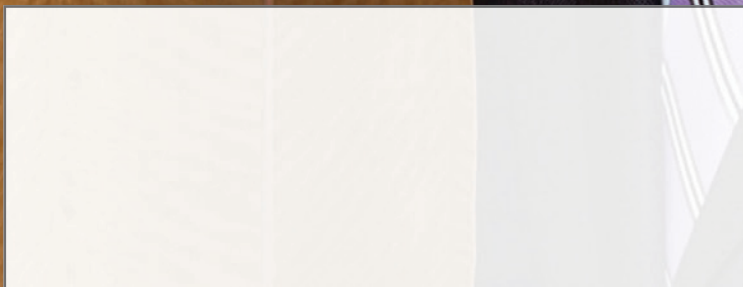


THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | FEBRUARY 2016

# TOASTMASTER®



Stretch your  
brain with a  
Table Topics  
workout



## Meet Dr. Steven Stack

Former Toastmaster  
steers the American  
Medical Association



## Talk Up Toastmasters

The number of people I meet who are not aware of Toastmasters, or who don't have knowledge of what we do, surprises me. Guided by the organization's strategic plan, this month the Board of Directors considered approaches to increase the overall awareness of, and participation in, Toastmasters. As a nonprofit, we will focus significantly on tools and techniques that can be used by local clubs and district leaders. The ultimate result of increased

awareness will be greater membership in our existing and new clubs.

One existing program to help with awareness and participation is Talk Up Toastmasters, a membership-building campaign for clubs that runs in February and March each year. I encourage every club to participate. Campaigns like this remind us to promote our clubs, bring guests to club meetings and invite them to join and develop their skills in our supportive environment.

Toastmasters International surveys samples of members who do not renew their membership. (To find the survey report, go to <http://bit.ly/1MwplWm>.) In the survey, non-renewing members say the likelihood they would recommend Toastmasters to a friend, family member or colleague is 8.1 on a scale of 0 to 10. In addition, 77.3 percent of non-renewing members report that they intend to renew soon or may renew in the future. Quite good.

As to the reasons for not renewing their membership, 13 percent cite the meeting time or location of their club, and close to 5 percent mention the member attendance. If only we could direct these past members to other clubs where their needs found a better match.

I ask you to promote Talk Up Toastmasters in your club. It's a great speech topic in itself. I recall speaking on this once and a newer member said afterwards, "I didn't know we were looking for new members," and the next week she brought two guests. Sometimes we can mistakenly assume that newer members fully see and understand how our clubs operate.

Have some fun as you promote Talk Up Toastmasters. Remind people that any club that adds five new, dual or reinstated members with a join date between February 1 and March 31 will receive a special "Talk Up Toastmasters" ribbon to display on their club's banner. You can learn more by signing in to [www.toastmasters.org/MembershipPrograms](http://www.toastmasters.org/MembershipPrograms) and then clicking on "Membership Building Programs for Clubs" in the Helpful Resources section.

In addition, when individual Toastmasters sponsor five, 10 or 15 new members in a program year (July 1 to June 30), they will receive special prizes. Learn more by signing in to the same page mentioned above and clicking on "Membership Building Program for Individuals."

Toastmasters has been very successful over our 91 years thanks to the achievements and performance of our members, the work of our volunteer leaders and our strong culture. We have the capacity to enable many more people to develop their skills. Increased awareness, and membership-building campaigns, can help us to do just that.

**JIM KOKOCKI, DTM**  
International President

# TOASTMASTER®

**Publisher**  
Daniel Rex

**Managing Editor**  
Suzanne Frey

**Senior Editor**  
Paul Sterman

**Associate Editor**  
Mary Nesfield

**Associate Editor**  
Jennie Harris

**Editorial Coordinator**  
Shannon Dewey

**Art Direction**  
Susan Campbell

**Graphic Design**  
Deidre Gaffney

## 2015-2016 OFFICERS

**International President**  
Jim Kokocki, DTM

**International President-Elect**  
Mike Storkey, DTM

**First Vice President**  
Balraj Arunasalam, DTM

**Second Vice President**  
Lark Doley, DTM

**Immediate Past President**  
Mohammed Murad, DTM

**Chief Executive Officer**  
Daniel Rex

**Secretary-Treasurer**  
Jennifer Quinn

## 2015-2016 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Margaret Page, DTM  
Region 1

Gloria Shishido, DTM  
Region 2

Crystal D. Allbritton, DTM  
Region 3

Joan Watson, DTM  
Region 4

Magnus Jansson, DTM  
Region 5

Ross Mackay, DTM  
Region 6

Russell L. Drake, DTM  
Region 7

Dennis Wooldridge, DTM  
Region 8

Steve Chen, DTM  
Region 9

Ede Ferrari D'Angelo, DTM  
Region 10

Teresa Dukes, DTM  
Region 11

Charlie Starrett, DTM  
Region 12

Nagaraja Rao, DTM  
Region 13

Patrick Oei, DTM  
Region 14

## TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL

P.O. Box 9052, Mission Viejo, CA 92690 U.S.A.  
+1 949-858-8255 • Fax: +1 949-858-1207 • Voicemail: +1 949-835-1300  
[www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org)

## CONTACTING WORLD HEADQUARTERS

For information on joining or building a club, visit: [www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org)  
Article submission: [submissions@toastmasters.org](mailto:submissions@toastmasters.org)  
Letters to the Editor: [letters@toastmasters.org](mailto:letters@toastmasters.org)  
To change address, log in to: [www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org)

## Toastmasters International Mission:

We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.



**WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE**  
[www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org)

The *Toastmaster* magazine (ISSN 00408263) is published monthly by Toastmasters International, Inc., 23182 Arroyo Vista, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688, U.S.A. Periodicals postage paid at Mission Viejo, CA and additional mailing office. POSTMASTER: Send address change to the *Toastmaster* magazine, P.O. Box 9052, Mission Viejo, CA 92690, U.S.A.

Published to promote the ideas and goals of Toastmasters International, a nonprofit educational organization of clubs throughout the world dedicated to teaching skills in public speaking and leadership. Members' subscriptions are included in the \$36 semi-annual dues.

The official publication of Toastmasters International carries authorized notices and articles regarding the activities and interests of the organization, but responsibility is not assumed for the opinions of the authors of other articles. The *Toastmaster* magazine does not endorse or guarantee the products it advertises.

Copyright 2016 Toastmasters International, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited. Not responsible for unsolicited material.

Toastmasters International, the *Toastmaster* and the Toastmaster International Emblem are trademarks of Toastmasters International registered in the United States, Canada and many other countries. Marca registrada en Mexico.

Printed in U.S.A.

Club milestones give many Toastmasters around the world a reason to cheer. Congratulations to the following clubs!



**200th meeting**  
Yokohama Frontier  
Toastmasters  
Yokohama, Japan



**1st anniversary**  
UBD Toastmasters  
(University of Brunei  
Darussalam)  
Brunei,  
Darussalam



**15th anniversary**  
Toastmasters  
of Basel  
Basel,  
Switzerland

Send your fun club photos to [photos@toastmasters.org](mailto:photos@toastmasters.org). Include a description and your club name and location. Photos must be in .jpeg format and they can't be blurry. In addition, they should have a resolution of at least 300 dpi (dots per inch) or 1 megabyte (MB). Each email we receive is limited to 25 megabytes (MB). If your photos are too large, please attach them to separate emails or use Dropbox. All pictures of Toastmasters materials must display the current brand.

# Features



22

## 22

IMPROMPTU SPEAKING

### A Table Topics Workout

The power-packed exercise for stretching your brain.

*By Maureen Zappala, DTM*



16

## 16

HUMOR

### The Serious Business of Being Funny Across Cultures

Managing humor, culture and virtual technology in the 21st century.

*By Dean Foster*

**ON THE COVER:** Photo of American Medical Association president Dr. Steven Stack courtesy of the AMA.

# Articles

## 12

COVER: Q&A

### DR. STEVEN STACK: STEERING THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

Pioneering president speaks out on doctor-patient communication.

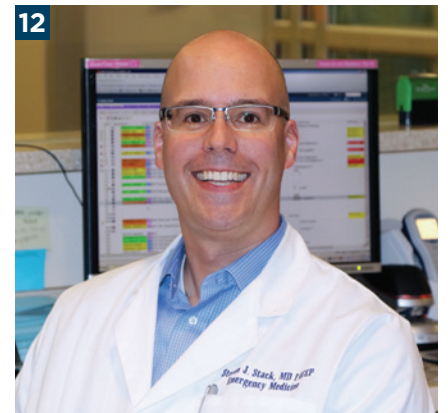
*By Linda Allen, ACS, CL*

## 14

PUBLIC SPEAKING  
OOOPS!

Bloopers, blunders and other embarrassing moments onstage.

*By Caren Schnur Neile, Ph.D., ATMS*



12



14

# Read it anytime, anywhere.

Download the Toastmaster magazine tablet app and get instant access to:

- Past issues (up to one year) in one convenient location
- More photos
- Links to additional resources, including videos, relevant articles and websites

To download it today, visit

[www.toastmasters.org/Magazine](http://www.toastmasters.org/Magazine)



## Articles

20

### TALL TALES

#### SPINNING A TALL TALE

The secrets of sounding believable when twisting a story.

By Mitch Mirkin, CTM

26

### ADVANCED SPEAKER

#### VOCAL VARIETY 2.0

Three techniques to sound your best.

By Bill Brown, DTM

28

### SUCCESS STORIES

#### MEMBER ACHIEVEMENTS

How four members pushed past barriers on the road to success.



