

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | APRIL 2016

TOASTMASTER®

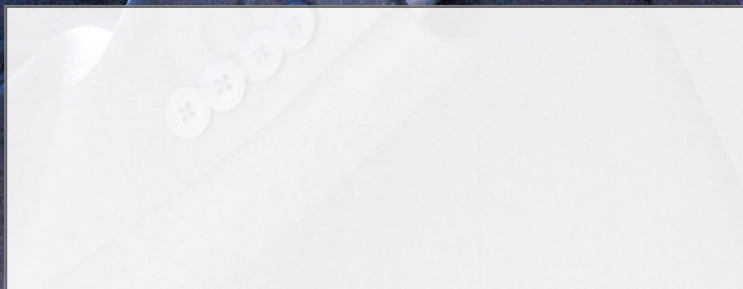
Finish Strong!

How to beat club officer burnout.

Breaking Language Barriers

Jimmy Thai, DTM

Compassionate Leader
Building Bridges
in Vietnam





Empowering Members Worldwide

One of the joys of my position as International President is connecting with members around the world. I'm struck by our common mission, and our common goals and ambitions, despite our vastly different personal circumstances.

I consistently see members focused on goal achievement and skill development, and club

leaders focused on providing excellent, supportive environments where their members can develop and achieve.

In October I traveled to District 74 in southern Africa, where I visited South Africa and Zimbabwe in my role as an ambassador for the organization. South Africa has 11 official languages, including Xhosa, the language of the ethnic group to which Nelson Mandela belonged. At the district conference, I attended a speaker showcase where several Toastmasters used their skills to deliver speeches in Xhosa. This was memorable for many reasons, not the least of which is that Xhosa contains nearly 20 different clicking sounds as a component of the language.

In November I visited District 60 in Toronto, a vibrant, multicultural city with a perennially bad professional hockey team. One of the district's major initiatives is a focus on the Toastmasters Youth Leadership Program (YLP). I attended a ceremony with local mayors and councilors for a group of YLP graduates and left impressed with the skills of these young people and the commitment of Toastmasters who invest time and energy to help such individuals develop.

Later I visited District 95 in Central, Eastern and Northern Europe. This district is composed of 17 countries and more than 230 clubs. Four-hundred members traveled significant distances to enjoy the district conference in Prague. Some members came from Russia; currently we only have a handful of clubs in that country, but we have the potential to empower many people there. I'm confident the talented young leaders I met at the conference will pursue club growth opportunities as well as their own personal development as they work to expand Toastmasters membership throughout the region.

It is a tremendous honor to serve as International President. From time to time I read the writings of Dr. Ralph Smedley, our organization's founder. Here are a couple of passages he wrote in 1959. (Please keep in mind that at the time Toastmasters membership included only men.)

While our language and our customs have changed, men differ very little in fundamentals from the men of half a century ago. They have similar ambitions, difficulties, and impediments to progress.

While conditions have changed, human nature and human needs have not been greatly altered.

Smedley was strongly focused on the individual. What are some of the joys you've experienced as a Toastmaster?

JIM KOKOCKI, DTM
International President

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Three members of Cedar Hill Toastmasters in Newington, Connecticut, teamed up to walk a 5K race called Making Strides Against Breast Cancer. Pictured from left, Elizabeth Dobosz, CC; Joyce Boncal, CC, CL; and Martha Danielewicz, CC.



After Hiroyuki Ito, DTM (far left), moved back to his hometown of Hachinohe from Tokyo, members from his club, Storytelling Toastmasters, visited him at Tanesashi-Kaigan beach in Japan.



Members of the Bridgetown Toastmasters club in St. Michael, Barbados, celebrate finding a prize in a treasure hunt while celebrating the club's 50th anniversary.



Eric Feinendegen, ACG, CL (left), from Lake County Club in Vernon Hills, Illinois, shakes hands with Donal Heney, CC, CL, of the Viking Voices Toastmasters in Dublin, Ireland, while visiting the club on a business trip.

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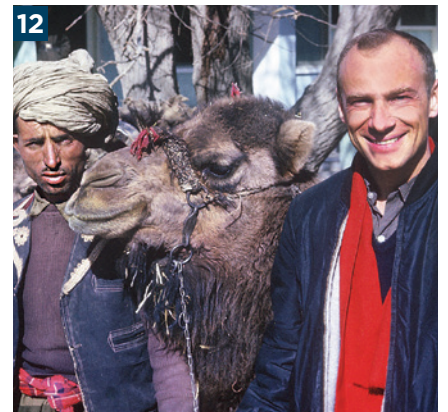
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IT'S TIME FOR PLAN B... BRAINSTORMING!

How to draw out dormant ideas and innovate.

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Your club meetings just got easier

The first Toastmasters International mobile app, which features a built-in Ah-Counter, grammarian and timer, is now available to download.



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Articles

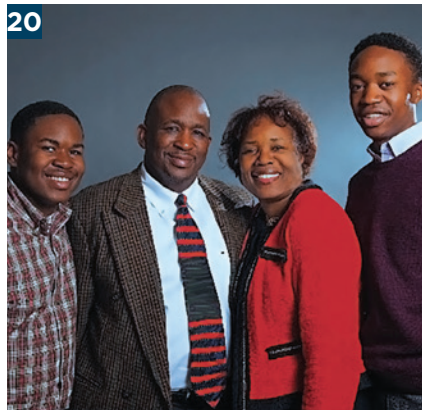
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TRAVELING TOASTMASTER

▶ MEMBER MOMENT



Barbara Kondilis, ACG, ALB, was born in Massachusetts, United States, to a family of Greek origin who emphasized education and self-growth throughout her childhood. Raised bilingual in a diverse neighborhood, she grew up with a deep understanding of intercultural communication.

Having spent time in hospitals as a young patient, and later working in mental health and health care settings, Kondilis yearned to learn more about public health and social work, which she integrated into her graduate studies at Boston University. In 2005 she moved to Athens, Greece, for her profession, and saw the need to conduct more research on topics such as second-hand smoke and health literacy.

Drawing on her positive experiences as a member of a club in the U. S., she founded the HAU Athens Toastmasters club—the first introduction of Toastmasters in Greece.

Why did you join Toastmasters initially?

My first exposure to Toastmasters came in Georgia while training for my job at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Club meetings were held at lunchtime. At the time, I had been videotaped for CDC training and I was learning about effective presentations, and when I saw myself on camera for the first time, the result left a lot to be desired.

Because of the enthusiasm I felt during those first few club meetings, I joined the Providence Toastmasters when I transferred to Rhode Island to work for the Department of Health.

How did you adapt to the Greek culture?

Even though I speak Greek fairly fluently, I was never formally educated in a Greek high school or university so my language skills needed improvement. Improvement came through having to interact and work with individuals and groups, and in particular, writing articles and presenting at local conferences.

I am still learning, along with the natives, how to communicate effectively to get things done here. In the U.S., it is about efficiency; in Greece it is more about relationships and rhetoric. When Greeks speak loudly they may seem angry to an outsider—and most of the time they do use a higher pitch while speaking—but to the onlooker, the next minute they seem to be the best of friends.

How did you introduce Toastmasters to Greece?

My employer, Hellenic American College/Hellenic American University, collaborates with the Hellenic American Union (HAU) in Athens, and the leadership staff there was very supportive of my idea to start a corporate club.

I wanted to expand the corporate club into a community club. Some said I was too idealistic and that it couldn't be done since most Hellenes (Greeks) would have no interest in a club for public speaking (because it's already in their blood). But I knew differently. With the help of several key members and mentors like Dennis Fokas, DTM (who has since passed away), we expanded the number of clubs and we now have almost nine (some are in the process of being chartered), and will soon be joining a European district.

Tell us about your career, and how Toastmasters has helped.

I present research related to psychology, public health and applied linguistics at conferences, and have been invited to schools as a consultant to help structure training workshops for various social science or public health-related projects. I also work one-on-one with individuals who want to improve their presentation skills, primarily in English.

Practice does make perfect, so I have gotten better at structuring speeches and I'm getting the audience more involved with difficult topics such as bullying prevention, working with student challenges, volunteerism and more.

SHANNON DEWEY is the editorial coordinator for the *Toastmaster magazine*.

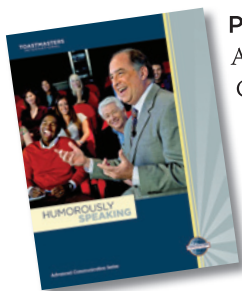
▶ SNAPSHOT



Members and a young guest of the Qatar Malayalam Toastmasters club in Doha, Qatar, held their first paperless meeting in December as an initial step to incorporate environmental considerations into their club meetings.

▶ CLUB SURVIVAL TIP

Finding Your Funny Bone



PROJECT 5: THE HUMOROUS SPEECH

Adapted from *Humorously Speaking*, an Advanced Communication manual

You've probably used humor in many of your speeches, but in this one the primary objective is to get your fellow members rolling on the floor in laughter. The speech, as part of the *Humorously Speaking* manual in the

Advanced Communication series, isn't about throwing in a funny line or two; its purpose is to entertain throughout the entire presentation.

