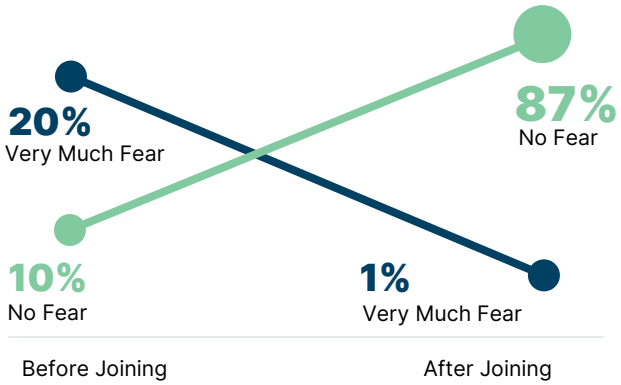
72% Achieved their primary goal
Members

52% Are halfway or more toward their goal
Members still pursuing goals



From stage fright to confidence.

Members report a dramatic shift in their fear of public speaking after joining Toastmasters.



No Fear

Very Much Fear

87%
report no fear after joining
compared with 10% before joining

What people gain.

Supportive Community

90% of people surveyed feel their club provides them with new social connections

92% say their club helps them feel part of a larger community

85% say their club makes them feel valued

More fun facts

Europe + Africa

Fastest regional growth in the past year

Global Languages

73%
English primary/ secondary

38.9%
Multilingual

6
Pathways Languages

English
Arabic
French
German
Simplified Chinese
Spanish

1,629
2026 Convention Registrants

77
Countries Represented
at the 2026 International Convention

17
Years of *The Toastmasters Podcast*

97
International Presidents Since 1924





From Club Evaluator to a Coaching Career

Taking that step means broadening your scope and your skills.

By Diane Windingland, DTM

After I won a District Evaluation Contest one year, another Toastmaster told me, "You'd make a great coach." Maybe you've heard some version of that yourself after giving a strong evaluation. On the surface, it makes sense. Good evaluators listen closely, notice patterns, and help speakers improve. Those are coach-like skills.

But becoming a coach involves more than giving strong feedback. It means moving beyond a one-time response into an ongoing development process and, in many cases, into a business. Meera Manek, a Kenyan-born public speaking coach based in the Los Angeles area, says Toastmasters can be like "the gym," while a coach offers more specialized, individualized support like a personal trainer.

So, can Toastmasters prepare you to become a coach? Yes, in important ways. But an even bigger question may be whether you want the broader role that coaching requires.

What Speech Evaluators Learn

Toastmasters evaluators develop several skills that translate well to coaching: listening carefully, spotting patterns, tailoring feedback to the speaker, and offering suggestions designed to help someone improve.

Career coach Jennifer L. Blanck, DTM, a longtime Toastmaster, says membership helped her in several ways. It gave her speaking and evaluation experience, a safe place to try new things, and examples she could later draw on in coaching conversations.

> For many coaches, the reward is not just helping someone perform better, but watching something click.

For me, years of giving Toastmasters evaluations sharpened my ability to listen carefully and spot common public-speaking pitfalls, such as fleeting eye contact, filler words, distracting gestures, and information overload. Learning to recognize those patterns quickly strengthened one of my most important coaching skills: observation.

Public speaking coach Manek says it was the evaluation portion of Toastmasters that helped her realize she could take a speech "to another level," a realization that eventually led her toward more formal study and professional coaching work.

Evaluation vs. Coaching

A speech evaluation typically addresses a single performance. Coaching, by contrast, often unfolds over time and is shaped around a client's larger goals.

Career coach Blanck, a member of AAMC Toastmasters in Washington, D.C., draws a useful distinction between advising and coaching. Advising often means offering specific recommendations. Coaching, she says, involves more listening and strategic questioning, with the goal of helping clients uncover answers for themselves.

That distinction matters. A speech evaluator may tell a speaker what worked, what did not, and what to try next. A coach may help that same person clarify goals, work through internal blocks, and build toward a larger outcome.

For example, one corporate client hired me to coach four consultants in client-facing presentation skills. Over four weeks, they practiced, received

individualized feedback, and revised both their messages and delivery. One consultant initially focused heavily on features and process. Through coaching, he reframed the presentation around the client's business problem, potential return on investment, and the decision the client needed to make. We also strengthened his opening and practiced responses to likely questions.