## Columns

2

### VIEWPOINT

Talk Up Toastmasters

By Jim Kokocki, DTM  
International President

11

### MY TURN

The Road Ahead

By Andrei Levitski

30

### FUNNY YOU SHOULD SAY THAT

What's So Funny?

By John Cadley

## Departments

3 MEMBERS' FORUM

6 QUICK TAKES

10 TRAVELING TOASTMASTER

### ▶ MEMBER MOMENT



**Quinn Lemley** sang, danced and acted her way from the city of Columbus, Indiana, to the bright lights of the stage in New York City. The Distinguished Toastmaster is the star and producer of the critically acclaimed shows *Burlesque to Broadway* and *The Heat Is On*, and she headlines at top theaters and casinos around the world.

When she's not performing, Lemley teaches public speaking at the New York Conservatory for Dramatic Arts. Last year she presided as celebrity host for Citicorp's March of Dimes fundraiser event. She and two other Toastmasters have also developed a boot camp called *The Quintessential Message*, to help companies develop their employees' executive presence, and their speaking and communication skills.

Lemley is a member of two clubs: Douglas Elliman and Leadership Roundtable Toastmasters. She has served as president, vice president education and area governor.

#### **Why did you join?**

In 2012, I went to support my friend who was delivering her Ice Breaker speech and fell in love with her club, Douglas Elliman Toastmasters. I do a lot of interviews for the press, and they're just like Table Topics. During interviews I stuttered or spoke too fast. I thought Toastmasters would help—and it has!

#### **How has Toastmasters affected your career as an entertainer?**

Between songs, I address the audience through monologues. Like in public speaking, it's important to connect with the audience and keep them engaged. I've learned to master the skills we use at Toastmasters: body language, vocal variety, listening, eye contact, props and more.

With 20 people performing in my show, the leadership track in Toastmasters has had a huge influence on my ability to lead. For example, I've learned to delegate responsibilities in our company, *Burlesque to Broadway*, in each department, just as we do in Toastmasters. Each member has a role and is responsible for their department, like dance, music, costumes, hair, etc. It's also helped in learning to work with so many diverse personality types.

#### **How do you adapt your performance for international audiences?**

I love performing internationally! In addition to touring in the United States, we play in Greece, China and Europe. The connections I make with those audiences is different from when I play in the U.S. because I try to speak their languages. Even if I just say hello, it lets them know that I care about their culture.

#### **Do you have advice for members on how to conquer the stage?**

Singing in front of 2,500 people isn't that different from singing in a club of 50. I started out in small clubs, and that is great training for making connections in a large hall.

I also give a workshop called *Secrets of The Stage*, and I tell people to take advantage of every opportunity to speak. The more you do it, the more comfortable it becomes. If you ever fail, get back up and learn from your mistakes!

---

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

## ▶ SNAPSHOT

The Smashing the Envelope club in Melbourne, Australia, created custom red beanie caps to wear when fellow members participate in speech contests. When members are onstage, they can look out into the crowd and feel supported by a “sea of red caps,” says Club President Ross Brunt, ACG, ALB. They plan to wear them in upcoming area, division and district contests.



## ▶ SPEECH CONTEST TIPS

### Know Your Timeframe

There’s a lot to learn when it comes to speech contests. While the Toastmasters International Speech Contest is what most members work toward, many other speeches take place throughout the year. To learn which contests you can participate in and when they are held, talk to your club officers or visit your district website ([www.toastmasters.org/districtwebsites](http://www.toastmasters.org/districtwebsites)).

If you decide to compete, here’s a helpful chart to remind you of your time limits as you prepare:

| Contest type               | Timeframe      | Disqualified         | Green     | Yellow     | Red       | Disqualified         |
|----------------------------|----------------|----------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|----------------------|
| International and Humorous | 5 to 7 minutes | Less than 4½ minutes | 5 minutes | 6 minutes  | 7 minutes | More than 7½ minutes |
| Table Topics               | 1 to 2 minutes | Less than 1 minute   | 1 minute  | 1½ minutes | 2 minutes | More than 2½ minutes |
| Evaluation                 | 2 to 3 minutes | Less than 1½ minutes | 2 minutes | 2½ minutes | 3 minutes | More than 3½ minutes |
| Tall Tales                 | 3 to 5 minutes | Less than 2½ minutes | 3 minutes | 4 minutes  | 5 minutes | More than 5½ minutes |

Are you thinking about being a judge for an upcoming contest? E-learning tutorials are available with valuable tips and information to help you prepare for the role:

- Speech Contest Tutorials (<http://bit.ly/1NnKy9e>)
- Speech Contest Judges Training (<http://bit.ly/1P5fuvo>)

## QUICK TAKES

### ▶ MEET MY MENTOR

# Roger Caesar, ACB, ALB



FROM LEFT: *Nadia Hussain and Roger Caesar*



Nadia Hussain, CC, ALB, a child-and-youth worker at the Peel District School Board in Ontario, Canada, always had a fear of public speaking. After raising a family, Nadia was ready to step outside of her comfort zone. As a result of encouragement from a past World Champion of Public Speaking, she joined the Brampton Club in Brampton, Ontario, in 2010 and was immediately assigned a mentor.

Roger Caesar, ACB, ALB, an entrepreneur who runs his own transport company, joined the club about six months later, and was voted onto the leadership team. Nadia and Roger both served on the team that year. Nadia realized that she has the same energy and personality type as Roger. She also related to his speaking style, so she asked him to be her new mentor.

#### What is Roger's approach to mentoring?

Roger is holistic in his approach. He not only provides guidance in regard to specific speaking strategies, he's also a true teacher when he encourages me to alter the thoughts that I attach to myself as a speaker. He says that if I tell myself I'm going to mess up, I will. He encourages me to visualize my success so that I can experience it.

He's nothing short of compassionate, supportive and encouraging. One phone call from Roger makes all the difference in getting me on track.

#### What do you like about the Toastmasters mentoring program?

I like it so much that last year I served as the chair of mentorship. My role was to pair new members with club veterans based on existing speaking skills, style and personality. Members are free to change their mentors as their skills develop.

The program not only helps new members learn and grow; it also motivates others to continue to challenge themselves and participate more consistently as mentors for even further growth and development.

#### What makes Roger stand out?

Roger's speaking skills were already advanced when he joined. But even pros like Roger can learn and grow in Toastmasters. But as much as he is interested in his own success and development, his passion lies in witnessing the growth and development of fellow members, whether or not he is their mentor.

Roger is this year's club president and is doing an amazing job! He made it to Las Vegas as a semifinalist contestant at the 2015 World Championship of Public Speaking, and he won the District 86 Humorous Speech Contest in 2014. He works hard and keeps busy as he continues to compete in the public speaking arena.

#### 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](mailto:MentorMoment@toastmasters.org).

### ▶ SPEAKING OUTSIDE OF THE CLUB



Helen Cothron, right, of the Atomic Windbags of Chattanooga, Tennessee, poses with Ryan Wolfe from East Coast Electric Toastmasters of Charlotte, North Carolina. The two traveled to Shenyang, China, to present information at the 4th International Symposium on materials and reliability in nuclear power plants.



## ▶ HUMOR SPEECH TIPS

# Comedy Made Easy

BY DAVID KLINE LOVETT, DTM

Want to get better at writing and delivering funny, original jokes? To get started, follow these four rules of humor.

### 1 If there is no surprise ... humor dies.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle once said, “The secret of humor is surprise.” One of the primary reasons people laugh is because of surprise, and what causes surprise is the unexpected.

A joke is a tale of two stories. One story has everyone walking down Main Street and turning right on Elm Street. In the second story, you are the only person to turn left, thus creating surprise.

An example of how this works comes from the comic genius Rodney Dangerfield. “My wife and I were happy for twenty years ... and then we met.” When Dangerfield pauses before the second phrase, the audience is left thinking that the next line (or the right turn) will be about how happy he and his wife were together. But the next line comes as a surprise, “and then we met.” That’s the left turn.

### 2 If they only hear half ... they will never laugh.

All too often we hear the first half of a story and we miss the second part. In a speech, that second part of the story is called the punch word, or phrase. In humor it’s called the punch line.

Take my yoga teacher, for example. She barks out instructions for an entire hour, telling her students how to move, stand and hold postures. Every person in the room can hear her. Yet at the beginning of the class, when she gives us her name, most people can’t hear her. I think it’s because she’s calling attention to herself, and that makes her shy.

I’ve done the same thing when asking for a date. At that critical moment when I’d ask, “Would you like to go out with me?” my voice would drop, causing the woman to ask me to repeat the question.

Make sure that everyone in the room can hear every word that you say, especially the punch line.

### 3 When you say it last ... they have a blast.

Put the punch line at the very end. If you don’t, you will be talking while your audience is laughing and they won’t be able to hear what you say next. This is known as “stepping on your laughs;” it trains your audience not to laugh.

This also applies in a speech. To have more impact, and to be more memorable, say the most important line—or punch phrase—last. Take Dangerfield’s joke (mentioned earlier), for example, “My wife and I were happy for twenty years ... and then we met.” If he had continued, by saying, “and we lived in a three-bedroom house,” the joke no longer works.



### 4 If there is no pause ... there won't be applause.

I remember first hearing about comic timing, and how some comedians have it while others don’t. The truth of the matter is that it isn’t that difficult to do, and it can easily be learned.

Three pauses go into comedic timing. One comes prior to the joke; another is inserted right before the punch line; and a third comes after the punch line is delivered. The first pause draws attention, implying that something important is about to be said.

The second pause sets up of the joke. It alerts your audience that there is something good coming next. It also builds tension, which will be released later by your punch line.