Humorous speeches have several features, including a theme, a point, a story and an exaggeration.

The theme—or subject—of your humorous speech should be appropriate for your audience and something they will identify with. For example, if you pick the subject of a funny experience you had while trying to use a new app on your iPhone, it may not go over well if most audience members don't own smartphones.

While choosing the right topic for your humorous speech is vital, your delivery of the speech can make or break it. This includes the way you use both oral and body language. Make sure to put your whole body into the story. Move around, use your hands and arms, and don't forget about facial expressions.



Be expressive with your voice and use these speaking tools:

Tempo: This should vary according to the action.

Rhythm: Use this to add emphasis to your story.

Inflection: Raise or lower your voice. This adds emotion to your words.

Pause: This important tool attracts listeners' attention. Pause before important words, and before and after punchlines.

Volume: Save your "outdoor" voice for excitement, surprise or action in your speech. Use your quiet indoor voice for suspense.

▶ MEET MY MENTOR

Dr. Clement Chen Tzeh Chung, DTM



FROM LEFT: Clement Chen Tzeh Chung, wife, Kellie Tiong, and Kwong Nui Sim



Former District 72 Area Governor Kwong Nui Sim, ACG, ALB, fondly recalls her first club meeting. It was September 2006. She was greeted warmly that evening, and was immediately introduced to other members. When she met Dr. Clement Chen Tzeh Chung, DTM, she felt as if he was inviting her to become a part of his family. She joined the Swan City Toastmasters club in Sibü, Sarawak, Malaysia, that night. After moving to New Zealand to continue her education, she joined the Lunchspeak Club in Dunedin and Gourmet Toastmasters in Wellington, but Clement continued to mentor and inspire her.

Clement, a general surgeon at Rejang Medical Centre in Sibü, owner of the Dr. Clement Chen Tzeh Chung Specialist Clinic, and a medical board member of the Sibü Kidney Foundation, has been a Toastmaster for more than 20 years. He founded the Swan City club and in 2004, organized a Youth Leadership Program (YLP) in Sibü, Kwong Nui's hometown. He has conducted 12 YLPs since then, and in the last few years, 200 to 300 high school students have participated in the three- to four-day programs.

How would you describe Clement?

He is approachable, friendly, open-minded and sincere, and he has a successful career. His interpersonal skills are simply remarkable; he always has others behind him to support him for any plan, event or activity that he is a part of. But, more importantly, he offers inspiring perspectives on life and employs simple sentences to convey thought-provoking ideas.

How has he influenced you?

Inspired by his example, I learned how to become the best I could be. When I was in a dilemma about further study abroad, since I had never left home before, he said, "Live your life to the fullest."

Thanks to Clement, I went from being a pessimist to becoming a confident go-getter in fierce pursuit of my dreams. I recently earned a Ph.D. in higher education at the University of Otago, New Zealand, and I plan to achieve my DTM this year.

How has Clement helped you grow in Toastmasters?

In recent years, participants in Clement's YLPs have been not only from my hometown but also from all over the island of Borneo. In organizing the program, Clement's endless passion for inspiring and developing the people around him, especially the youngsters, is astonishing and impressive. His perseverance and passion in sourcing funds and manpower for YLP is amazing, and he motivates me to take on leadership roles in my new country of residence. In my various club roles, including club president and area governor, I used Clement as my role model and led my area to achieve Distinguished status for the first time.

What is another example of Clement's leadership?

Clement has never failed to participate in annual speech contests. Once, I asked him if he was tired of doing so. He said he wasn't. "In fact," he said, "I am more energized after taking part in the contests." In October 2015, Clement participated in the English, as well as the Mandarin, Evaluation and Humorous Speech contests at the District 87 conference in Bali, Indonesia, despite having ruptured his Achilles tendon while playing Ping-Pong in a tournament.

For me, living, working and studying abroad is challenging. Nevertheless, every time I want to give up, Clement's words come to mind. As a result, I have progressed in my Toastmasters journey, my studies and my career as a lecturer in e-learning at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. I would not be the way I am now if Clement had not been in my life!

MARY NESFIELD is associate editor of the *Toastmaster magazine*.

NOMINATE YOUR MARVELOUS MENTOR!

Do you know an exceptional mentor who has positively influenced you? Send a 200-word description and photo (1 MB or larger) of you and your mentor to MentorMoment@toastmasters.org.

▶ TI NEWS



Register for the 2016 International Convention

Registration is now open for the 2016 International Convention. Save the date and register early! The event takes place August 17–20 at the Marriott Marquis in Washington, D.C. If you are traveling internationally to attend and require a Letter of Invitation to obtain a visa, contact conventionregistration@toastmasters.org.

About Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C., the capital of the United States, is formally called the District of Columbia, but it's commonly referred to as "Washington," "the District," or simply "D.C." Home to more than half a million people, the city is a national center for the arts and

a popular tourist destination. Each year, millions of people visit to tour its museums, historic monuments, galleries and more. Washington is a walkable city, so bring your walking shoes. The city's rapid transit system, the Washington Metro, or the Metro-bus system will also take you where you want to go.

Learn more about the city at Washington.org/DC-guide-to-dc-first-timers.

Membership Dues to Increase in October

Toastmasters International has expanded many of its services in recent years. To continue offering a program of the highest quality, the organization's Board of Directors is taking steps to further enhance and modernize the member experience.

This includes revitalizing the education program, improving infrastructure and expanding digital offerings and technology. The investments in these initiatives and other improved services are expected to increase the organization's annual expenses in the coming years. Although the organization is financially strong, the Board of Directors is increasing dues to ensure Toastmasters' ongoing financial health. Beginning in October 2016, individual members' dues will increase to \$45 each semiannual period. Membership dues were last increased in 2011 to \$36.

For anyone looking for help to meet personal and professional goals, Toastmasters remains a great deal, says International President Jim Kokocki, DTM. "Our value proposition is second to none."

▶ MEMBER ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE CLUB



It was a special occasion for members of the Talk of Dell club in Plano, Texas, when an Ice Breaker speech by Christine Jones and a 10th speech resulting in a Competent Communicator achievement by Karen Alsandor-Young took place on the same night. Pictured from left to right: Caroline Orr, Karen Alsandor-Young, Christine Jones, LJ Callaghan and Julie May.

TRAVELING TOASTMASTER



- 1 | **BRENDA WALDEKKER, FROM EINDHOVEN, THE NETHERLANDS**, poses in front of Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon, Myanmar.
- 2 | **RANDIE ELLINGTON, ACS, ALS, FROM OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA**, sits at the Havana Harbor across from the Morro Castle in Cuba.
- 3 | **HALLIE ADAMS, DTM, FROM SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA**, embarks on a journey with a camel in Egypt.
- 4 | **SHAWN GOLD, DTM, AND HIS WIFE, ALEXIS ROTHSCHILD, CC, CL, FROM RICHMOND, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA**, visit the Mayan Ruins in Tulum, Mexico.



View more photos on your tablet or on our Facebook page: Toastmasters International Official Fan Page.



PICTURE YOURSELF HERE! Pose with the *Toastmaster* magazine—print or tablet edition—during your travels and submit your photos for a chance to be featured in an upcoming issue. Visit www.toastmasters.org/Submissions. Bon voyage!

My Cross-Cultural Journey

From Montreal to Manipal, we're all alike.

MARZIEH GHIASI, ACB, ALB

In the eight years I've been a Toastmaster, I've joked more than once that "Toastmasters lets me see the world right here, and I don't even have to take a ship!" I was raised by the sea, as my family's work on ships took us from port to port: the Baltic Sea, the Persian Gulf, Nova Scotia's Atlantic.

Born in Tehran, Iran, I came to live beside the St. Lawrence River in Montreal, Canada.

Toastmasters allows me to meet people with vastly different backgrounds, including many who are immigrants like me. I'm a member of Montreal's McGill Club, which is part of a bilingual division, where French- and English-speaking clubs work together—and our contest days are twice as long.

"In minor ways we differ/ in major we're the same ... We are more alike, my friends/ than we are unlike."

—Maya Angelou

Last June, I traveled to Manipal, a city in the south of India beside the Arabian Sea. I'm a graduate student working in global health, and I was there for four months to lay the groundwork for a new project. But being 13,000 kilometers (about 8,000 miles) from home, I needed something familiar—a second home. Some people seek comfort in multinational fast food. I went for a less salty, more spicy choice: the Manipal-Udupi Toastmasters.

On the rainy afternoon when I visited the club, all my migration anxieties started flooding in. Would I fit in? Would we understand one another? Would the meeting be in a language I could comprehend? I was welcomed with smiling faces and a great introduction by Sridhar Kamath, CC, ALB, club president at the time. The meeting was in English, like almost all clubs in the region, and it proceeded in a familiar way—I really could have been anywhere in the world.

That is, until the impromptu Table Topics session: "What is your best monsoon memory?" I really panicked. Memory? I was literally dripping wet from the first monsoon rains I'd ever witnessed! But I decided to use an impromptu speech tactic and shift the unfamiliar to the familiar—comparing the experience of the



monsoon to memories of ice and hail storms in Canada, which I had in abundance.