By the final session, he had moved from presenting information to communicating business value—a shift that illustrates why coaching is more than a one-time evaluation.

Breakthrough coach Allen Ang Boon Kiat, DTM, third-place winner of the 2025 World Championship of Public Speaking and a member of The Brunei Speakers' Club in Brunei, emphasizes the importance of asking direct questions such as "What's not working?" He also notes the challenge of balancing kindness with the courage to give honest feedback.



What Does It Take to Become a Coach?

For Toastmasters who are considering coaching, the shift is not only about skill. It is also about structure.

A coach may need to choose a niche, define an offer, develop a process, build credibility, set fees, and find clients. In some cases, that also means deciding whether to work independently, contract through another organization, coach inside a company, or combine coaching with workshops, speaking, or training.

Some coaches pursue certification, but it is not always necessary. Certification can add training, credibility, and differentiation. The International Coaching Federation is one of the best-known credentialing organizations.

Manek's work shows what one communication-coaching niche can look like. She helps clients prepare for high-stakes speaking moments, from media interviews and award speeches to fundraising events and presentations, often guiding them before, during, and after the event itself.

But even with a clear niche, building a coaching practice can be challenging. Presentation coach Rich Hopkins, DTM, third-place winner of the 2006 World Championship and a member of Solar Speak Club in Broomfield, Colorado, is blunt about the hardest part: finding enough clients to go full time. He describes a crowded field, the challenge of clarifying whom you help, and the difficulty of attracting paying clients if you are known primarily through Toastmasters. His advice on pricing



was equally direct: "Charge more—the less they buy in, the less they buy in." Higher investment often brings stronger commitment.

My own path reflects that reality. I started by offering free coaching to fellow Toastmasters to gain experience and testimonials. Over time, I began charging and expanded beyond Toastmasters as I built marketing assets and systems—videos, a website, social media, a blog, a newsletter, and workshops—while learning how to market my services and track clients and opportunities.

The pandemic in 2020 also pushed me fully online, changing both how I delivered coaching and how I ran the business.

> Presentation coach Rich Hopkins, DTM, is blunt about the hardest part [of coaching]: finding enough clients to go full time.



Coaching Paths Beyond Communication

Communication coaching may be the clearest path for many Toastmasters, but it is not the only one. Members may also move into career coaching, leadership coaching, executive presence coaching, interview coaching, life coaching, health coaching, or other people-development roles.

For example, career coach Blanck focuses on job searches, interviewing, career transitions, and values-based decisions. Breakthrough coach Ang describes his work as more focused on people development, soft skills, productivity, and team effectiveness.

But the further a coaching field moves from communication itself, the more likely it is to require additional expertise, training, or domain knowledge beyond what Toastmasters alone can provide.

The Skills Toastmasters Does Not Teach

Toastmasters provides a strong foundation, but not everything a coach needs.

Blanck emphasizes that strategic questioning is essential in coaching, especially when helping clients identify blocks and go deeper without overwhelming them. She also notes that for solo coaches, business development, accounting, and marketing become part of the job.

Hopkins makes a similar point from a different angle. He says sales, outreach, and clear messaging are crucial for anyone who wants to build a coaching business.

I found that to be true in my own work. One of the biggest skills I had to learn was how to have a sales conversation—asking questions to uncover the real need, then positioning my coaching as a solution. Toastmasters had helped me become more comfortable speaking and evaluating, but it had not taught me how to convert interest into paying clients.

BUILD

Should You Become a Coach?

Coaching can be deeply meaningful work. It allows you to support a client's growth in a direct, individualized way and see them develop confidence, clarity, and results. For many coaches, the reward is not just helping someone perform better, but watching something click—seeing clients become empowered or experience what Ang calls a "light bulb moment."

But coaching also asks a great deal. Ang describes one of the less obvious shifts: Coaching means stepping out of the spotlight and putting the client there instead. For Toastmasters who love speaking, performing, or leading from the front of the room, that can be a bigger adjustment than expected.

Hopkins adds that building a coaching business takes patience, outreach, and business development.