The third and final pause comes at the end. It’s there so that you don’t step on the audience’s laughter. I have delivered jokes that didn’t get a laugh initially, but once I paused, the laughs came because I had given the audience time to think about what I had said. Another reason for pausing at the end is to prolong, or milk the laughter. And that’s a good way to end.

These four tips will get you started writing funnier speeches, and it will make you funnier in all areas of your life.

---

DAVID KLINE LOVETT, DTM, is the president of the Leaders in Action club in Huntington Beach, California. You can read more humor tips in his book *Comedy Made Easy*, or visit his website at [DavidKlineLovett.com](http://DavidKlineLovett.com).

## TRAVELING TOASTMASTER



**1 | CHRISTA SABATHALY, FROM JAKARTA, INDONESIA,** meets a Komodo dragon at Komodo National Park in Indonesia.

**2 | SARAH HALL, CC, ALB, FROM HASTINGS, NEW ZEALAND,** poses near a live volcano on Mount Benbow, on the island of Ambrym, Vanuatu.

**3 | KEN BLACK, CTM, FROM HOUSTON, TEXAS,** visits the Icebar in Stockholm, Sweden.

**4 | STEVE WEIL, ACB, FROM LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA,** poses in the Sahara Desert in Morocco.



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](http://www.toastmasters.org/Submissions). Bon voyage!

## The Road Ahead

My snow-inspired journey from computer programmer to entrepreneur.

BY ANDREI LEVITSKI

I started working as a computer programmer at Chubb Insurance after graduating from the Chubb Institute, ending a 15-year career as a chemist. It was near the end of the “golden era” of computer programming. The year was 2000, and all the Y2K work was done. Crisis had been averted, and the world didn’t end.

Even then, the life of a computer programmer could seem boring to the average person. The thing about us—computer programmers—is that we like it that way. I liked the fact that during my workday I interacted mostly with a computer keyboard and monitor. My plan was to keep it “boring,” surrounded with lines of code and minimal interaction with co-workers and customers. Evidently, though, destiny had a different road for me.

My manager, Joe Mathesisus, was president of a local Toastmasters club, Sound Bytes Toastmasters, in Warren, New Jersey. He invited me to join the club so I could learn to speak in public. Learn to speak in public? I had two very good reasons not to join the club. First, I didn’t think I needed to speak in public. I was a

**I liked the fact that during my workday I interacted mostly with a computer keyboard and monitor. My plan was to keep it “boring.”**

computer programmer and wanted to stay one. The second was that thing that people say—that fear of public speaking is greater than the fear of death. Well, that was real for me. I preferred to die than speak.

Joe, however, had two very good reasons to make me join the club: He was my manager, and with his experience in Toastmasters he knew how beneficial the club could be for me. Long story short, I started Toastmasters on June 1, 2011. Through many subsequent meetings I still did not see how public speaking would benefit me, but I began to enjoy interacting with other



*Andrei Levitski with his invention, The Knight Sight Safety Banner.*

members, and I could see firsthand the progress that people were making in a short time. Over the next few years I served as an officer and then became president. I still did not see how it all would ever benefit me in “real life.” But as I mentioned, destiny had a plan.

One day in January 2014, during an afternoon snowstorm, I was driving with traffic at 35 miles per hour when my car was struck by an SUV, causing a chain reaction three-vehicle crash. One of the vehicles was hit by a truck that kept going. We were able to move our disabled vehicles to the side of the road. Visibility was poor and oncoming traffic could have struck our already damaged vehicles. We were stuck there, waiting nearly three hours for police to arrive. Darkness fell. We stood outside, and within two hours a

foot of snow fell. Even with my hazard lights on, it seemed dangerous. Although the passing cars were moving slowly by then, I wished I had something to make me more visible.

I later recalled that snowy evening on an August day, when I saw a bright, yellow and black utility truck on the New Jersey Turnpike. I thought about its markings. Such a visible way to alert people, and wouldn’t it have been cool in that snowstorm if I had something like that on my car? That is how the Knight Sight Safety Banner was born. In order to make my idea a reality, I had to create a fabric prototype, find manufacturers, negotiate terms and develop a marketing campaign—I had to communicate, talk, educate and persuade hundreds of people I had never met. But I was ready for those tasks! I had several years of Toastmasters experience.

That is how, equipped by Toastmasters with knowledge of the art of public speaking, I started my entrepreneurial journey and created Knight Sight, in hopes that it will help people to stay safe on the roads. **T**

**ANDREI LEVITSKI** is a member of the Sound Bytes Toastmasters club in Warren, New Jersey. He is a computer programmer who invented a car safety banner called Knight Sight. You can find it at [www.knightsightstore.com](http://www.knightsightstore.com).

## Dr. Steven Stack: Steering the American Medical Association

Pioneering president speaks out on doctor-patient communication.

BY LINDA ALLEN, ACS, CL

**W**hen Dr. Steven Stack was sworn in last year as the new president of the American Medical Association (AMA), he made history on a couple of fronts. At 43, he became the organization's youngest president in 160 years. He also became the first emergency physician to serve in that role.

The former Toastmaster has been a longtime leader in the medical profession. Stack is an expert in the field of health information technology and has served as medical director for several emergency departments. In his line of work, he notes, "the ability to communicate clearly and persuasively is an incredible asset."

The Lexington, Kentucky, physician was elected to the AMA's Board of Trustees in 2006. Founded in the mid-1800s, the AMA is the largest physician organization in the U.S., with 230,000 members.

**"Whether on stage for thousands or in an exam room for a single patient, understanding one's audience is essential to effective communication."**

— Dr. Steven Stack

"My personal mission is to advance the work of the AMA in helping doctors help patients live healthier, happier lives," says Stack. One of his key goals is to reform medical education to meet the needs of a 21st century health care system. For example, he supports AMA funding to help more than 30 medical schools develop innovative training—new curriculum models that will better prepare medical students for real-world patient care.

As the public face of the AMA, Stack gives a wide range of presentations, both in the U.S. and around the world. He speaks about health-policy topics to small and large audiences, and he regularly does print, radio and television interviews.

Stack credits his experience in Toastmasters for his confidence as a speaker. He was a member for about six years, and his initial connection to the organization stretches back to his early teens. In the eighth grade he participated in a community public speaking program led by two Toastmasters, Victoria and Nicolette Boros.

Stack was so enthusiastic about it that Victoria invited him to talk about his experience at the District 10 spring conference in



*As a teen, 14-year old Steven Stack attended a district conference where he met Helen Blanchard, Toastmasters' first woman president.*

1986. There he met Helen Blanchard, Toastmasters International's first female president. Visiting with her made a big impression on the young man.

"All these years, I have remembered her name and my meeting with her solely because of the profound impact that brief interaction has had on my life," Stack says.

### **Why did you decide to become a physician?**

As a student, I enjoyed both science and interacting with people. Becoming a physician was a good blend of my interests. My Toastmasters' involvement represents the interpersonal engagement part of me, and medicine offers personal interactions and many ways of applying science to help patients. I consider being a physician one of the most special parts of my personal and professional identity.

### **How can physicians balance technology and the "personal touch" with patients?**

This may be one of the most salient health care challenges of our times. We have more science and technology to help patients than ever before in human history. Previously incurable conditions are being transformed into chronic, manageable conditions. Health care is now a big business, and many entities have inserted themselves between doctors and patients, to the detriment of this relationship. Both patients and physicians must work to find ways to preserve this bond.



*Dr. Steven Stack uses his Toastmasters skills when speaking on health-policy topics around the world, and to the media.*

With the complexity in science and health delivery, patients need doctors as trusted advocates and partners to chart and navigate a path that leads to healthier, happier lives.

### **How do your communication skills help you as a doctor and as AMA president?**

The ability to empathize with others and appreciate another person's frame of reference is an invaluable asset. Whether on stage for thousands or in an exam room for a single patient, understanding one's audience is essential to effective communication. This sensitivity, when coupled with the ability to distill complex issues into easily understood stories, enables one to connect with others and communicate effectively.

### **What are some challenging speaking situations you encounter?**

I regularly speak to groups about topics on which there are strong differences of opinion. I strive to acknowledge the concerns of others, frame the issue in as balanced a manner as possible and be candid in my response. I find that this works on large stages as well as in one-on-one discussions with patients. Most people appreciate honesty and sincerity, even if they have a difference of opinion.

### **What is your usual approach to public speaking?**

My usual (and most fun) approach is extemporaneous speaking, set around a theme and supported by solid content knowledge. My ideal set-up is a lavalier microphone and a visible clock so I can stay within the allotted time. I owe this [comfort level] to Toastmasters, because this style of public presentation can be terrifying for many people.

I craft the content and style of my message to the real-time verbal and nonverbal feedback from the audience. The presentation becomes a dialogue rather than a monologue. The ability to tailor words, phrases, tone and pacing to a live audience is one of the most impactful communications I get to experience. It's a genuine treat. I am inherently an introvert, so for me to say this is quite an evolution for me.

### **How did Toastmasters help you?**

Nicolette Boros explained that it was normal to have butterflies in my stomach when speaking—but it was how I managed them that mattered. The butterflies don't come as often now, but when they do, my training and experience help me communicate effectively and convey a

polished presence to my audience.

Table Topics has been invaluable to me. The ability to hear and assimilate information quickly and communicate effectively on short notice has been of inestimable value.

I remember being the Ah-Counter and being subjected to others serving in that role. The ability to express myself in a smooth, fluid manner, free of distracting verbal utterances, has enhanced my effectiveness.