At the meeting's end, I knew this was the perfect place for me. The new-member induction coincided with an installation celebration for new club officers. It wasn't like any installation I'd experienced before: It was a full celebration of members, with speeches, food, music ... and even dancing! There was much to celebrate. The club is relatively new, but like many in the region,

it is growing fast—and the air is filled with excitement, energy and passion.

I attended meetings diligently and came out energized and more knowledgeable about both public speaking and India. These well-organized meetings and educational sessions drew Indian Toastmasters from across the state. On occasion I wouldn't understand a cultural reference—does this popular sport "cricket" involve crickets?—or couldn't catch a word here and there. And of course others sometimes couldn't follow my accent, or my hockey jokes just didn't translate. But rather than create barriers, these were opportunities to speak more clearly, and adjust to the audience—to convey the heart of the message.

At one meeting I spoke about my passion for poetry, and while reciting lines from a poem I saw an audience member silently mouthing the words. She also loved poetry, and gave me recommendations for great Indian works. I'm grateful to have been a member of Manipal-Udupi Toastmasters, my supportive home away from home.

In her poem "Human Family," the American poet Maya Angelou wrote: *In minor ways we differ/ in major we're the same ... We are more alike, my friends/ than we are unlike.* Every Toastmaster has different goals and needs, and every club has a different way of doing things. Across continents and oceans, what we share is a deep commitment and passion for building communities and, ultimately, a better world, through better communication. ■

MARZIEH GHIASI, ACB, ALB, is a member of the McGill Club in Montreal. She is a past division governor and a graduate student in epidemiology, passionate about global health. You can find more about Marzieh at ghiasi.org/writing.

It's Go, Go, Go!

Energetic octogenarian thrives on global volunteerism.

BY MITCH MIRKIN, CTM

If one day world peace is achieved, people like Nick Hoesl, ATMB, can probably claim a bit of the credit.

Back in the 1960s, the Cincinnati, Ohio, resident took a break from his retail pharmacy career to spend two years as a Peace Corps volunteer in the hot, rugged environs of Jalalabad, Afghanistan, teaching pharmacology to Afghan medical students. And in 2000, some 15 years before the United States and Cuba restored relations, he took part in a Peace Corps public-health

“I’m always looking for something new. I know people who are bored to tears, and they can’t seem to find a remedy.”

— Nick Hoesl, ATMB

study on the Caribbean island. In May, this active 83-year-old is planning to embark on yet another Peace Corps trip, this one to Iran, even amid the continuing tense relations between his own country and that Mideast nation.

All told, Hoesl has spent time in more than 40 countries. Most of his trips are “working vacations” during which he performs some form of volunteer service. What has all the globetrotting taught the spry retiree? “It’s made me more aware of the fact that we’re all one people,” Hoesl says. “We all come from the same ancestors, if you go back far enough.” He says he firmly believes that “people are the same all over the world.”

Putting Language Skills to Use

Hoesl finds that he doesn’t have to be on foreign soil to reach out across cultures. A few years ago, he helped resettle an Afghan mother and her seven children in Cincinnati, his



As a Peace Corps volunteer, Nick Hoesl, far right, went to Afghanistan in the '60s to teach pharmacology.

hometown. Her husband had been killed by the Taliban. Hoesl put to use some of the Farsi he had learned decades earlier for his Peace Corps mission.

“They came through the airport and didn’t speak a word of English,” he says of the family. “I nurtured them along until they were on their feet. It was a great experience.”

Lately, he’s again been brushing up on his Farsi, with an eye toward his upcoming trip to Iran. While he’s delivered hundreds of talks throughout the years—in Toastmasters and in community settings—Hoesl says one of his most memorable was, in fact, delivered in Farsi. “The hardest five-minute speech I ever gave was in Peace Corps training in Portland [Oregon],” he says. “We had to give our speech in Farsi!”

Hoesl has also toiled at Spanish over the years in preparation for medical missions and other volunteer trips to Honduras, Mexico and the Dominican Republic. He doesn’t claim fluency in any foreign tongue, but he does take pride in his ability to connect with people around the globe despite language barriers. “I love dealing with people one-on-one, and I always look for a chance to communicate.”

Humor is Universal

One of the communication tools he uses is humor. “It’s a universal language,” he says. “You don’t even have to understand someone else’s language to pull it off.”

Humor has been the hub of Hoesl’s speechmaking in recent years. He joined the West Hills Toastmasters club in Cincinnati in 1964 and, except for a 15-year hiatus, he’s been active in the club ever since. His wife, Ginny, also a member, earned an ATM Bronze, and both have served in various roles, including club president.

The couple likes to visit other clubs when traveling. “Members welcome us with open arms,” says Nick. “We don’t want to be treated as guests, though—we always ask to be put on the meeting agenda.”



In Honduras, during a 1993 trip, Hoehl set up a makeshift pharmacy at a village clinic.



On a 2001 trip to study Cuba's healthcare system, Hoehl takes a break with two of Havana's goodwill ambassadors.

Hoehl has competed in Humorous Speech Contests at the club, area and division level. "I never won top prize, and I haven't yet competed at the district level, but that's my goal." His humor has also found expression in the witty columns he wrote for six years for a local senior newspaper called *50 Plus!* In 2007, he compiled those columns into a book he titled *Jest Desserts*. In the book's foreword, *50 Plus!* publisher Earladeen Badger wrote of the longtime pharmacist, "He finds humor in everyday living and shares it with us in large doses."

Hoehl has published four books in all and features them on his website, laughterdoc.com. In addition to *Laughter: The Drug of Choice* and *The First Humorously Medical Dictionary*, his latest book, *Proverbial Laughter of the World: Afghanistan to Zimbabwe*, written last year, draws heavily on his international experiences.

He also enjoys sharing proverbs, and one of his favorites is a simple one. It's from Afghanistan: "If there's only bread and onions, have a happy face." He once shared it, in Farsi, with the owner of a Los Angeles restaurant as he enjoyed a plate of Kabuli, the classic Afghan rice-and-lamb dish. The owner laughed heartily, recalls Hoehl.

Another favorite is: "If there is light in the soul, there will be light in the person. If there is light in the person, there will be harmony in the house. If there is harmony in the house, there will be order in the nation. If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world." That one is from China, where he and Ginny spent two weeks in 2006 teaching English through the nonprofit Global Volunteers program. "We both used our Toastmasters skills in teaching," Nick says. He also traveled to Tanzania with the group.

Staying Active in Athletics

Besides participating in Toastmasters contests, the energetic octogenarian also competes in other arenas. In the 2015 U.S. National Senior Games, he came in fifth in the nation in the

80–84 age bracket for the 400-meter run, finishing in one minute and 37 seconds. He's looking ahead to 2017 to compete in the next event. His current training schedule would leave most 30-somethings panting:

- Weightlifting on Sundays, along with a quarter-mile run.
- Volleyball on Mondays. "It's sociable," he says.
- Yoga on Wednesdays. "I never knew how hard an hour of yoga could be."
- On Fridays, it's Zumba, followed by another run.

He also does half-mile runs up and down the hills near his home three times a week, along with playing tennis doubles now and then. And then there's the occasional outing with Ginny: "We still love to go out dancing. We still do the jitterbug."

As busy as all this sounds, it's a far cry from his old regimen. He used to run marathons, and even did a super-grueling 50-mile ultramarathon at age 50. He is known locally for running 5Ks and other races in costume. He's run as a rabbit, as Dr. Seuss's Cat in the Hat and as a chimney sweep donning a top hat and formal jacket. (He actually worked as one for a few years, in addition to his pharmacy job.)

What drives him? "I'm always looking for something new," he says. "I know people who are bored to tears, and they can't seem to find a remedy."

As he plans more books, trips and speeches, Hoehl seems to have indeed found a remedy. By anyone's account, his life has been full and fascinating, but he is quick to point out: "I'm still working on it." ■

MITCH MIRKIN, CTM, is a member of Randallstown Network Toastmasters, based in Baltimore, Maryland. He works as a writer and editor for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.



It's Time for Plan B... Brainstorming!

How to draw out dormant ideas and innovate.

BY CRAIG HARRISON, DTM, PDG

Our workgroup was in the middle of a spirited brainstorming session—a freeform idea-generating meeting where creativity is encouraged, judgment is suspended, and the best ideas often come after 10 or more minutes. The ideas were flying fast and furiously from all participants, as they should when a group gains momentum. The energy was intoxicating. And, in a fit of inspiration, one employee suggested, “Why don’t we reverse the order of the deliverables?”

While nine other people energetically accepted this offer as worthy of inclusion on their flip chart of ideas, their manager scowled and announced, “That will never work!” Thus ended what had been, up until that point, a productive brainstorming session. Sadly, the manager was unclear on the concept at play.

She replaced a brainstorm with a rainstorm and dampened the entire process.

A Different Kind of Collaboration

Brainstorming is a special type of meeting, with its own ground rules, tempo and ethos. Innovation expert John Storm says, “Brainstorming is an art form that can produce valuable results for any organization. Uncovering the ideas buried in the brains of your team is an important ‘front end’ element of any successful innovation process.” It’s also an invaluable tool for Toastmasters clubs, district leaders and others—for idea generation, problem solving, innovation, teambuilding and creativity. Whether you are ideating (generating ideas) on building club membership, generating exciting future meeting themes, amassing marketing

ideas or pondering how to boost attendance at district conferences, brainstorming often leads to a pot of gold at the end of its rainbow of reasoning.