Toastmasters can absolutely help members develop coaching skills. Evaluation, listening, questioning, observation, and encouragement all carry over. But becoming a coach requires more than becoming an excellent speech evaluator. It calls for a broader role and, often, additional skills, training, and business awareness.

For some Toastmasters, that path will be a natural next step. For others, the better choice may be to use coaching skills inside Toastmasters, at work, or in leadership roles without turning them into a profession.

The real question may not be simply, "Could I become a coach?" It may be, "Do I want everything that role requires?"

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



The **Audience-Speaker** Connection

The listener is just as crucial to the success of a speech as the speaker.

By Kate McClare, DTM

Carolyn Stein, DTM, will never forget the audience member who saved her speech.

"I was talking about a rather serious subject, and the group in the next room was laughing about something and being very loud, which was interfering with my speech," says Stein, an author and international speaker and a member of North Miami Beach Toastmasters Club in Florida. "Somebody in my audience went to their room and asked them to be quiet, and they did. That said everything, and I've never forgotten it."

As speakers, we're trained to put the audience at the forefront of everything we do. *Your speech isn't really about you; it's about the audience. Talk about things they care about. Craft your message with their needs in mind. Hook them in the first few seconds or they won't listen at all.*

But what about the audience themselves? Don't *they* have some responsibility?

They do—to the speaker and to each other. Ask anyone trying to deliver their message while people are texting in the front row. Ask anyone trying to focus on the speaker while people are chattering in the seats behind them.

But don't just ask them—ask science.

Crucial Connections

Researchers have found strong connections between audiences and speakers. For example, one study in 2026 compared the effects of supportive and unsupportive audiences. "The unsupportive audience elicited greater negative affect [sic], arousal, and anxiety [in the speaker], and . . . decreased the speaking rate," the authors wrote. Another study from the same year found that smartphone-related interruptions can alter the dynamics of a performance.

> You can encourage a nervous speaker by smiling and nodding to reassure them that their message is getting through.

Researchers have also identified clear two-way communication between audience and performer. They looked at posture changes, fidgeting, scratching, adjusting glasses, and other small movements as possible indicators of engagement. They discussed how attentive posture, facial reactions, and appropriate laughter can provide crucial feedback to the person performing.

Other studies have looked at how audiences affect each other and how that behavior is felt by the speakers. One, in 2013, found that a person's likelihood of beginning to applaud increased as more people around them started clapping.

Science also tells us that being a supportive audience member can enhance other audience members' experience. A 2020 Scientific Reports study measured people attending live theatrical performances and found "physiological synchronization" among spectators. Their cardiac synchronization—similar heart rate patterns—was associated with convergence in their emotional evaluation of the performance. The researchers concluded that simply being with other people sharing an experience can produce spontaneous synchronization.

No Bad Audiences

Stein, the Florida Toastmaster, knows from personal experience that audience behavior is crucial to the success of a speech. "I've had bad audiences and I've been a bad audience," she says. "You get bored, so you start chatting with the person next to you or you start checking your cellphone." She has coped with belligerent people and those who couldn't wait to raise their hand and disagree with something she said.

But she doesn't blame those people. "I will not label a whole audience as 'bad,' except one—and that was my fault." She didn't fully research the group she had



been hired to speak to, and the material she presented was of no interest to them.

She tries not to react to misbehavior, unless she can use humor. "When a cellphone rings in the middle of my speech, I'll say something like 'That must be the president calling me again.'"

Sometimes, being a good audience means more than turning off your cellphone and saving the chit-chat for after the show. If there's a tech delay, be patient; the speaker is probably more stressed out than you are. You can encourage a nervous speaker by smiling and nodding to reassure them that their message is getting through. Stein is also grateful to the person who brought extra chairs to her overcrowded room without being asked.

Don't hold back laughter and applause, as long as they're genuine. I'm still smarting from my decidedly unfunny performance at a Humorous Speech Contest. I had "killed it" at the club and Area rounds, but when I brought the same speech to the Division level—crickets. If someone had given me "pity laughter," I would have felt even worse.

More Audience Tips

Although every speech and performance is different, you should always aim to be a good audience member. Luckily, there are a few simple tips every listener can use to show their support to the speaker.

If You're in the Room

- **Pay attention, and show that you are.** Respond to the speaker by smiling, nodding, or giving other signals that their message is getting through.