### **What tips do you have for patients to help them communicate better with their doctors?**

One, be honest with your physician—a) it's the best way to get good advice, b) we've heard it all before, and c) we often learn the truth from secondary signs anyway.

Two, write notes before you go to your appointment to keep yourself organized and make sure you don't forget any important questions you have.

Three, physicians are often as frustrated with the health system as our patients are—we really want to be your partner and supporter in addition to your advisor.

### **What are your keys to success in life?**

Earlier this year I spoke with students and faculty at my alma mater, Holy Cross College [in Massachusetts]. My message was to be curious, passionate, persistent and humble. Being vibrantly engaged with people in the world around me and being careful to keep things in perspective has gifted me with a wonderful professional and personal life. I am one lucky fellow, to be sure. 

*LINDA ALLEN, ACS, CL, is a member of Enid Speakers of the Plains Toastmasters in Enid, Oklahoma. She is a writer, speaker and trainer who specializes in professional and personal development and leadership programs.*

# Ooops!

Bloopers, blunders and other embarrassing moments onstage.

BY CAREN SCHNUR  
NEILE, PH.D., ATMS



Let's keep this story between you and me, okay? I was recently invited to tell regional stories at an event at a Calvary church in Central Florida. As I pulled my car into the parking lot, it occurred to me that perhaps a few of my racier tales would not appeal to this conservative audience. When I asked my hosts, however, they assured me that I shouldn't worry, so I promptly relaxed.

Apparently I relaxed a bit too much. In the middle of telling a story in which a postman stabs an alligator, I digressed, as I sometimes do, to reflect that as a strict vegetarian, this was the part of the story that always bothered me. A chill fell over the crowd for the rest of the presentation. I couldn't figure out why until I drove back the way I'd come and began to notice the signs I had overlooked on the way into town. Signs for cattle ranches. And a giant billboard with the words, **Beef! It's what's for dinner!**

Ooops. I'd just alienated my entire audience.

Over the years, I've presented to hundreds of groups around the U.S. and abroad. And I'm not ashamed to say—well, I guess I'm a teensy bit ashamed to say—that over time, I have fallen onstage, lost my place in my notes, inadvertently insulted my audience and generally messed up. Am I the only one? I had to know, so I did a little research to find out.

(Sneak preview: What I discovered will, I believe, erase all fear of bloopers for the rest of your speaking career. That is to say, not a single blunderer was fired, stoned or banished. And everyone lived to tell the tale.)

## Soldiering On

Jeannine Murray, ATMS, CL, had been a member of the Medina Toastmasters in Medina, Ohio, for about six months when her club held a meeting with an armed forces theme. Murray was Toastmaster of the meeting, so she decided to get creative.

"I announced that I was the general of the meeting, the functionaries were lieutenants and the Topicsmaster was 'the sergeant in charge of our privates,' by which I meant the participants in Table Topics. Even as I said the words 'our privates,' all the voices in my head gasped. For a micro-moment all was quiet. Then, as I dropped my head onto the lectern in embarrassment, the room exploded in laughter."

Twenty years later, Jeannine says, "I continue to embarrass myself now and again, but not to that same extent!"

According to business speaker and trainer Michael Kerr, we speakers need to celebrate our stumbles. His first piece of advice: Get over it.

"No matter how much you prepare and plan ahead, speaking bloopers will happen, and some of them, despite all your planning, will be beyond your control," Kerr writes on his website.

Instead of dreading or cursing such blunders, we should laugh at them, suggests Kerr. For one thing, they can be a source of onstage humor, relaxing the audience. Plus, mistakes keep us humble and we learn from them.

"Speaking can be a very ego-destroying experience when things go bad," Kerr writes. "[Laughing] at our blunders can remind us not

to take things too seriously and offer some much needed perspective when things go wrong.” In other words, the old adage “tragedy plus time equals comedy” can be a godsend for speakers.

### Political Pitfalls

Toastmasters are not the only ones to misspeak, of course. Politicians, under enormous pressure to get it right, mess up constantly. In August 2004, then-U.S. President George W. Bush told a group in Washington, D.C., “Our enemies are innovative and resourceful, and so are we. They never stop thinking about new ways to harm our country and our people, and neither do we.”

Current U.S. Vice President Joseph Biden is no stranger to bloopers, either. On the day he was sworn in as vice president in 2009, Biden told the crowd that he and his wife “had the great honor of standing on that stage, looking across at one of the great justices, Justice Stewart.” The problem was, he was sworn in by Justice John Paul Stevens.

Few stages are bigger than the annual Academy Awards ceremony, which is viewed on TV by tens of millions of people around the world. At the 2013 ceremony, actress Jennifer Lawrence tripped as she walked up the steps to the stage to receive her Best Actress award. She was later praised for handling the embarrassing tumble with humor and grace.

When the audience gave her a standing ovation, a smiling Lawrence said, “You guys are just standing up because you feel bad that I fell, and that’s really embarrassing! But thank you.”

Cyndi Wilson, DTM, also did some nifty improvising after a slip-up. In a 2010 article in the *Toastmaster* magazine, she described how she once gave a Table Topics speech and unintentionally put a new spin on the idea of “off-the-cuff” speaking.

“I got my foot tangled in my pants leg and—boom!—down I went,” recalled Wilson, a New Jersey resident and member of

several clubs. “I heard this loud gasp as I was lying on the floor asking myself, ‘How do I recover from this?’”

“I had been talking about how children try to get their way so I lifted my feet into the air and started kicking as if I were having a temper tantrum. I eventually got up and continued my speech! Only one person knew that I actually fell; all of the other attendees thought it was part of the speech!”

### Don’t Run!

I’ve had my own experience with falling down onstage. This is an incident that I will remember until the day I die. I was telling stories to 200 women in a large room and the stage was not well-lit. In order to connect with the people sitting way in the back, I moved around much more than I normally do.

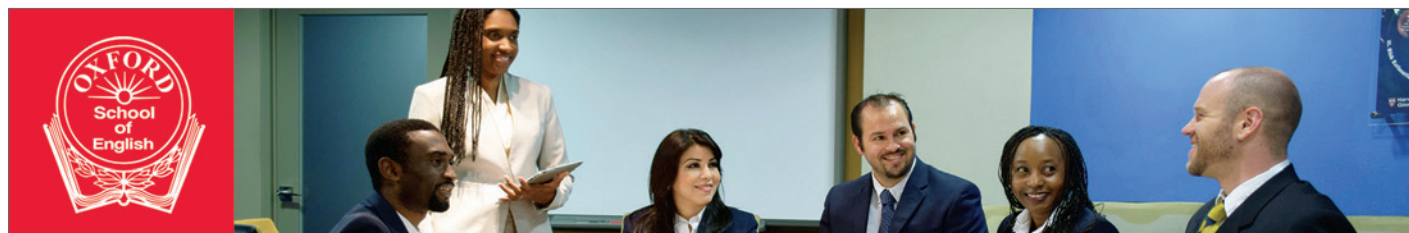
Dressed in high heels and a silk pantsuit, I began to run across the stage to dramatize a particular point—when I suddenly slipped. I was fine, but the women were, understandably, distressed. I assured them I was OK, made a joke about the fact that the character in the story fell, and continued.

Ten minutes later, the character was supposed to run again. I made a movement to head across the stage, and the entire group called out in unison, “Don’t run!” I am willing to bet I’ve never brought together an audience so well before or since.

Not that this is a great excuse for blunders, mind you, but I speak a lot, to a wide variety of audiences. My best excuse? I’m human. And when a public speaking robot is created, I promise it won’t be as much fun to watch. **T**

---

**CAREN S. NEILE, PH.D., ATMS, CL**, is a professional storyteller and an affiliate professor at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, Florida. She has presented at two Toastmasters International conventions.



Our school is located in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico, and we are the **BIGGEST** bilingual school in the north of Mexico.

### We are looking for teachers for K-12.

#### Requirements

- 1 year of experience teaching English subjects.
- Education; Bachelors or similar.

#### We Offer:

- Competitive Salary.
- Great benefits.
- 2 meals (monday-friday).
- Training.
- Work Permit.



**Leaders in Robotics.** At Oxford School of English, we are interested in offering you a job with the potential for growth.

Send your Resume to: [joalvarez@oxfordschool.edu.mx](mailto:joalvarez@oxfordschool.edu.mx) / [www.oxfordschool.edu.mx](http://www.oxfordschool.edu.mx)

# The Serious Business of BEING FUNNY Across Cultures

Managing humor, culture and virtual technology in the 21st century.

BY DEAN FOSTER



“When in Rome ...” the saying goes, means that what’s funny in Italy will not necessarily make them laugh in Los Angeles. Anyone who has made presentations abroad learns this very quickly. As all good presenters know, humor is universal, but jokes may not be. So while using humor is always a good strategy, using jokes can be a poor tactic, precisely because what makes a joke funny is often an aspect of the local context. If the audience does not know the context, the joke bombs.





For example, I once prepared a presentation in Hong Kong. Just before I went on, a colleague reminded me that in Asia, a great way to kick off a speech is to express humility, based on the Chinese value of individuals humbling themselves. He suggested that I apologize upfront in the event my speech would fail to meet the audience's expectations.

As an American, I viewed this strategy as the kiss of death for my presentation, wanting instead to open with a humorous anecdote about cultural differences, the topic of my talk. So I thought about this cultural dilemma. When I went on stage, I announced that I understood that here in Hong Kong, I would garner respect if I started my presentation with an apology of sorts. I said that in my country, the United States, we would prefer to start off with a joke. So, to accommodate both cultures, I apologized for not having any jokes to tell. The audience laughed, and it was a great way to introduce the topic of my talk: making presentations across cultures.