Rules That Rock!

Brainstorming meetings are unbound by traditional meeting rules where predetermined people speak on predetermined subjects for prescribed times. Yet it still has a structure. Sue Walden, founder of ImprovWorks! and contributor to *Yes And... Your Mental Agility*, makes an important observation: “When I outline the full [brainstorming] process in advance (gather ideas, set criteria, create an implementation strategy), I get less resistance to the brainstorm phase. Groups often need to know that the gathering of ideas is only the first, though most important, step on

this journey.” Like during a jam session of jazz musicians, all you need to do is begin recording and let the sounds commence. Remember, the key is to record the ideas. Later you can go back and edit out that which might not be considered beautiful music.

Storm, the author of *Brainstorming*, relates, “Although there is not one ‘right way’ to brainstorm, it is critical to agree on ground rules, manage expectations, communicate how the ideas will be evaluated and selected, and get clear about the end results.” In brainstorming sessions everyone is equal, all ideas are worthy of consideration, all judgment is suspended and a person’s rank or status is irrelevant. The goal is to fill the air (or whiteboard or flip chart) with ideas, depart from conven-

people in a playful mood: Decorate your meeting space with lava lamps, beanbag chairs and even bubblegum and bubble makers to loosen everyone up. You want to encourage participation by all.

“If you don’t have the budget for playful décor, use what you have in a new way,” suggests Walden. “How about holding the session under the boardroom table, or out under a tree, or in a nearby playground, perhaps with everyone sitting on the merry-go-round? Look around. What seems like a crazy idea?”

The Challenge Question

Language is key in the leading of brainstorming meetings. The focus of your brainstorm should be framed appropri-

Brainstorming sessions rely on the reality that when multiple brainpowers are merged, the results are greater than the sum of their parts.

tional thinking, and allow the smorgasbord of strategies, insights, inspirations and epiphanies to cross-pollinate.

Think of brainstorming meetings as magnificent melting pots, a veritable giant stew where bouillabaisse bubbles and bursts, unleashing new, exciting and innovative initiatives. The Toastmaster, acting as facilitator, becomes the Chef de Aha!

The B-List: Preparing for Your Meeting

The following recommendations will ensure a successful session, whether it’s a stand-alone brainstorm or part of a larger meeting or event:

Adorn your environment with art, toys, games, crayons, colored markers or other stimuli to get the juices flowing and invite fun, free thinking and playfulness. Another way to build anticipation beforehand and garner the attention of participants is to deliver special written invitations in advance to set the tone, expectations and goals for the session.

How you begin your session is key. Create a mental or physical icebreaker to loosen everyone up. Another way to get

atly. “A challenge question is one that defines the challenge, problem or project in a *clear, concise* and *accurate* way, yet opens an invitation for multiple ideas,” according to Bruce Honig and Alain Rostain, authors of *Creative Collaboration: Simple Tools for Inspired Teamwork*.

Once the challenge question is set, the ideas will follow. Whatever contributors’ sentences begin with, the ideas will flow! Each one should be embraced ... accepted with the word “YES!” and followed with “and ...” before another idea is built upon the last idea, or a stand-alone idea is shared.

Setting expectations is also essential. Encourage attendees to check skepticism, negativity and ego at the door. It’s not about whose ideas are embraced. All ideas should be received, for the benefit of the group mission. That’s why we employ the “YES, and ...” approach instead of a “Yes, BUT ...” stance in response to others’ ideas. Remind people to suspend judgment throughout the session. By assigning a scribe or by simply audio-recording the meeting, you can capture it all and later cull the brainstorming session for best ideas. Also, allow

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CHALLENGE QUESTIONS FOR TOASTMASTERS

1. How many ways can we boost club membership?
2. What can we do to re-engage former members?
3. Let’s identify strategies and processes to keep veterans engaged.
4. Let’s generate ideas to enhance our meeting space.
5. How can we positively impact our community through Toastmasters outreach?
6. Let’s explore different meeting formats to infuse new life into our meetings!
7. How many new ideas can we come up with for future speeches?
8. Let’s generate fresh ideas for future meeting themes!
9. What ideas can we come up with for High Performance Leadership projects?
10. What are ideas for fun club special events throughout the year?
11. How can we leverage social media to better promote our club and attract new guests?
12. How many ways can we encourage a youth movement and attract younger guests?
13. How many new venues can we identify to stage Speechcraft and Youth Leadership programs?



Compassionate LEADERSHIP

How my team of volunteers fulfilled a promise to help Vietnamese children.

BY JIMMY THAI, DTM



When I left Vietnam as a teenager, nine years after the Fall of Saigon, I hadn't finished teaching Minh to read. He was an illiterate 8-year-old whose parents harbored me for a few days leading up to my forbidden journey across the pirate-infested Gulf of Thailand from the southern tip of the Mekong Delta—Cape Ca Mau.

Crouching on a rickety boat amidst a vast body of water under the moonless night, I couldn't escape the image of Minh waiting for me with a crumpled newspaper that his mother used as wrapping paper. Every night by the faint, flickering light from a rusty oil lamp, Minh patiently traced each article and eagerly sounded out the words he recognized and asked for my help with the others. Feeling that my work was not finished, I vowed to one day return and build schools for the less fortunate children in the rural, remote regions of Vietnam.



Jimmy Thai and his volunteers hand out school supplies and food to students during grand-opening celebrations held for the new schools.

After decades of struggling to overcome the culture shock, the language barrier and the financial hardship of living in a different country—the United States—I had not made progress on my school-building promise. It was nothing more than a warm thought of yesteryear. The hectic life of chasing the American dream had piled upon me layers and layers of roles and responsibilities.

Then, 16 years ago I attended a Toastmasters meeting. Along the way, while improving my communication and leadership skills, I reconnected with who I used to be—the teenager with a daring dream. But this time, I had accumulated the essential tools I needed and was ready for construction.

- 1) Vietnamese children are challenged each day as they make their way to and from school by crossing a system of dangerous waterways in Ca Mau.
- 2) The way to school is often slippery during the rainy season in Ca Mau.
- 3) Thai's volunteers distribute school supplies to the children in Cape Ca Mau as they gather to celebrate the opening of a new bridge.

Share Your Dream with the Right People

In 2007, in my first trip back to Vietnam, I went as a professional to consult the country's scientists on tsunami forecasting and warning systems. I also leveraged what I had learned from Toastmasters about telling personal stories, as I spoke to a small audience about my life story and passion for developing compassionate leaders and inspiring them to make a difference in the lives of others. The next thing I knew, more and more groups began asking me to speak and to teach them, their companies and organizations about personal and professional topics, including building schools and minimizing damage from tsunamis.



Volunteers traveled all night to decorate the Bao Ai kindergarten in Yen Bai Province for its grand opening to 44 children.

Soon, other non-business groups invited to me speak. I retold the story of my past again and again, to larger and larger crowds.

Six more years passed, and in 2013, I moved forward with one of my personal goals and founded the Leadership Foundation Academy (LFA) to train, mentor and inspire future business leaders and teach the “Passion Meets Compassion”

When we take our passion and add compassion—and keep going—our dreams will become reality.

philosophy. I secure space at various venues, such as conference halls, schools or corporations, where I conduct my classes designed to help attendees think fast, act with confidence and develop a caring attitude. Students, trainers, presenters, technical professionals, project managers and business executives attend my classes, and I award Certificates of Completion to those who finish. Some of my LFA students are now assisting me with teaching. Class schedules are listed at www.leadershipfoundationacademy.com/classes.html. This year, my classes are available in San Diego, where my academy is based, as well as in three cities in Vietnam.

And then, finally, in May 2015, my goal to open schools for young children

in Vietnam came closer to being realized. It happened after I presented a “How to Motivate Your Team to Build Your Dream” seminar in Ho Chi Minh City. Dinh Hong Duyen, a graduate of the LFA, approached me and confided that she had the same dream of serving the poor children of Vietnam. We collaborated on the details of a “Build a School—Leave a Legacy” bricks-and-mortar project

with the help of compassionate leaders in Vietnam and elsewhere. We discussed the role of the local government’s Office of Education and Development, and followed up with a detailed budget and a schedule and permits to initiate the construction of a three-classroom kindergarten school near Vietnam’s mountainous border with China.

Four months later, when I returned to Vietnam to teach seminars, I took my LFA team on a six-hour ride from Hanoi to Ha Giang province. We traveled first by car, then by motorbike, and then walked a quarter-mile. Finally, amid the picturesque rice paddies stacked up against the backdrop of a blue sky, we opened the Dong Tam school to 53 wide-eyed, bright-smiling young learners.

By sharing our dream with the right people, my team not only improved the probability of success for new projects, we also accelerated existing projects to reach new heights.

Develop a Plan

A plan is crucial when developing a team to execute a vision, especially when work is to be done in another country. It’s impossible for my team to serve in Vietnam without the help of the country’s local leaders, especially when we are 9,000 miles away from the school construction sites.