- **Sit up straight.** Nothing says "You're boring me" like slumping in your chair or hunching over your table or desk with your chin propped in your hands. You may like the speech, but the speaker sees your body language and thinks they've lost you.

- **Put away your phone.** Keep it on silent, vibrate, or, better yet, Do Not Disturb. Social media and email can wait; wouldn't you like a break from them anyway?

If You're Online

- **Keep your camera on.** Unless the host has asked attendees to turn theirs off, or you have an extenuating circumstance, let the speaker see who's out there. Adjust your lighting so you're actually visible. However . . .

- **Keep personal actions out of sight and hearing.** Do you have to eat lunch or dinner during the meeting? Okay, but turn off your camera. And mute your microphone—we don't want to hear you munching away, either.

- **Keep your microphone off.** This is especially important if there's noise in your room that can interrupt the speaker. Minor noises aren't usually a problem in a live meeting room, but they're magnified online—and can cause you to suddenly pop up as if you're the speaker. (That goes for any issues within microphone range.)

Where Supportive Audiences Are Made

Toastmasters' main mission is building better speakers, but you've probably found yourself becoming a better audience member too. Serving as a speech evaluator or in one of the typical meeting's functionary roles, like Ah-Counter or grammarian, trains you to listen and offer constructive feedback. Some clubs even assign a Body Language Monitor meeting role to assess audience members along with the speakers. Is anyone slumped over their table, or mostly making eye contact with their cellphone?

Being a speaker yourself also makes you a more supportive audience member. Once you've seen the view from onstage, you can't help but empathize with those who brave nerves and fears to stand up and speak.

Kate McClare, DTM, *has been a member of Toastmasters International since 2011. She is a member of three Florida clubs: Art of Speaking Toastmasters, Broward College Toastmasters Chapter, and Miami Advanced Toastmasters Club.*



A New View From the Judge's Chair

Stretch your skills and discover the benefits you can gain as a speech contest judge.

By Diane Windingland, DTM

You may have watched dozens of Toastmasters speech contests, enjoying the stories, humor, and polished deliveries. But the experience changes when someone hands you a ballot and asks you to help determine the official results.

Now you are listening with a different purpose, weighing structure, language, delivery, audience connection, and effectiveness. You are responsible for applying the contest criteria fairly rather than simply rewarding the speech you liked best.

That responsibility can feel intimidating. It can also become a valuable learning experience in your Toastmasters journey.

What Does a Judge Actually Do?

A voting judge listens to every contestant, applies the criteria on the ballot for that contest, and ranks the contestants first, second, and third. Official Toastmasters speech contests include International, Evaluation, Humorous, Table Topics®, Tall Tales, and Online.

Just before the contest, the chief judge briefs judges and provides the ballot and Judge's Certification of Eligibility and Code of Ethics. Judges are also encouraged to view the online Speech Contest training videos on the Toastmasters website in advance. During the contest, judges have one minute between speeches to mark their ballots. You are not simply watching; you are listening with accountability.

And don't be intimidated, thinking you need a lot of prior experience. At the club level, you need only be a paid member. Higher levels have additional requirements. To judge an International Speech Contest Quarterfinal, Semifinal, or the World Championship of Public Speaking®, you must have completed a Pathways path and have previously judged at the Area level or higher.

> "Judge the speech you heard, not the speech you would have given."
>
> —Eleos Theofilus

Learn to Listen Differently

Eleos Theofilus of World Travelers Toastmasters Club, an online club based in Singapore, recalls judging two speakers who drew very different audience reactions. One was animated and sparked laughter; the other was quieter. Theofilus initially favored the more energetic speaker, but applying the criteria led him to a different conclusion. His takeaway: "Applause is feedback, but it is not the scorecard."

Roger Caesar, DTM, of Raising Champions Advanced Toastmasters in Brampton, Ontario, Canada, and Alexandre Matte, DTM, of Voix du Nord in Sudbury, Ontario, Canada, both former top-three winners in the World Championship of Public Speaking, describe a similar shift. Caesar learned to flip into a more analytical "judge mode" rather than simply experience a speech as an audience member. Matte similarly adjusts his mindset depending on whether he is listening as an audience member, coach, or judge.