### **The Challenges of Technology**

Following the old rules for delivering humor across cultures is no longer enough as we are now also required to manage new virtual technologies. In today's world, we not only communicate and make presentations face-to-face, but increasingly we are doing so virtually. We use technologies such as WebEx and Skype, and make our presentations and keynote speeches to groups both large and small around the world, often to audiences comprising many different cultural groups.

Using humor face-to-face in cross-cultural situations is tough enough; doing so virtually can be even trickier. Additional rules must be understood to successfully communicate through technology.

Well, maybe. For most presenters, technology isn't really new. After all, speakers have been using microphones, PowerPoint projections, lights and cameras for a long time.



*Successfully relaying a humorous message virtually means being aware of how your humor is perceived by different cultures, as well as being comfortable with technology.*

We know that being comfortable with the equipment we use is essential to successfully relaying a message. We had to learn how to use the camera and the microphone, and we need to do the same with Skype and broadband.

An additional complication has emerged as well. While cameras are common in face-to-face presentation situations, most of

## No amount of skill will ensure the success of a joke or humorous anecdote if the content and style are culturally inappropriate.

the time the audience is still there, giving us immediate feedback. Cameras, however, in most virtual presentation situations, do not allow us to see our audience, and so the feedback we get is severely limited. We need to be sure that the humorous anecdotes we communicate are well-received and understood. Therefore, it is essential that we test humor in a live setting before we use it in a virtual environment, whether crossing cultural lines or not.

### Using Slides

Any presentation that displays content through images and written words (e.g., via PowerPoint) needs to be culturally appropriate for everyone. That can result in a difficult balancing act, as the content must be free of culturally offensive references while not eliminating the local flavor and color that might be essential to understanding the information being communicated (or the joke being told).

Be sure to review all graphics and text for cultural appropriateness. And if associated with a humorous anecdote or joke, these elements must not distract from the funny part of your joke. Glaring, culturally inappropriate graphics or text, despite your best intention, will immediately distract from, and undermine, the quality of your humor.

Culturally inexact spelling (“humor” in the United States versus “humour” in the United Kingdom) doesn’t often distract very much from a presentation. A larger problem occurs when words have different meanings in different cultures (e.g., “fanny” in the United States refers to one’s rear end, but in Britain it’s called one’s “bum,” and “fanny” refers to female private parts).

Another issue can arise when using terms with no comparable meaning in other cultures. American sports clichés such as “ball-park figure,” “left field,” and “step up to the plate” come to mind, as well as expressions such as “do the needful” in Indian English, or English that is characteristic of the Indian subcontinent. Care should also be taken when employing acronyms and abbreviations that are specific to only one culture or industry (e.g., “asap,” “ETA” or “CYA”).

Scrub all of your graphics of any culturally inappropriate images. Religious or political images would be the obvious place to start, but also consider, for example, the use of color, as colors carry culturally different meanings (e.g., red is good in Asia, green is good in Muslim cultures, but green or yellow are not good to use in Thailand or the Philippines.). Even the degree to which text and graphics are used varies culturally. In Asia, for example, the use of symbols, numbers and pictures is much more effective than text or words on a screen, while in continental Europe, the use of bullet-pointed, logically connected text that represents concrete ideas leading to a final conclusion is highly effective.

### Are You Speaking My Language?

And then there’s language, the fundamental element of every culture. It’s important to remember that individuals in other cultures are speaking a kind of “global English” which they may have learned or perhaps mastered—or not—and that their first or even second language may not be English. Therefore, English-speaking presenters must take responsibility for being understood. The best way to do that is to speak slowly enough to receive confirmation from audience members that they, in fact, understand the words you are using.

This audience feedback can take the form of direct information (certain cultures are very good at telling you exactly what they think and feel in the moment). But with other cultures, you may have to tune in to what their silence implies. Good presenters do this all the time when an audience is physically present. However, when speaking virtually, it may be very difficult to get any kind of feedback at all. Again, test your content in a face-to-face situation first.

Always speak slowly and allow listeners the time they need to “translate” your English as you speak. Opt for words with fewer syllables when you have a choice, and always avoid acronyms and local terms that don’t translate well. Put your words through this “cultural neutralizer” process, especially when telling a humorous story, prior to delivery to weed out anything that won’t easily be understood. Nothing kills a joke faster than when listeners don’t understand what you’re saying.

### What’s Your Style?

Style is also subject to difference. Much British humor is based on the ability to use the meaning of a word or phrase to its opposite intent. This is the heart of irony, a form of humor that is

Always speak slowly and allow listeners the time they need to “translate” your English as you speak. Opt for words with fewer syllables when you have a choice, and always avoid acronyms and local terms that don’t translate well.

not as common, and therefore not as well understood, in direct-speaking cultures like Switzerland, Germany or the Netherlands. Sarcasm can be seen as hurtful in places such as Latin America, but considered super-funny in India or Israel precisely because of its abrasive, in-your-face, over-the-top nature. Humor based on self-deprecation (making yourself the butt of the joke) is appreciated in the West, but in Asia, instead of generating a laugh, self-deprecation will more likely elicit quiet empathy and discomfort with the unfortunate situation that you are experiencing.

Differences in cultural preferences even arise in what is visually funny. Pratfalls and physical humor play well in some cultures, but not well in others (generally speaking, yes in France and Italy; no in Malaysia).

It’s funny how culture plays a crucial role in determining what’s funny—or not. As presenters, we can learn to be effective in selling that joke or funny story. But no amount of skill will ensure the success of a joke or humorous anecdote if the content and style are culturally inappropriate. This is especially true when presentations—and the humor that should be an essential part of them—are dependent on virtual technology. Mastering all three elements of successful presenting today—managing humor, managing culture and managing virtual technology—is possible, and must be the goal of every great presenter in the 21st century. For those of us who make our livelihood presenting today, this is no laughing matter. **T**

**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* ([dfaintericultural.com](http://dfaintericultural.com)).

## Honor achievement

**10% OFF** Reward speech contest winners with Bronze, Silver or Gold Achievement Medals.



Use promo code **ACHIEVEMENT** at checkout. Offer valid February 1–29, 2016. Not valid with any other offer.

Shop now at [www.toastmasters.org/medals](http://www.toastmasters.org/medals)

## Spinning a Tall Tale

The secrets of sounding believable when twisting a story.

BY MITCH MIRKIN, CTM

**B**efore there were online movies, before there was TV, before there was even radio—there was storytelling.

People from all over the world have passed on stories from generation to generation, often embellishing them with each retelling. These are known as folktales, which are ever-changing, with new versions and details added to fit the characteristics of the culture and customs of the people from which they originated.

And one of the most popular story genres, especially in folklore, is the tall tale. These stories are told as if they are true. They usually start off ordinary enough, but the details gradually build to comic outlandishness, challenging listeners' credulousness while entertaining them.

Ever hear the one about Paul Bunyan, the giant lumberjack who cleared forests with his mighty axe and ate 50 pancakes for breakfast? "Ask any old-timer who was logging that winter, and they'll tell you I ain't lying when I say his kitchen covered about 10 miles of territory," writes S.E. Schlosser in "Paul Bunyan's Kitchen," one of her classic tall tales on [AmericanFolklore.net](http://AmericanFolklore.net). Or maybe you grew up hearing the Welsh tales about the legend of King Arthur and his knights, or the tales of giants in Brazil. Perhaps you were inspired by the African tale about the Man Who Never Lied? Find more folklore from around the world at [www.worldoftales.com](http://www.worldoftales.com).

Toastmasters who are working through the Advanced Communication Series *Humorously Speaking* manual can create their own original tall tales for project No. 5, which calls for the use of exaggeration to entertain the audience. And any member can aim to compete in a Toastmasters Tall Tales Contest. The main requirement, according to the *Speech Contest Rulebook*, is that the speech "be of a highly exaggerated, improbable nature and have a theme or plot."

### Ground it in Realism

Robert Cravalho, DTM, of Honolulu, Hawaii, won the District 49 Tall Tales Contest in 2013. He suggests keeping these kinds of speeches grounded in realism, for the most part, and going easy on the exaggeration: "You probably want to stay away from magic or unbelievable characters such as elves, giants or mermaids. A tall tale has realism that's exaggerated just to the point where the audience questions the validity of what is being said."

Listen to Cravalho's winning performance on YouTube (<http://bit.ly/1NJaFOA>) and you'll see what he means. He tells of a high school bully who stole his prom date. The first minute or so of his talk is quite believable. But then there's a run up the steps of the

football field bleachers, where at the top, the bully, Big Billy Biederman, who's deathly afraid of heights, "freezes like a woolly mammoth in a glacier." Cravalho strikes the pose of a sprinter frozen in midstride,

one forearm extended forward and the opposite elbow jutting backward. He holds it for a few seconds, to excellent comic effect.

The story draws loosely on actual events in Cravalho's life. The retired police officer, now a private detective, relates in an interview that he once had a workout buddy who "was as big as a house" but would run if he saw a roach. "So I came up with the idea of my villain being afraid of heights and I took it from there," he says. "He was a big guy and I wanted to knock him out for stealing my girl, but he would have killed me," says Cravalho, a member of the Na Hoku Kai Toastmasters in Honolulu. Decades later, his fictional tale gave him a chance to get even, as it were. "I wanted to come up with an opportunity to beat him and take back my girl. Since this is Toastmasters, I couldn't do anything violent, so I had to think of another way to win."

At the end of Cravalho's tale, after a mad chase through the campus chapel, the bully finds himself four stories high in the bell tower. Once again he freezes in fear—and to this day "remains frozen in time," says Cravalho in his speech, concluding his story with an evil laugh.