Through a remote mentorship, we coached Hua Lam Thanh, a passionate graduate of the LFA, who had written us a heartfelt letter offering his help to build our second school. My team set a clear goal for Thanh to fundraise and build a one-classroom kindergarten in Yen Bai province. He recruited two other LFA graduates, Pham Huu Loc and Lam Ngoc Thuy, to lead additional efforts. Another graduate, Pham Quynh Lan, armed with excellent marketing and communication skills, got involved in the effort. Through a call-to-action letter, they made contact with 56 colleagues, friends and family members and raised donations.

My team worked closely with the Office of Education and Development, national media and news reporters in Vietnam to ensure proper accountability



Jimmy Thai thanks the U.S. and the leaders of Vietnam for their cooperative effort during the turnover ceremony of Nam Nhung kindergarten.



The Nam Nhung kindergarten opens to 53 young learners in Ha Giang Province, Vietnam.

and transparency. In the era of a global war on terrorism and the anti-money laundering laws in the United States, it is essential to secure the proper documentation of monetary donations to a foreign governmental agency.

In November 2015, local leaders and supporters traveled all night to a mountainous location to decorate and help with the grand opening of this new school for 44 excited children. With two schools completed in five months, my team now has the confidence to plan for at least three more new schools this year. Our goal is to expand our footprint from Vietnam's Northern border to meet children's needs in the Central province and Southern delta region of the country.

Believe in Your Dream, Passion and Compassion

While it's easy to get excited in the beginnings of a dream, a vision, a cause; it takes

a lot of courage and determination to keep it going every day. Unlike the friendly, supportive environment we are accustomed to in Toastmasters clubs and meetings, some of our naysayers were hard to cope with at first. Some belittled our efforts, others doubted we could even obtain a permit, let alone build a school with a budget of less than \$8,000. Nonetheless, we remained focused on the need, the right partners and the faithful leaders.

We rely on our Toastmasters training to communicate our cause. Each conversation leads to another supporter. Meeting new groups results in more donations. When we take our passion (whatever we love to do) and add compassion (whatever we're meant to do for the less-fortunate)—and keep going—our dreams will become reality.

And for my childhood friend Minh, after 31 years of an innocent promise, the window of opportunity for me to

advance his literacy is missed. But, others need help, as well. For example, the children of Ca Mau, where my journey began, are challenged each day as they travel to and from school. They must cross a spider web of rivers, streams and creeks via slippery, clay walkways and single-coconut-trunk bridges when walking is unfeasible. Some cross in large baskets or rubber tires, while others pedal their way during the rainy season. Floods and strong currents often sweep away the children who slip and fall. Without timely rescue, these children often drown in the vast bodies of water.

My team funded the construct of a 30-meter (about 98 feet) bridge in Cape Ca Mau to provide the young students safe passage. We celebrated the bridge's grand opening in January. Perhaps the children of Minh, who once traced his index finger on the crumpled newspaper of yesteryear, will soon count their footsteps across the new bridge. **T**

JIMMY THAI, DTM, speaks to a global audience on how he transformed from being known as one of the "Boat People" refugees to become a Fortune 500 vice president. He is now living in San Diego, California. His Leadership Foundation Academy develops compassionate leaders to serve the less-fortunate.

TOASTMASTERS SKILLS	CHARITABLE APPLICATION
Storytelling, Public Relations	Share your cause, vision
Communication, contest	Deliver keynotes, seminars
Leadership	Conduct strategic sessions
Membership building	Grow partners and members, seek donations
Treasury	Define budget, manage revenue streams
Club Officer Training	Develop, train volunteer staff
Club Planning	Set annual plan and goals



A Family Affair

Public speaking spans generations in the Spillers family.

BY MELANIE D.G. KAPLAN

When Wanda Spillers, a nurse in the U.S. Air Force, began squadron officer school in the 1990s, she realized that before long she'd be required to speak in front of an audience. With no experience giving briefings, Spillers was grouped with fellow Air Force officers, including fighter pilots, many of whom had already begun developing their public speaking skills. "It was quite intimidating," Spillers says, adding that this particular training required her to leave the lectern and walk into the audience as she spoke. "I thought, *For real?*"

A colleague told Spillers about the Andrews Toastmasters club at Andrews Air Force Base outside Washington, D.C., and after an initial observation and some encouragement from members, she presented her Ice Breaker in 1998. Over time, Spillers gained confidence speaking to groups and found lifelong friends.

Through the decades, Spillers has moved around the country, and wherever she's landed, she's joined a Toastmasters club or started her own, including G.U.T.S., the first club she chartered, at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. She has influenced countless individuals, but perhaps none more than her own family members.

"Toastmasters has afforded me many opportunities," Spillers says, "and I knew when we had children, public speaking would be a skill they would need as well."

Spillers, DTM, and her husband, Stan, CC, met in Korea 26 years ago in the U. S. Air Force and married shortly thereafter. Stan had more opportunities to speak publicly than Wanda did, and by the time Wanda discovered Toastmasters, Stan was already comfortable giving briefings. He watched her go to club meetings in Washington and couldn't fathom how people were so energetic

and happy on Saturday mornings. "I thought she had joined a cult," he says, laughing at the memory.

The Spillers moved for work, first to Texas, then to Alabama, by which time they had both retired from the Air Force and were working at the Birmingham Veterans Affairs Medical Center (the VA). Although the VA had a Toastmasters club, the hours weren't convenient, so Wanda started the Circle of Champions club in Alabaster, Alabama. When she came up short on members, she turned to her husband. Stan joined, and has been a member ever since. Wanda is the club's vice president education and has served on its executive committee for the better part of eight years.

Not surprisingly, both of the Spillers' sons—Elliot, 22, CC, and Jeremiah, 16—are active public speakers. Elliot is a senior at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, expected to graduate in May and majoring in business management with a double minor in political science and disciplinary studies. Last spring, he was elected Student Government Association (SGA) president for the 2015–2016 school year. Not only is he the school's first African-American SGA president in four decades, but he is also only the eighth candidate in more than a century to defeat what's known as "The Machine"—a secret, politically powerful campus group of traditionally white students from campus fraternities and sororities.

Elliot, also a member of the Circle of Champions club, has been involved with Toastmasters since he turned 18, but in some ways, he's been with the organization his entire life.

"My mom took me to Toastmasters meetings as a kid, and I'd sit in the background," he says. "Listening to my mom, I learned



(At far left) The Spillers family: Jeremiah, 16, Stan, Wanda, and Elliot, 22. Elliot, shown at left and above, has capitalized on his Toastmasters skills at the University of Alabama, where he was elected student body president for the 2015-2016 school year.

that public speaking was very important to success in life.” At an early age, Elliot wanted to be involved. While it was nerve-racking initially, he pushed forward, earning awards from Jack and Jill of America, Inc. (an organization that nurtures future African-American leaders) and excelling in the Pelham High School debate club.

After the landmark SGA election, Elliot fielded numerous interview requests from the media and even appeared on CNN, talking about race relations. But that pressure was no match for his toughest critics—at home.

“It’s one thing to be nervous because everyone is watching me on television, but I’m most nervous about my parents watching me,” Elliot says. “I know they’ll critique me.” He still catches himself throwing in filler words now and then (he can be sure his family will count each one), but he knows his folks are sticklers for other areas of his speech as well.

“We give him feedback,” Wanda says, noting that during the CNN appearance, Elliot referred to the country’s leader as “Obama.” Wanda told him later, “You need to say, ‘President Obama,’ and he took it to heart.”

Wanda says Jeremiah is the quieter of the brothers. “He’s a person of fewer words, more of a listener,” she says, adding that she often has to pull opinions from him. Yet he’s still enthusiastic about competing. He recently participated in a competition called Speak Up Speak Out, through the Birmingham Jack and Jill chapter.

Elliot and Jeremiah have grown up in an environment of friendly competition—with a special emphasis on pronunciation

and annunciation. The brothers certainly see a rivalry between their parents, who are both outspoken, but they understand it’s all in good fun; mostly, the family enjoys growing together.

At the VA today, Stan is an advocate for patients’ rights who works on the director’s staff, and communicating is a critical part of his job. He says Toastmasters has helped him cut down on ahs, ums and other crutch words. It’s also allowed him to more quickly articulate his thoughts in an often contentious environment. Wanda is a district president of the Alabama State Nurses Association and a clinical coordinator at the VA, spending her days talking to insurance companies and advocating on behalf of the veterans.

Stan wants to continue inspiring others to join the Circle of Champions club—whose members come from all walks of life. Since Wanda started the club, more than 100 people have joined, including a city councilman and some CEOs. Tony Roberts, a local preacher, offered his church for meeting space, and eventually he, too, joined. He’s earned ACB and CL awards, and is serving as club president. Stan said his sermons have improved as

Not only is he the school’s first African-American SGA president in four decades, but he is also only the eighth candidate in more than a century to defeat what’s known as “The Machine.”

a result. “It’s hard to imagine a pastor doing this for a living and still improving,” Stan says, “but he has.”