Discover What Makes Speeches Work

Judging gives you a concentrated opportunity to compare speakers who may all be effective in very different ways. That comparison can sharpen your speechwriting.

Alex Llerena, DTM, of Team Entrepreneur Toastmasters in Weston, Florida, says, "A speech may be well organized, but it becomes memorable when the structure, words, voice, and emotion all support the same purpose."



Mark Reynolds, DTM, of the Aldinga Toastmasters Club in South Australia, says, "Understanding judging criteria helps me to understand what components are important to creating a well-structured speech."

Caesar and Matte came to the criteria from different directions as contestants. Caesar studied the expectations closely so he understood what judges were evaluating. Matte eventually shifted away from consciously focusing on the ballot, because he found that concentrating too heavily on criteria could interfere with connecting naturally with the audience. Their experiences suggest a useful balance: Know the criteria, but don't turn your speech into a checklist.

Become More Aware of Bias

Good judging does not require you to stop being human; it requires you to recognize when your human reactions are competing with what's on the ballot.

"We are human beings," Caesar says. "Sometimes judges judge based on emotions they are feeling that particular day." He gives the example of a judge who has had a bad day and is naturally drawn to the speaker who makes them feel happy. Caesar also cautions against scoring the first speaker lower simply because later speakers have yet to be heard; each contestant should be judged on the criteria, not on their place in the speaking order.

Matte points to another possibility—sympathy for a contestant. "Sometimes we just need to turn off our emotive brain because that fuels possible bias."

Bias can also mean favoring humor over inspiration, energetic delivery over a quieter style, or a subject you personally enjoy. Reynolds, the South Australian, advises judges that "personal likes and dislikes for the subject matter are irrelevant, except insofar as the criteria for audience suitability and reaction."

Theofilus, of the Singapore-based online club, offers an even simpler reminder: "Judge the speech you heard, not the speech you would have given."

Llerena puts it this way: "Good judging requires both structure and judgment."

Another challenge is separating official judging criteria from the "unwritten rules" that members may hear repeated over the years. Matte gives the example of "worldwide appeal"—the idea that a District-level International Speech Contest judge should consider whether a speech could succeed with an international audience.

He notes that this may be useful strategic advice, especially because the District winner advances to the quarterfinals by video, but it is not an official judging criterion. The lesson applies at every level: Before penalizing or rewarding a contestant for something you have heard judges say, ask, "Is this actually on the ballot or in the rules?"

Why You Should Volunteer

Judging strengthens skills you use as a speaker—listening, analysis, organization, and delivery awareness—while also asking you to practice different abilities: comparative analysis, impartiality, decision-making, and accountability.

It can also deepen your Toastmasters experience through service. According to Theofilus, good judging can "encourage improvement, build trust, and raise the standard of communication and leadership" throughout Toastmasters. Llerena notes that good judging also helps clubs and members recognize strong speaking and learn from the contest process. As a chief judge, Reynolds has studied the ballots closely enough to brief other judges.

You do not need to be a championship speaker to begin judging at the club level. You do need to prepare. Even Matte says, "I still read the back of the ballot before judging." Attend the briefing. Give every speaker your full attention. Notice your preferences. Then return to the criteria.

Your rankings may not match the final results. That does not automatically mean you judged poorly. Don't be discouraged. As Llerena observes, confidence comes through practice, just as it does with speaking.

The next time your club needs judges, consider saying yes. You may arrive expecting only to rank speakers first, second, and third, and leave with a clearer understanding of how every speaker, including yourself, can communicate more effectively.

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

How to Be a **Memorable** Conference Panelist

Answer questions and contribute confidently and helpfully.

By Joel Schwartzberg

I was recently helping a CEO prepare for a conference panel. A longtime leader and expert in the field, he said, "No worries. I can wing it."

Alarm bells went off in my head—not because he lacked experience or confidence, but because he wasn't fully appreciating what makes a panel appearance effective.

"Winging it" is often a recipe for disaster, which is why I like to say: *The more you PREpare now, the less you'll need to REpair later.*

Panel discussions may seem simple. Answer a bunch of questions on a subject you know well, right? But making the most of this opportunity requires precise communication, strategic engagement with other panelists, and tactical responses to unexpected or adversarial questions—all in short, friendly bursts that look effortless.