Junius Ho, CC, won the District 6



Robert Cravalho, DTM

photo courtesy of Kyle Nishioka



Junius Ho, CC

Tall Tales Contest in 2014. Like Cravalho, he crafted a story with ties to his personal experience. His parents are from Taiwan, and they owned a Chinese restaurant in Santa Barbara, California. “Fortune cookies were part of our lives growing up,” he recalls.

So he wove a fanciful yarn about the origins of the fortune cookie, although his speech was titled, cryptically, “Crispy Croissants for Thought.” Ho’s tale originates in France, oddly enough, where a croissant baker named Menton (French for “chin”) had a “penchant for proverbs.”



Melissa Randall, ACB, ALB

photo courtesy of David Taylor

### A Love Story

For another example of how art imitates life in the world of tall tales, meet Melissa Randall, ACB, ALB, a member of the Salesmasters Club in Sherman Oaks, California. She won the 2013 Tall Tales Contest in District 52. In her tale, she runs away to join the circus after falling in love with a “drummer boy” who worked there. The basic story is true. “I really did run away and join the circus,” she says in an interview, “because I really did fall in love with a guy who got a job as a drummer with the Ringling Brothers Circus.”

The circus is a bizarre setting to begin with: fire eaters, lion tamers, sword swallows. So Randall didn’t have to stretch reality all that much to infuse her speech with zany humor and outlandish details.

“It was easy to write a speech about the circus because it’s so ‘out there,’” she says. “The stories I have from being there are fantastic and crazy.”

Her tale bubbles with colorful details, vivid imagery and dramatic body language as she follows Bobo the Clown through “humongous rings of fire” and gets lost in mirror mazes. She comes to “the tiniest little door I had ever seen,” bends down to peek inside and sees “12 contortionists, packed in like sardines.”

### Member Feedback

All three winners received helpful feedback on body language and other points when they practiced their tales at the club level. Ho, a member of the Sales and Marketing Executives club in Minneapolis, Minnesota, says his fellow members gave him excellent tips “on the small things that actually mean a lot: pacing, vocal variety, the ebbs and flows, and using my voice and body to help convey the feeling.”

Cravalho recalls valuable advice he received from a new club member. “She said that when I spoke about Tulip [the girlfriend in the tale] breaking up with me and I said ‘I was devastated ... I was crushed,’ I didn’t *look* like I was devastated and crushed.” Cravalho knew she was right, and he improved that portion of the speech by showing more emotion.

Ho and Cravalho were eager to compete districtwide with their newly polished stories. For Randall, that was a scary proposition. But she overcame the fear, with life-changing results. Through her participation in Toastmasters speech contests, says Randall, “I started believing in myself more.... I started realizing I was capable of more than I had ever imagined.”

And that’s no tall tale. ■

**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.

## TALL TALE TIPS

When he’s not chasing down bad guys, private detective Robert Cravalho spins a mean tall tale. Here are some of his tips for mastering the genre.

- **Have fun writing, rehearsing and telling your tall tale.** If you have fun, the audience will have fun, and that’s the purpose of a tall tale.
- **If you’re looking for an idea, identify a conflict you experienced in the past.** Think about how you resolved, or could have resolved, the situation. Then consider points to exaggerate.
- **Incorporate what you learned in other projects.** Make sure you have an opening that grabs the audience; a body that includes gestures, facial expressions, vocal variety and descriptive words; and a strong conclusion. A twist at the end is fun for listeners.
- **Practice, practice, practice.** You must know your tall tale inside out, top to bottom, front to back. If you’re delivering it in a contest, consider memorizing it—you want to rock it! If you practice enough, your speech will not sound memorized; it will sound as if you are sharing it from your heart and soul. This will make the unbelievable sound almost believable!

## IMPROMPTU SPEAKING



Top: Lau Kiang Siang tries an out-of-the-bag Table Topics approach while visiting Thai Airways International club in Bangkok, Thailand. Bottom left: Binoj K. Ravi is comfortable impromptu speaking at his Assisi Toastmasters club in Kerala, India. Right: Joyce Teal took her extemporaneous speaking skills to the TRPA Conference in Kingsport, Tennessee in 2015.

# A TABLE TOPICS WORKOUT

The power-packed exercise for stretching your brain.

BY MAUREEN ZAPPALA, DTM

Roscoe Drummond, an American journalist, once said, “The mind is a wonderful thing. It starts working the minute you are born, and never stops until you get up to speak in public.”

Hmm, was he talking about Table Topics?

Table Topics has been a key component of the Toastmasters program for many, many years. The 1936 club officer training manual prescribes a typical meeting agenda and defines a “table topic.” The manual reads, *“This topic becomes the theme for informal discussion in which each member is expected to participate, with the exception of those assigned as speakers on the regular program. The purpose is to get every member on his feet at every meeting.”*

Decades later, Table Topics is still a signature club activity. While the purpose of encouraging participation remains the same, the benefits embrace much more. That simple one- to two-minute impromptu speech can transform your communication and leadership skills. Love it or loathe it, Table Topics is a powerful tool for growth.

Every day, we engage in impromptu speaking. In conversation, you speak off-the-cuff. When asked for your opinion, or a summary of a task at work, you speak extemporaneously. Table Topics hones the skill of creating an impromptu response that is laser-focused, compelling and engaging.

If you struggle with small talk, or desire to give a good interview, Table Topics will help. You’ll be a better conversationalist and your professional presence will improve. In a corporate environment, you may need to develop “sound bite”-type answers for the CEO, or develop your promotional elevator pitch. If you are a person learning English as a second language, Table Topics is ideal for exercising your conversational skills. Participating in

Table Topics helps you develop critical and organized thinking skills because you have to think quickly, and if you participate frequently you will lose those verbal crutches, the dreaded “ahs” and “ums,” much faster.

Dwayne Windham, DTM, from Laughing Matters club in Austin, Texas, is passionate about how Table Topics has benefited him. “I work in technical support, a constant, unending world of ‘table topics.’ Pick up the phone, and you’re on stage trying to answer ‘Why is it doing this?’ ‘How do I make it do this?’ Every time you use audible fillers—‘ah,’ ‘um,’ ‘you know’—your credibility drops and it’s more likely that someone will demand to speak to a manager. The more you can provide prompt, succinct, accurate responses, the better your numbers, and the better service you deliver.”

Table Topics can help a timid speaker emerge into a more confident one without being overwhelmed by developing a five- to seven-minute speech. Joyce Teal, ACB, CL, from Monday Mumbler Toastmasters in Chattanooga, Tennessee, loves to see those who are nervous about speaking take a turn. She says they are always surprised by how much they enjoy it and how confident they feel afterwards. Similarly, guests often embrace Table Topics. Katherine Hanneman, DTM, from the Hickam AFB club in Honolulu, Hawaii, says, “Guests who are encouraged to participate in Table Topics have a feeling of fitting in and belonging, and they are more likely to join. Table Topics is a magic wand that makes fear disappear and creates an eagerness to do more.”

## IMPROMPTU SPEAKING



*Katherine Hanneman of the Hickam AFB club in Honolulu, Hawaii, speaks at the District 49 Conference in the fall of 2015.*

### Why Is It So Difficult?

Many Toastmasters love Table Topics because impromptu speaking comes easily to them. They may even prefer it to drafting, practicing, memorizing and delivering manual speeches. Binoj K. Ravi, CC, of Assisi Toastmasters in Kerala, India, is an engineer with previous experience in training and education, and he is very comfortable with impromptu speaking. However, after several years of not teaching, he felt his skills deteriorating, so he joined a club to regain his sharpness. Creating a prepared speech was a challenge for him. "I am a spontaneous speaker," he says. "I can't memorize well. But I gain the most from Table Topics." He even proposes delivering an impromptu five-to seven-minute speech to further improve his own skills.

If you, unlike Ravi, struggle with impromptu speaking, you are not alone. Science explains why. Researchers from Rice University,

## TABLE TOPICS SURVIVAL TIPS

The following are the most popular tips submitted by members at the 2015 International Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada. Did your favorite make the list?

- Relate the question to your personal experiences.
- If you don't like the question, change it.
- Start with an inspirational quote.
- Keep up to date with books, technology, news and TV shows.
- Go with the first thing that comes to your mind.
- Walk slowly to the podium; it will give you more time to prepare.
- Be ridiculous. Anything funny works.
- PREP (state your **p**osition, provide a **r**eason, give **e**xamples, restate your **p**osition).

Johns Hopkins University and Columbia University recently published their conclusions that our abilities to speak and write are controlled from two separate but closely located areas of the brain. This is why people write differently from how they speak, and vice versa. When writing a speech, we edit ideas more slowly, using formal, less conversational phrases. When we speak off-the-cuff, we don't edit as much. In other words, we think before we write but we speak before we think, and the thinking comes from two different brain areas. Table Topics helps exercise and discipline the brain to even out this disparity.

### Common Concerns

What are your Table Topics concerns? Maybe you're afraid of looking foolish, or you're unfamiliar with the topic. Maybe you fear sharing an opinion on a controversial topic, or getting too emotional. Maybe you wish you had a different topic. Maybe you feel pressured to be funny, profound, accurate, concise or entertaining. You might even think the topic is too frivolous.

Division Director Dale Goff, DTM, of Dobson-Craddock Toastmasters in South Charleston, West Virginia, says, "I feel Table Topics, like much of Toastmasters, is designed for professional development. Is it just a game? Let's get back to basics and hone our professional skills." Many members agree, but other members enjoy the chance to be more creative, and even theatrical. Both approaches work, because the skills developed in Table Topics are transferable beyond the club setting.