Wanda never passes up an opportunity to introduce someone to the Circle of Champions and knows firsthand that a fear of speaking can be debilitating. She’s working on bringing Toastmasters into Jeremiah’s high school through the Youth Leadership Program. Her goal, she says, is to share the organization with as many people as possible, because she believes strongly in its mission. “Public speaking,” she says, “is part of who we are.”

Elliot, who is a member of his university’s Honors College and Blount Liberal Arts program, is focused on using public speaking to inspire change, whether it’s creating more opportunity and access for minority students on campus or working toward improvements in government after he graduates. He’s applying for fellowships and preparing for law school in the coming years.

No matter what Elliot’s career path, public speaking will play a significant role, he says. “Whenever you’re speaking publicly, it’s great to see the expressions of your audience members turn when you can tell they’re engaged and hanging on every word,” he says. “We all have something to say in life, and when people listen to what you have to say, you can inspire, and you can make change.” ■

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FINISH STRONG!

How to beat club officer burnout.

BY MAUREEN ZAPPALA, DTM

It was 1997. The annual Cleveland Revco 10K race was days away. I thought, *I'm going to enter. I think it will be fun! I'm not a runner, but how hard can it be?* (If you're a runner, you just rolled your eyes, right? You know where this is going.)

The race-day weather was perfect, and the mood was electric. Thousands of runners crowded the starting line, eager to start the race. I was jazzed. The race started. I sprinted ahead with all the exuberance of a non-runner who had no clue how to pace herself. Halfway into the race, having fallen way behind, I thought I would die. *This is the dumbest thing I ever did. I can't finish.*

Sometimes serving as a club officer is a lot like my first 10K race. You think you know what's ahead, but you really don't. You feel inspired, love the camaraderie and have a vision of success. You sprint at the start, excited to do well. But halfway through the year, you're weary, frustrated and alone. You think: *I can't do this anymore.* You are burned out. You want to quit.

Maybe you're the vice president education and you had no idea how much work it would take, or you're the sergeant at arms, and lugging and setting up supplies each week has become a thankless struggle. You could be the treasurer, tired of chasing members for dues renewal, or the club president who lacks member support for your DCP goals. Perhaps you're the vice president membership, but visitors don't join, or you're the vice president public relations and creating a club communications plan becomes overwhelming. Maybe your club is small, and officers double up on duties. Your life outside of Toastmasters may be over-busy, or a conflict within your club is draining your energy. So many factors feed into officer burnout. It's no wonder that a number of leaders fizzle midyear and contemplate quitting.





But if you're one of these people, think about what could happen if you don't quit.

I finished that 10K race and I'm so glad I did. That day, as I crossed the finish line, I didn't care that my time was abysmally slow. I was thrilled that I finished. It may sound trite, but finishing your officer year strong will give you a valuable perspective on your abilities, your influence and your inner strength that will come no other way. Author Napoleon Hill said, "Effort only fully releases its reward after a person refuses to quit." The reward comes with staying in the race.

How Stressed Are You?

Volunteer burnout is just like work burnout. Although Toastmasters is a volunteer organization, the work can be just

as stressful as in a job. Stress exists in a continuum. At one end is burnout, exhibited by severe symptoms such as lethargy, crankiness, insomnia and feelings of worthlessness. Near the other end is the less severe but more common relative—"brownout." People who feel this are anxious, disengaged and disillusioned and often unaware of the value of their work. It's a cognitive and emotional malady, one that affects relationships and attitude.

The U.S. coaching firm Corporate Balance Concepts polled 1,000 executives about job stress. They estimated that while a small percentage suffered from true burnout, closer to 40 percent suffered from brownout. It makes sense to assume a similar pattern exists in the volunteer world, even among Toastmasters club officers. That's a lot of unhappy officers!

What Causes Burnout and Brownout in Toastmasters?

Many stress factors cause club officers to toy with the idea of quitting before their term is up. Do any of these resonate with you?

- With no tangible pay compensation, it's hard to see the intangible rewards of serving, especially as the year progresses. If an officer does not see the significance of the role, or the clear link between the role and the bigger picture of Toastmasters, it's easy to let apathy creep in.
- Some roles are more time consuming than others, such as the vice president education. That can be draining.
- Some roles, such as sergeant at arms or treasurer, are less visible, and don't elicit a lot of recognition. If members in those roles long for recognition for a job well done, they may not get it as often as they'd like.

Finishing your officer year strong will give you a valuable perspective on your abilities, your influence and your inner strength that will come no other way.

- Club culture can create stress. Conflict between members is no fun. Lack of support from other officers, or little enthusiasm from club members, will cause an officer's fervor to diminish. Poor communication within the officer team or unrealistic team goals almost guarantee burnout.
- The personality of the individual officer can contribute to burnout. They may have a hard time saying no, or may overestimate their time-management ability. They may struggle with delegation or be hesitant to ask for help. They may be perfectionists or have overextended themselves in areas outside of Toastmasters.

Why Push Through?

In spite of these factors, the rewards of finishing your officer year strong are many. No matter what club officer position you hold, or what the frustrations may be, if you push through to the end of June, you will:

- Earn credit toward your Advanced Leader Bronze award, which requires six months of club office service. (Serve an entire year, and you'll have doubled that credit.)
- Feel tremendous pride at completing your commitment, especially if you dig deep to finish strong.
- Secure your integrity as one who keeps a promise.

- Be an example and role model to others coming up behind you.
- Transition your club to new leadership for the next Toastmasters year.
- As president or vice president education, enjoy the privilege of voting in new officers at your district conference.
- Celebrate with your club as you make an end-of-the-year push to reach those final DCP goals.
- Have more opportunities to develop your leadership skills.
- Encourage others when they want to quit.

That's quite a list! An anonymous wise person once said, "We are judged by what we finish, not by what we start." Don't just start. Finish.

How to Push Forward

Research shows that the greatest amount of volunteer engagement occurs when volunteers know what to do *and* enjoy doing it. By the middle of the Toastmasters year, officers know what to do. But sometimes enjoyment needs to be rekindled. With only a few months left in the Toastmasters year, here are some ideas to reignite your enthusiasm as well as help others:

- Enjoy a social event with the members of your club.
- Take a break. Let others do the work for a while.
- Conduct a club officer meeting over a meal.
- Remember it's only a few more months.
- Begin to cultivate a successor.
- Attend district training events.
- Read the *Toastmaster* magazine to remind yourself of the impact of your job.
- Send handwritten notes to those officers and members who seem to be burning out.
- Know that you are not alone. Connect with others via social media.

In 1997, the day following that 10K race, I was sore but my spirit soared! The iconic boxer Muhammad Ali once said, "I hated every minute of training, but I said, *Don't quit. Suffer now and live the rest of your life as a champion.*"

You're in the final stretch. The finish line is just ahead. Push yourself to reach it, because when you cross the line, you'll love how you feel! You'll feel like a champion. 🏆

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TIPS FOR EXTINGUISHING BURNOUT

Here are some thoughts and useful suggestions from Toastmasters around the world:

Learn how to say no

“I struggled with burnout early on because I hadn’t learned the art of saying no. Now I only say yes to the things I really want to do. I would rather perform a few tasks really well than to do several tasks really badly.”

— Karen Armour, DTM
Modderfontein Breakfast Club
Johannesburg, South Africa

Get organized

“All of our records go into one binder: attendance sheets, grammarian sheets, speech information for each speaker, blank evaluation sheets, etc. At the end of the Toastmasters year, the binder helps us determine members trophies for best attendance, fewest crutch words, best use of word of the day or more. I still type the agenda for each meeting, although the next VPE should have it easier.”

— Susan O’Malley-Larson, ACS, ALB
Ozaukee Toastmasters, Grafton, Wisconsin



Keep a balance

“Take time for yourself; do other things besides club officer duties for Toastmasters. Do your share but not the entire club’s workload. Concentrate on your own journey of personal growth. Dedication to the club is admirable but not at the expense of your health.”

— Lenore Whelan, ACS, ALB
Arnprior Toastmasters, Arnprior, Ontario, Canada

Re-energize

“I regained my energy after attending the May 2015 district conference. It was a wake-up call—one that everybody needs once in a while.”

— Dorceus Valjery Wellington, CC, CL
The Bees Toastmasters
Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Everyone is different

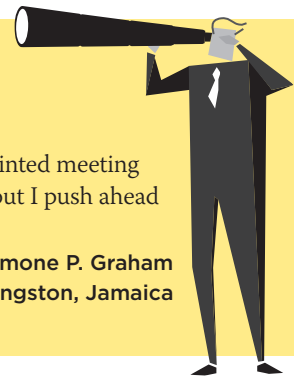
“I stay motivated by remembering that not everyone has the same level of commitment. I appreciate the different strengths that members bring to the group.”

— Donnise Krier, CC, ALB
Dayton Toastmasters
Dayton, Ohio

Set your sights on the rewards

“When we’ve lacked enough members to fill all of the roles, I’ve doubled up to cover them. If we don’t have a printed meeting agenda, I write it out on a white board. It can get hectic, but I push ahead because I believe it is worth it in the end.”