Here's how to show up in your next panel prepared and confident—without needing to wing anything.

Prepare Points, Not Just Answers

A week or more before the conference, generate three to five core ideas you want people to remember. Focus on points that are unique, useful to the audience, and supported with data, logic, or storytelling. Even better if they connect to current events or industry trends.

If you've developed a clever or very specific way to make a point, use it, but don't script entire answers word-for-word. Internalize the concepts so your words come out naturally. Aim for precision, not perfection.





Do Your Homework

Before the event, review the conference website thoroughly and ask your contact questions to clarify the conference's goal, your session's objective, the nature of your audience, and the moderator's background. Hopefully, you'll meet your moderator and fellow panelists beforehand, but don't count on it.

Knowing these details will increase your comfort on the panel, help you meet audience and event expectations, and enable you to differentiate your expertise.

Own Your Introduction

Some moderators introduce the panelists themselves (in which case you should ask to review your portion in advance for accuracy). But if the moderator asks you to introduce yourself, focus on one or two parts of your professional story that support the conference's theme and the points you'll be making. The purpose of an introduction is not to impress the audience, but to assert the speaker's relevance to the discussion.

Lead With Your Answer

One of the most common panel mistakes is burying your point. To avoid this, always start with a direct, definitive answer that includes key elements of the question.

Once the audience hears your position, they're prepared to hear you explain it. But if you start with a lengthy preface, they're flying blind until you get to your point.

You've probably heard advice on starting answers with "good question!" or "I'm glad you asked that." These insertions are unnecessary, but they can give you time to formulate your answer. The peril is saying them too often, which may seem like pandering. Stick to one or none and know there's no harm in simply pausing before you answer—it demonstrates live thinking.

Tell Strategic Stories

Brief panel stories—whether case studies or personal narratives—need to be relevant, not just riveting. To reinforce that relevance, follow each story with a statement that makes its point explicit: "That day, we learned …" or "This story demonstrates why …"

"Stories make you and your message memorable," says Eva Daniel, a public speaking expert and founder of The Speak Shop. "Prepare three or four personal or professional stories you can share in a couple of minutes. Just make sure each story is relevant to the question you were asked so it can support the point you're making."

Identify Pain Points

One of the best ways to connect with audiences is to identify what you have in common with them: the pain point.

Whether it's a shared fear or a common obstacle, stories about challenges, setbacks, and assumptions proven wrong are typically more relatable, more dramatic, and contain the most valuable lessons.

Laura Mathis, senior coaching partner at The Speech Improvement Company, says, "Conference attendees crave candor. Fill that need by telling stories about your struggles and mistakes and what you learned from them, not just tales of success."

Interact Purposefully

Panels should feel like conversations, not a series of mini speeches. So engage other panelists by "agreeing with," "adding to," or "building on" their answers.

However you join the conversation, make sure your contribution is additive, not repetitive. If you have something valuable and unique to say, say it after the preceding person has finished. If not, wait for the next question.

"One way to make your point stand out is to explain how it differs from a fellow panelist's response," says Amy Scarlino, CEO of Scarlino Speaker Strategies and a longtime expert in speaker program management.

"Even if you agree in principle, wrap your response in the context of your unique personal experience."

Handle Confrontation Constructively

Disagreement makes panels more exciting, but the tone should always be civil, not combative. It's a conversation, not a talk show. The key to handling disagreement or criticism respectfully is framing your position in the context of your professional role, not as a universal truth:

- "In my work, I see it differently because …"
- "Here's another way to think about it …"
- "I appreciate that perspective. My experience has been slightly different …"

If you get confrontational questions from the audience, what they typically want most is acknowledgment, not necessarily agreement. Simple phrases like "I hear you," "I understand where you're coming from," and "Thanks for your perspective" can provide that acknowledgment without conceding the point.

When you don't know the answer to a question, say so. Or pivot with: "I can't speak to that, but what I can tell you is …" This phrase enables you to move smoothly from what you don't know—and aren't expected to know—to what you do know and can competently address.

Remember that a panel is a purpose-driven discussion. Every minute you spend debating someone else's point is a minute you're not advancing your own.

Always Be Polite

Panel politeness is about the respect and attention you show other panelists. Give them a chance to speak and don't interrupt them or finish their sentences.