### 4 Steps to Terrific Table Topic Answers

So, what can you do to improve? Try this simple four-step approach to developing a great response.

- **Think Calmly:** Before the meeting starts, bring to the forefront of your mind some recent conversations or events so you may have access to possible responses. When you hear the topic, stay silent. Breathe, refer to your inventory of recent thoughts, and choose one point or story that fits. (Note: This does not mean scripting an answer ahead of time and forcing it to fit the topic. That defeats the purpose.)
- **Organize Clearly:** Develop an opening, body and closing. Many people open by repeating the question, but that is a weak opening. Open as you would a speech, perhaps with a quote, statistic or question, such as, "Don't you agree that ...?" Then make your point (or tell a quick story), and use a close that ties to the opening.
- **Deliver Masterfully:** Don't forget eye contact, body language, vocal variety, grammar and pronunciation. Watch the ahs, ums and ya-knows.
- **Time Perfectly:** Most of us are unaware of how much (or little) we say in one or two minutes. Table Topics forces loquacious people to condense their words, and timid people to expand them. Watch the timing signals.



Would you like more preparation time? Darren LaCroix, the 2001 Toastmasters World Champion of Public Speaking, suggests improv classes. “In Table Topics, you’re given a topic, and right in the moment, you talk about it. How can you prepare? Improv games! They help you to be more ‘present.’ When you are present, you can handle impromptu speaking better.” Bruce Yang, DTM, of Taichung Toastmasters, Taichung City, Taiwan, agrees. He sees the parallel between improvisation and Table Topics. He marvels at an improv performer’s ability to immediately connect the dots in order to evoke a picture in the listeners’ minds.

### Unique and Creative Approaches

The freedom to be creative and unpredictable is a hallmark of Table Topics. Greg Gazin, DTM, from New Entrepreneurs club in Alberta, Canada, says, “Once, we selected unfamiliar words from the dictionary and asked participants for definitions. We had creative and funny answers, then we revealed the true definitions.” For example: The word *homerkin* reminded members of *The Simpsons* TV show, but actually, it’s a very old word for a measurement of beer.

One club created an out-of-the-box Table Topics experience, literally. Aero Speakers Toastmasters in Laverton, Melbourne, Australia, conducted an outdoor session at a local open-air market on a busy Saturday, patterning it after the famous Hyde Park (London) soapbox style where someone stands on a box to deliver a speech, eliciting responses from passers-by.

## Love it or loathe it, Table Topics is a powerful tool for growth.

Helen McKenzie-Fairlie, ACB, CL, of Satdy Arvo Communicators club in Port Melbourne, worked to help charter Aero Speakers and was involved in the project. She proudly reflects on this unusual experience: “Our purpose was to recruit new members. Within two months, the club chartered, but it was not because the market event created new members. Rather, it was because we gained confidence. Toastmasters lives up to its promise of developing skills.” Personal testimonies like that are persuasive to prospective members.

And then there’s the out-of-the-bag approach. Lau Kiang Siang, CL, from Historical City Toastmasters in Malacca, Malaysia, visited the Thai Airways International club in Bangkok, Thailand, where “the Table Topicsmaster called the members and guests to draw items out of the bag to use as their topic.”

Or how about a “tag-team” approach of storytelling? The Topicsmaster starts a story with a simple “Once upon a time ...” or “T’was a dark and stormy night ...” and calls on a person to craft the next part. After a minute, that person calls on another to continue the story, and so on. Still another innovative method is described by Douglas Wilks, ACB, CL, of District 78 Skills Club in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. “I chose some world records from the Guinness book and had each speaker describe the record they

broke and why they chose to break it. Everyone at the meeting commented how fun it was.”

The variations are endless, the fun is limitless, and the benefits are boundless. This time-tested custom of impromptu speaking is a robust way to improve your skills. The next time you are called on for Table Topics, rethink Roscoe Drummond’s quote to be this instead: “The mind is a wonderful thing. It starts working the minute you are born, and never stops ...” especially when you get up for Table Topics. ■

---

**MAUREEN ZAPPALA, DTM**, is a former NASA propulsion engineer. Today she’s a professional speaker, author and presentation skills coach, as well as founder of *High Altitude Strategies*, a coaching and speaking service. She belongs to the *Aerospace Toastmasters Club* in Cleveland, Ohio. Visit her website at [www.MaureenZ.com](http://www.MaureenZ.com).

## TIPS FOR THE TOPICSMASER

- Be prepared! Plan topics that reflect the meeting theme.
- Dare to be creative and unique, even unconventional.
- Remember, Table Topics is not a quiz or test of knowledge, but an opportunity to think and speak quickly. Choose topics that allow this.
- Topics with broad appeal work well. Be cautious of cultural references, controversial topics or questions requiring specialized knowledge. Try searching the Internet for some topics and apps to help you.
- One word, short phrases or simple questions are best. Avoid long explanations or setups.
- Keep your introductory comments short. State timing limits for the benefit of the guests and new members.
- Asking for volunteers is fine, but appointing speakers gives all attendees a chance to speak. First choose people without a role.
- Be sensitive to people’s reactions. Nothing is worse for a participant than squirming with stress, desperately wanting that green light to go on.
- After visitors have seen a few responses, invite them to participate, letting them know they are free to decline if they prefer.
- Watch your total time. Adjust the number of questions so your segment ends on time. Even if your portion started late, try to end on time to avoid the meeting running late.

## Vocal Variety 2.0

Three techniques to sound your best.

BY BILL BROWN, DTM

I had just won our division's Tall Tales Speech Contest, and I was excited. I was ready for the district finals. Or so I thought.

While I was still enjoying the congratulations for my win, a friend pulled me aside and suggested that I attend another division contest the following Saturday. She said, "You have got to hear Jim in Division C." The urgency in her voice convinced me that I needed to go. And when Jim performed his speech, my jaw dropped. His vocal variety was off the charts. For the first time, I realized just how average my own vocal inflections were.

Vocal variety is an art. Project 6 in *Competent Communication* is a great place to start.

At that time, I had over 10 years of experience in radio broadcasting and voice-over narration. I knew how to emphasize a script, but at that moment I realized that something was missing. I needed to become more expressive if I wanted to be a better speaker.

Project 6 in the *Competent Communication* manual does an excellent job of teaching us the basics of vocal variety. I call it Vocal Variety 1.0. But if we want to take our speaking to a more advanced level, we need to take our vocal variety to the next level, too. We need to move to Vocal Variety 2.0.

I had some serious work to do. In the three weeks following our division contest, I pushed myself to be more expressive. I won the district contest and, in the process, changed my whole speaking style—permanently.

So how do we become more expressive?



At the 2015 International Convention, Kiran Patel (left) from Oakland, California, joins speaker coach Patricia Fripp onstage as Fripp offers session attendees feedback on small portions of their presentations, including their vocal variety.

Here are the top three principles I've learned about achieving that goal.

**1 Give it all you've got.** A number of years ago, I put together a recruiting product for a network marketing company. I recorded a number of the company's key leaders. The recordings were usable, but they weren't awesome. To each of the leaders I said, "That's great. I have a recording that I can use. Now let's have some fun. Give me one read where you are way over the top. Give me all you've got." In every case, that was the take I used, not because it was filled with hype (it wasn't), but because it was the only one that sounded real and, frankly, not boring. I asked for "way over the top" and that's what the people thought their takes were—but they didn't sound too extreme; they sounded like what was needed. Imagine that there is a vocal continuum from 1 to 10 where 1 is a total monotone and 10 is a raving lunatic. If you want your audience to perceive you as a 5, you have to perform as a 7. If you perform as a 5, they will perceive you as a 3.

Try it for yourself. Record yourself saying some lines from one of your speeches. Then record it again, and this time go way over the top. Set those recordings aside for a day, then listen to them. You may be amazed by what you hear.

**2 Emphasize words naturally.** One pattern I have seen from speakers is their use of volume in a contrived way. Getting louder or softer on key words or phrases is an effective technique. But too many times I hear speakers get louder or softer in what seems like a random fashion. They know they need to vary their volume, so they pick a word, any word, and punch it.

When I listen to those same people in normal conversation, they use volume in a normal manner. They emphasize the right words naturally.

We all know inherently how to be expressive. Use that to your advantage. Take your speech, sit down with a friend and recite it as if you are having a casual conversation. Don't read it. Internalize a section, then say it like you mean it. Record yourself, and then listen to see how you emphasize and pace your words. That is how you should deliver your speech.

Do what you normally do, just make it bigger.

**3 Don't swallow the last word in your sentence.** Have you ever heard this rule: Your pitch goes up at the end of a question and down at the end of a statement. This is conventional wisdom—and it is wrong. Yes, your voice typically goes down at the end of a statement, but not *always*. In fact, when I thought that last sentence in my mind, the first syllable on the last word went up in pitch. That is how we normally talk. Frequently the most important word of a sentence is the last word. And many times, for the sake of emphasis, our pitch goes up.

All too often, however, I hear speakers drop their pitch every time. It wouldn't be so noticeable except that these speakers usually drop it to the same exact pitch. I suspect this is because they think it sounds professional and formal. It doesn't.

On top of that, many of them also drop their volume, frequently to the point where it is inaudible. This is not natural. It is controlled and contrived, and it comes across that way. Speech expert Patricia Fripp calls this "sameness." And sameness is boring.

As you listen to a recording of your speech (you are recording your speeches, aren't you?), chart what you do at the end of your statements. Do you see a pattern?

Remember, the most important words are often the last words in a sentence. Don't deemphasize them. Don't swallow them. Give them the importance that they deserve.