— Simone P. Graham
U.C.T. Toastmasters, Kingston, Jamaica



Draw inspiration from others

“I actually considered resigning the VPE post after five months, but the enthusiasm of guests and the members who were completing their education goals kept me going. Giving up doesn’t set a good example. No club officer position is easy, but it’s the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow that’s worth the challenge at the term’s end.”

— Shelly-Ann Lovell-Williams, ACB, ALB
CIPS Power Achievers Toastmasters,
Trinidad and Tobago

Recruit others

“We have subcommittees to help our club’s officers. The VPE subcommittee alone gets a mentor’s lead and two additional associate officers. This helps with the workload, but also creates a group of leaders who can serve in the future.”

— Julie Ton, CC, ALB
Austin Toastmasters club
Austin, Texas

HOW TO

It's Time for Plan B ... Brainstorming!

continued from page 15

enough time for people to loosen up. Often the best ideas occur once the group has gotten over any self-consciousness and then gathered momentum. Done properly, everybody contributes and also has fun!

Remember, like mastermind groups, brainstorming sessions rely on the reality that when multiple brainpowers are merged, the results are greater than the sum of their parts. You will generate powerful results from the blend of talent, experience, ideas and perspectives you assemble. When you place everyone on equal footing and free them of the usual restrictions of time, structure and rules, magic occurs.

There's incredible power in questions such as:

"What if we ... ?"

"How about ... ?"

"Let's try ... !"

"Suppose we ... ?"

The answer remains the same: YES, and ... !

You can solve club and meeting problems, generate new ideas for club growth, membership retention, meeting and conference themes and formats and even speech ideas. Forget the norms, it's time to brainstorm! **T**

CRAIG HARRISON, DTM, PDG, founded *www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com* to provide sales and service solutions through speaking. For more Toastmasters resources visit *www.SpeakAndLeadWithConfidence.com*.

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MORE BRAINSTORMING TECHNIQUES

Role-Storming: Solve problems in the role of someone from a different field. Or channel the masters and solve problems in the role of a famous person. Examples: WWJD...What would (Steve) Jobs Do? What would Leonardo da Vinci, Sun Tzu, Stephen Hawking, Gloria Estefan or Helen Keller do?

The Contrarian Approach: Be a contrarian and apply "opposite" thinking to generate new ideas.

Word Play: Employ semantic intuition. Play with words, antonyms, synonyms, etc. Rhyme, mix and match, use online dictionaries of all sorts. Check out Alexandra Watkins's www.eatmywords.com website for inspiration. (This also makes for a great warm-up activity to prime participants to think creatively.)

Body-Storming: You create a physical environment and then act within it. Because environment informs experience, when you create a different environment, your actions will generate new thoughts, ideas and understandings. Think role-play plus props.

Freewriting: Whether you brainstorm alone or in a group, engage in freewriting where your pen never comes off the page. Whatever you do, KEEP WRITING. No editing allowed. Suspend judgment and write non-stop for a period of 10 or 15 minutes if possible. Fight the urge to spell check, edit or otherwise go back while writing. Keep writing!

Mind Map: Instead of "lined paper" logical and linear thoughts, mind-map ideas are based on a central goal, premise or idea. Use giant tear sheets, colored markers, crayons or just blank paper. It's preferable to use drawings to depict images, ideas and processes. Don't worry about how well you draw. Just map it. (This can also be done with software, but I suggest doing it freehand.)

Location, Location, Location: Conduct your brainstorming session in an unusual, inspiring or supportive environment (Bonus points for a nature setting.). If you must use standard meeting rooms, name them exotically and adorn them with toys, posters, games, inspirational artifacts or thematic items. For example, rename your meeting room Aruba and create an island motif with shells, tropical fruit and accompanying music. Encourage attendees to wear shorts, beach attire, sunhats and tropical colors.

Use a Graphic Recorder or Graphic Facilitator:

Invest in hiring a graphic recorder, also known as a visual practitioner, to record your ideas visually and help bring them to life for all. Find one at www.ifvp.org.

Design Your OWN! You are creative enough to design your own. Go for it!



Breaking Language Barriers

Top 10 tips for connecting with anyone in the world.

BY DEAN FOSTER

Even if you're not crossing oceans, time zones or into new cultures, communication can be tough. Just think about how hard it is to communicate with your most intimate contacts; your significant other, your kids, your friends. In international business, when we add the pressure of work and deadlines, as well as language and cultural differences, communication gets even more complicated.

With all that in the mix, it's not hard for communication to break down. To help ease those stresses, here are the top 10 tips for more successful communication with anyone in the world. After all, good communication is key for good business.

Avoid any confusion by keeping baseball English in the dugout.

10 Take your time
Slow down. Pause. Give space. And don't talk too fast. Especially when you're communicating via telephone, remember to use conscious speech, slow down and break your sentences into short, definable sections. Also be sure to give your listener time to translate and digest your words as you go.

9 Ask the other speaker to slow down too
If the person you're speaking to is talking too fast or their accent is getting in the way, ask them to slow down. Making it about yourself is always a good trick and a way to avoid offense. Say something like, "I'm from Texas so I probably have a strange accent. I'll slow down and hope that makes it easier for you to understand me. Since you're from Hyderabad, your accent is not easy for me, either. Why don't we both slow down a little, so we can understand each other better?"

8 Keep it simple
Don't use big words. Two-syllable words are better than three-syllable words, and one-syllable words are better than two-syllable words. Don't say, "Do this in an efficacious way." Just say, "Do this quickly."

7 Don't be afraid to ask for help
If the person you're speaking with uses a word you don't understand, let them know. While "global English" may be the world's form of communication, it changes from country to country. If your Indian colleague says, "Do the needful," and you have no idea what that means, tell them. Spoiler alert! It means "take the next step to make things happen."

6 Avoid "Baseball English"
Unless your colleagues are familiar with sports terminology—and baseball terminology specifically—they probably won't understand what you mean when you say things like: *Let's hit a home run* or *please pinch-hit for me at the meeting*. Avoid any confusion by keeping baseball English in the dugout.

5 Get rid of double negatives
You don't know what a double negative is, do you? That question is confusing. Phrasing statements or questions in "double negatives" will result in an invalid response in many cultures.

4 Talk to more than one person
People often "imply" meaning, so the words in your business email or conversation may not represent all, or even the most important, information you need. Whenever possible, try to cultivate multiple sources of information to get the complete picture.

3 Start out formally
In most cultures, people expect a degree of formality at the beginning of communication. Each culture has its own culture-specific way of indicating this formality ("Herr" and "Frau" in Germany, the reversal of family and given names in China, and the use of "san" in Japan for men and women, for example.). Become familiar with these familiarity tokens, and don't jump to "first names" until you receive a cue from your new colleague to do so.

2 Pay attention to the nonverbal
If you have the luxury of being face-to-face, tune into nonverbal behaviors. Facial expressions, proximity, physicality and hand gestures all carry a lot of meaning. Be sure to remember that body movement or nonverbal behavior may have a completely different meaning in another culture. For instance, the U.S. "OK" sign (making a circle by touching the tip of the first finger to the tip of the thumb) is very vulgar in Brazil.

1 Be respectful, be interested and be humble
Ask people about their cultures, admit that you are learning and don't force or project your cultural ways on them. Remember, we all have a lot to learn and teach each other. No matter what, you are always a guest in a foreign land.

Based on an article published May 20, 2014 at internationalHRforum.com. 

DEAN FOSTER is an expert on culture in business and frequently lectures at various universities and conferences. He is the author of many books including *Bargaining Across Borders* and the *Global Etiquette Guide* series. He is the director of his own firm, *DFA Intercultural Global Solutions* (dfaintercultural.com).

Member Achievements

How four members leverage their skills for professional success.

Keith Hayden

Hickam AFB Club, Honolulu, Hawaii

A Look into Leadership

For officers in the United States Air Force, leadership is an every-day endeavor. Whether in the office or in a deployed environment in charge of a large unit (or just in charge of ourselves), we need leadership. Toastmasters has provided me with a professional and permissive environment, not only to hone my own leadership skills, but more importantly to help young Airmen develop theirs.

When I attend Toastmasters functions with other clubs in our district, I notice that most club members I meet are older professionals who want to improve their speaking and leadership skills. But my club is unique in two fundamental ways: 1) most of our members are under 30 and generally have little experience with public speaking, and 2) most of them are affiliated with the military, or are serving in the military, which means our membership is transitory. These two factors influence our club greatly, and as a result most meetings are focused on keeping a younger audience engaged while helping them develop as leaders and communicators.



Keith Hayden

I joined Toastmasters in June 2015, and because I believe strongly in the Toastmasters mission, I signed up for a leadership position during the second meeting I attended. Our club has been Distinguished for 10 years, thanks to very dedicated members who have since moved on in their careers. Our club's success now rests on my shoulders and on those of my fellow officers.



Ashayna N. Nisbett

Ashayna N. Nisbett, CC

SXM Achievers, Philipsburg, Sint Maarten

First Impressions

If you think presenting to a room full of adults is nerve-wrecking, just imagine speaking in front of 50 teenagers. How would you capture *and* maintain the interest of the world's largest group of critics (in my opinion)—teenagers.