I once attended a conference panel where a highly respected and experienced political advisor bloviated with every answer, interrupted panelists, and questioned their ideas. Despite his impressive credentials, his reputation took a serious hit.

"Don't monopolize the discussion," says Daniel. "You may think your ideas are outstanding and essential, but this is a group discussion in which everyone should have equal opportunity to contribute."

I recommend the four-second rule: If the moderator asks an open question to all of you, feel free to answer first. Thereafter, wait four seconds before jumping in again. This pause gives more reserved panelists a chance to contribute.

Stay Engaged the Whole Time

Even when you're not speaking, you're still in public view.

"Body language onstage is so important, whether you're speaking or not," says Scarlino. "Sit up and lean forward, nod when you agree, and laugh when appropriate. Speaker survey scores reflect that audiences stay engaged when panelists stay engaged."

Listening closely not only looks good on you. It can also give you a practical advantage when you want to refer back to panelists' previous comments.

Leave Your Sales Hat at Home

While self-promotion isn't on the agenda (and is a bad look if handled clumsily), that doesn't mean you need to avoid saying your company's name. Make references to your company and business if that context is important.

- "At Costco, we have a policy …"
- "One of the interesting things about working at Meta is …"
- "When I started working at AARP, I saw how …"

Keep self-references—about yourself or your company—framed in points, not superlatives.

Know When to Stop Talking

Giving concise answers on a panel requires knowing when to stop talking. After you hear each question, don't think of what you want to say, but what you want your audience to take away. Once you've delivered that takeaway, stop talking.

Train yourself not to end sentences with the word "and," which some people do instinctively, forcing themselves to speak even after they've run out of things to say. Daniel recommends finishing each answer with a "strong summary statement, not a mumble or a trail of filler words."

When a moderator asks "Anything else?" or "Final words?" don't introduce a brand-new point. Instead, reinforce a key takeaway you previously made.

Be Remembered

At the end of the day—or the end of a panel presentation—no one will remember who "won" the panel or seemed the most impressive. Audiences will remember the panelists who helped them think differently. If you use your content, communication, and courtesy to create that impact, you've done your job and then some.

Joel Schwartzberg *is a workplace communication coach, executive communication specialist, and author of* The Language of Leadership: How to Engage and Inspire Your Team *and* Get to the Point! Simplify, Sharpen, and Sell Your Message. *Follow him on LinkedIn.*



7 QUESTIONS WITH... Cartoonist Jerry King



Jerry's self-portrait

This month we're talking to Jerry King, an award-winning cartoonist who contributes laughs via his monthly cartoon in the *Toastmaster*. His client list spans a variety of platforms, and includes Disney, *The Wall Street Journal*, American Greetings, and dozens of newspapers, as well as children's books, websites, greeting cards, and calendars, just to name a few.

The National Cartoonists Society awarded him the Gag Cartoon Award in 2001. A U.S. Army veteran, he was recognized as the number two cartoonist in the world by the U.S. Army; additionally, he was named the top college editorial cartoonist in the country when he was a student. He has won many awards for his editorial cartooning.

How did you get started as a cartoonist?

School bored me, so I drew to keep myself entertained.

What do you enjoy most about your work?

Being creative. Crafting a cartoon idea then bringing it to life with the drawing. In most cases, the caption comes before the illustration.

Where do you do most of your drawing?

I work at my office at home, and also by my pool, which I consider my second office.

How do you create your drawings?

I freehand them, then scan them to color, fix, and attach the caption.

Do you have a ritual for tapping into your creativity?

I pick a topic then obsess over it.

Who are some of your favorite cartoonists/illustrators?

My favorites are the classic *The New Yorker* cartoonists, like Robert Weber, Charles Saxon, and James Stevenson.

What do you enjoy about illustrating for the *Toastmaster*?

I have spoken in front of people many times, so I can relate to what speakers go through.

More about Jerry

Hometown:
Lakewood Ranch, Florida

Hobbies:
Writing and drawing. Used to be golf.

Website/social media:
On Facebook as Jerry King Cartoonist, but you can also just search my name. I'm all over the internet.

Something interesting about you:
I was a boxer who shared the same trainer as heavyweight champ James "Buster" Douglas.

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