I joined Toastmasters in August 2013, exactly one year prior to embarking on a new journey as a career guidance counselor at a vocational institution with special education students. Little did I know how much the completion of the *Competent Communication* (CC) manual would affect my career.

My first presentation to the students at this school needed to leave a positive and lasting impression. I was scheduled to speak for 45 minutes on career guidance—my area of expertise. I was warned, "I hope you have something exciting planned. This group is a difficult bunch." I wondered if a 45-minute presentation existed in the CC manual.

I started with a clear tone of voice and noticed that all eyes were on me—this was a good sign. To conjure up images in the minds of the students, I used simple words and appropriate gestures. As I played an interesting video for them, I heard laughter and sounds of awe and excitement. I even had the attention of teachers in the audience.

Although I was not trained as a vocational/special education teacher, in Toastmasters I developed the skills I needed to fill in as a substitute in the classroom. My skills also helped me conduct school workshops and sessions as a career guidance counselor. I love what I'm doing, and thanks to Toastmasters, I am a more effective counselor, educator and leader.

Ana Bradley, CC

Bethesda Community Toastmasters, Bethesda, Maryland

Great Expectations

Can she talk? Those three words formed a question posed by an ill-informed, ignorant stranger. Ana, to whom the question was directed, delicately described that experience in response to a Table Topics question she answered during a meeting of the Bethesda Community Toastmasters. She explained how the question infuriated her, and how her mother, who was also present, was shocked.

Ana was born with Down syndrome, and while she may struggle with developmental delays and disabilities, no one in our club would ask that question. Not only can she talk, she can deliver speeches, make us laugh and command the attention of a large audience. And, she can serve as sergeant at arms for our club.

Delightful, engaging and bold are the words that come to mind when describing Ana. In one of her speeches (my favorite), she described the different dances she has learned throughout the years. She delivered it complete with ballet slippers, music and a full-on demonstration. She also asked us to get up and dance, and of course we did.

In addition to giving speeches, she enjoys introducing the word of the day. She works hard to ensure that the word is just tough enough that we need to think about it, while familiar enough that a couple of us can work it into our own speeches.

In October 2014, Ana, a long-term volunteer at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C., was hired by the Smithsonian Libraries, where she labels books, handles circulation and helps with the mail. She credits her club engagement and devoted parents with making this dream a reality. Ana's parents—the long-standing Toastmasters Ginny Colten-Bradley, CC, and Michael Bradley, ACS—are the delightful staples of our club.

In March 2015, our club was recognized by an organization that serves individuals affected by intellectual and developmental disabilities for our ongoing support of Ana. The truth is, it's a two-way street. Ana supports us just as much as we support her.

Not only is Ana a great speaker—she has us expecting great things of her. We eagerly await her next achievement.

Contributed by Jennifer Collins, CC, CL, president of Bethesda Community Toastmasters.



Ana Bradley

David Elston, DTM

C Division Advanced Speakers and Curwood Toastmasters
Grand Ledge, Michigan, and Owosso, Michigan

Climbing the Corporate Ladder

Back in 2012, I was having my yearly performance review with my boss, who at that time was Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of Memorial Healthcare in Owosso, Michigan. During my review, he asked me what I wanted to be doing in five years. I told him I wanted his job.

I am director of finance, which is one step below the CFO position. My boss told me I needed to learn the skills of public speaking, because CFOs give presentations to boards, finance committees, employee groups and community groups. He also listed it as a goal in my evaluation: Join an organization such as Toastmasters, get better at public speaking and give several presentations to groups—all by the time of the next evaluation. I waited almost a year before I acted.

Once I started Toastmasters, I was hooked. I joined a few clubs and tried to speak as often as possible. Many of my speeches were about my life—my family, friends and experiences. I constantly strove to improve my skills, and it worked: I earned my DTM in 22 months. And I am currently working on my second.



Elston (right) poses with his DTM award alongside Brian Long, CEO of Memorial Healthcare, where Elston works.

I was 56 when I joined Toastmasters so I felt that I needed to master public speaking quickly to help my chances of job advancement. I now know how to prepare speeches and deliver them well. I gained confidence that I never had before. Toastmasters has made a large improvement in my professional and personal life.



Yeah, but...

My continuing struggle to keep the “yeah” and lose the “but.”

BY JOHN CADLEY

I have to admit something about myself. I’m a “Yeahbut.” You know the type. You say something positive like, “Isn’t it nice today?” and the Yeahbut replies, “Yeah, but ... it’s going to rain tomorrow.” Or the Yeahbut’s doctor recommends that he or she get a vaccination for, say, shingles, and the following exchange ensues:

Doctor: “I recommend the shingles vaccination for anyone over 60 who has had chicken pox.”

Yeahbut: “Yeah, but ... you can get a bad reaction to vaccinations and die.”

Doctor: “It’s extremely rare. I’m sure you’ll be fine.”

Yeahbut: “Yeah, but ... I could get the vaccination and still get shingles. I know someone that happened to.”

Doctor: “He probably got a much milder case than he would have otherwise.”

Yeahbut: “Yeah, but ... it doesn’t protect me from pneumonia.”

You see the problem. A Yeahbut is like a funeral director at a birthday party. Confronted with good news, positive thoughts and hopeful tidings, the Yeahbut feels compelled to point out the illusory nature of such thinking and to remind us of the woe, misery and despair that are forever lurking just beneath the surface of all human endeavor.

Yeahbuts pride themselves on being “realistic.” They are sure they see what others don’t or won’t. And they feel it is their solemn duty—and I do mean solemn—to remind everyone within earshot that there is no point in hoping for the best when we should all be planning for the worst.

These are not fun people. And I’m one of them. If I had been one of those fortunate passengers who survived the sinking of the Titanic, I would have sat in the lifeboat and said, “Yeah, but ... what about my luggage?” That’s awful—and I know it. And it still doesn’t stop me from thinking *Well, it’s true—I would have lost my luggage.*

I think it’s congenital. In fact, I know it is. When I was born, the doctor clamped a pair of stainless steel forceps around my head to pull me through the birth canal (apparently I wasn’t all that willing to come). Then he held me upside down, slapped me, and handed me to a nurse who proceeded to put silver nitrate in my eyes and wrap me up like a ham sandwich. It was then that

I formed my first and most enduring impression of the human experience: *Someone could get hurt around here.*

I’ve felt that way ever since. I don’t mind it, but other people do. They’re trying to walk confidently in the direction of their dreams and I’m yelling, “Are you sure? You could trip and break your leg.” I mean—it could happen ... but it’s not what they want to hear. I understand. I know it would be better if my response to life was one, big unqualified YES! I know that’s what Oprah and Dr. Phil would tell me to do. I know how “Yeah, but” sends a morbidly mixed message, like: *YES—Let us celebrate the wonders of life! BUT—don’t forget all the ways it could kill you!*

A yeahbut is like a funeral director at a birthday party.

And I have tried to change—many times. Just recently I sat down with myself and had the following brief conversation:

“John, you’ve got to stop saying ‘Yeah, but.’”

“Yeah, but I could be right.”

“Yeah, but it’s depressing.”

“Yeah, but ...”

You see why I never get anywhere.

Do you have a Yeahbut in your life? If you do, you may take some comfort in knowing the nice things it says about you. After all, a Yeahbut can only be a Yeahbut if there’s a positive, trusting, optimistic person like you around to say “Yeah” so they can add the “but.”

You should also know that not all Yeahbuts are negative naysayers. Some very famous and successful people were Yeahbuts, like Napoleon who, while being congratulated for his many victories, said, “Yeah, but ... I’d still really like to capture Waterloo.” Or the mighty Julius Caesar who, upon reviewing the guest list for his appearance at the Senate said, “Yeah, but ... shouldn’t we invite Brutus?” If you’re saying, “Yeah, but ... Napoleon got defeated and Caesar got killed,” I’ll say, “Yeah, but ... you just said ‘Yeah, but.’”

Welcome to the club. ■

JOHN CADLEY, a former advertising copywriter, is a freelance writer and musician living in Fayetteville, New York.

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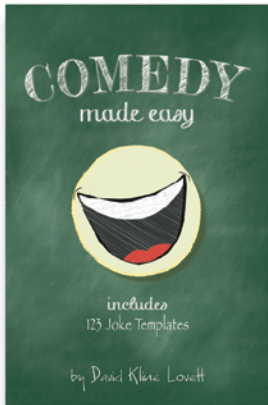
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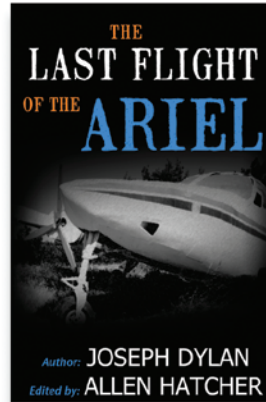
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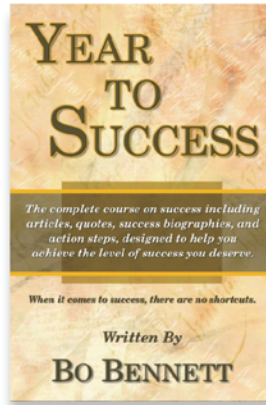
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