These tips can help you become more expressive. It is difficult, however, to fully explain a vocal skill in a print magazine article. To give you examples, I have posted a video on YouTube. Go to <http://bit.ly/1MvFpwK> to learn more.

Vocal Variety is an art. Project 6 in *Competent Communication* is a great place to start. It gives you the basics. But don't stop there. Continually push yourself to improve. That is part of becoming an advanced speaker. That is part of becoming a contest winner. That is part of becoming the best that you can be. **■**

**BILL BROWN, DTM**, is a speech delivery trainer and coach specializing in expressiveness and vocal variety. He lives in Las Vegas, Nevada. Visit [www.billbrown.biz](http://www.billbrown.biz) for more information.

### Volume

is the loudness or softness with which you speak.

### Pitch

is the sound frequency with which you speak.

**ROGER LOVE IS RECOGNIZED  
AS ONE OF THE WORLD'S  
LEADING AUTHORITIES ON VOICE**

**TOASTMASTERS  
INTERNATIONAL**

**2013 KEYNOTE  
SPEAKER**

# Free Speaker Training Videos

VISIT THE WEB ADDRESS BELOW TO GET FREE INSTANT ACCESS TO INVALUABLE SPEAKER TRAINING VIDEOS WHERE ROGER WILL SHARE WITH YOU THE TECHNIQUES AND METHODS BEHIND THE GREATEST AND MOST FINANCIALLY SUCCESSFUL SPEAKERS IN THE WORLD.

INSTANTLY GET STARTED FOR FREE HERE: [www.RogerLove.com/toastmasters](http://www.RogerLove.com/toastmasters)

# Member Achievements

How four members pushed past barriers on the road to success.

## Whitney Shayo, CC

Via Christi Club, Wichita, Kansas

### A Marriage Transformed

After 10 years of marriage and the birth of our third child, I wanted a divorce.

The way I viewed my husband Pesa and our marriage had suddenly changed. A case of mild postpartum depression took over. As I saw it, everything he said and did was wrong during the first several months after our baby was born. As a homeschooling mom with a newborn, I was in the house a lot, isolated. My husband, however, was working six nights a week as a nurse. My daily combination of boredom and exhaustion made a bad situation worse.

Pesa belongs to Via Christi Toastmasters of Wichita, Kansas, but I knew very little about the club. One Wednesday evening, as he was getting ready to attend his meeting, I informed Pesa that I would file for divorce the next morning. After a lot of yelling on my part, and a lot of listening and apologizing on his, he suggested that we both go to the meeting.

For the first time, I met my husband's fellow club members and learned how their meetings were structured. They invited me to participate in Table Topics, and I managed to come out of my shell and speak for a whopping 19 seconds.



From that week on, we made every Wednesday our official date night. Toastmasters came first, followed by dinner and then coffee at a local bookstore. Pesa is now president of the club and I currently serve as vice president membership. Serving as officers together has helped us appreciate the value of teamwork in our marriage as well. The skills acquired from Toastmasters can be applied to all areas of life.

Pesa and I now have a blog that provides encouragement for married couples, and I also provide coaching for moms who need support. Because of Toastmasters I speak with confidence, and I'm on a mission to spread cheer everywhere I go.



## Juliana Heng, ACS, ALB

KPMG KL Toastmasters and PJ Bilingual Toastmasters

Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia

### My Stand-Up Debut

September 15, 2015, was a memorable day for me. I debuted as a stand-up comedian at One Mic Stand, Malaysia's original weekly stand-up comedy open mic show!

A couple weeks before my debut, I was at the train ticket counter when a colorful brochure caught my attention. I flipped it over and saw 'One Mic Stand'—such a catchy phrase. Upon closer scrutiny, I realized that the club welcomed newbies, too. I sent an email to the team to get a slot, and I received a positive reply very quickly.

I was given three precious minutes to make people laugh. I had butterflies in my stomach, as this was my first time speaking outside of Toastmasters. However, that knot in my stomach loosened when I realized that even if the audience didn't laugh, I still had my dad and two friends there to support me.

When it was my turn, I briefly looked at my dad and friends, smiled and began to share my jokes. The audience responded well, the ice had been broken and I was enjoying the attempt to make people laugh.

I am grateful to One Mic Stand for giving me the opportunity to learn by doing. And a big thanks to Toastmasters for providing me a safe and supportive environment to hone my communication skills. Now I can take on a bigger stage to bring more joy to people!

## Ashley Nemeth, ACB

Indian Head Toastmasters, Indian Head, Saskatchewan, Canada

### No Longer Hiding

Before I joined Toastmasters, I was very shy around those whom I was not comfortable with—basically, anyone other than my family. I had a hard time at work and was very sensitive to anything my boss said to me. I hated going anywhere new and meeting new people.

I was always hiding a piece of me that I was embarrassed of, even though that piece was not always easy to hide. I am visually impaired. This made it awkward to meet new people because I couldn't pick up on social cues from their facial expressions.

Shortly after joining the Indian Head Toastmasters club in 2013, I did a speech on my disability. It felt so good to have somewhere to go where I could be myself and not have to hide. I set a goal to do a speech every week and make it through all 10 projects of the *Competent Communication* manual.

During my journey, my vision started to deteriorate even more. Within a few months I quickly went from having fuzzy vision to not being able to see anything except for bright light. This was very hard to deal with, but with the help of Toastmasters I kept giving speeches as a way to help me cope. It made a world of difference to have that safe place to tell my story and have the support of others who never judged me.

The members of the Indian Head club continue to be there for me. When I got my first guide dog in 2014, they were some of my biggest cheerleaders. They gave me the confidence to be my own advocate. I have made a few public speaking appearances, talking about blindness and guide dogs, and have started a support group for seniors new to vision loss.

Two years ago I would have struggled to tell you my name was Ashley Nemeth. Now I speak confidently and proudly wherever I am.



*Ashley Nemeth and her guide dog*



*Steven Tragash*

## Steven Tragash, ACB, ALB

Desert Toasters club, Palm Desert, California

### Exercising New Skills

I joined Toastmasters in January 2014 and am currently president of Desert Toasters in Palm Desert, California. As a former senior executive, I missed public speaking and leadership challenges. I joined specifically to hone my skills in delivering speeches of all kinds, and especially those that are extemporaneous.

Little did I know that a week after our District 12 Tall Tales Contest in 2014 that I would suffer the greatest challenge of my life: a stroke in the left hemisphere of my brain.

I didn't share the experience with my Toastmasters colleagues as I progressed through my recovery. But the weekly meetings, interaction and speech preparation helped immensely in keeping me sharp and effective in my officer roles.

In addition to physical therapy, my neurologist recommended that I "exercise" my brain. Consequently, I began taking piano lessons and studying German; I have never been happier! I've scored the trifecta with the fantastic Toastmaster experience, an introduction to the world of music and studying another language and culture.

I have been undeterred since my stroke. Toastmasters has played a great and unexpected role in my life. I only wish I had started sooner. **TM**



# What's So Funny?

For my sake, I'm hoping it's the next 700 words.

BY JOHN CADLEY

I'm worried. This issue of the magazine highlights humor. After perusing the articles, you'll be reading my column—my *humor* column—with a more critical eye. Talk about pressure. Now I've got to make the next 700 words so hilarious you'll blow coffee through your nose. How will I do that? Well, I can tell you a joke, like: "My wife said she'd love to visit some place she's never been before, so I said, 'Try the kitchen.'" Ha ha ha! That's funny, and if you didn't laugh you should have, because it's a perfect example of what humor researchers (yes, there are such people—isn't that funny?) call Incongruity Resolution. That's when you're expecting one thing and you get another. See, you think the husband's going to suggest some exotic vacation spot and—surprise!—it's the kitchen. Get it? Boy, is that incongruous or *what?!?* If you don't think that's funny, you either have no sense of humor or you're somebody's wife.

Here's another one: I saw a man walking down the street in a brand new suit and he tripped and fell into a mud puddle. Ha ha ha! What a riotous demonstration of Benign Violation. That's when something happens that could have a bad ending but doesn't. The guy wasn't injured, so it's funny. If he'd really hurt himself we wouldn't laugh, we'd call 911 and tell them to send a dry cleaner. Ha ha ha. See? I made you laugh again. You were expecting me to say an ambulance and I said dry cleaner because, you know, the new suit, the mud puddle, getting dirty ... get it? The suit's more important than the guy, which is totally incongruous—unless, of course, you work in the fashion industry. So I've given you a comedic double whammy—an Incongruity Resolution wrapped in a Benign Violation, which, according to research, should have you laughing so hard you need oxygen.

How else can I make you laugh? I could tickle you. Tickle is one of those weird phenomena that doesn't make sense. You wouldn't like being tickled. You would beg me to stop. But you would laugh. What's the matter with you? (And don't try to tickle yourself. It doesn't work. You need some irritating person like me who thinks tickling people is funny.)

Or I could make a funny face. People laugh when they see a novel pattern that doesn't match the image their experience

predicts. So all I have to do is contort my features in such a way that you'll think, *This poor guy is so desperate for a laugh he'll do anything. I'd better humor him.*

Perhaps tickling and making faces are beneath you. Then I could tell jokes that make you feel superior, which Plato thought was the basis of all humor. Of course, he would, since he was superior to everybody. Nevertheless, it does appear that the foibles of our fellow creatures provide us no end of amusement. Or, as the 17th century French wit Francois de La Rochefoucauld put it

**So I've given you an Incongruity Resolution wrapped in a Benign Violation, which, according to research, should have you laughing so hard you need oxygen.**

a little more directly, "There is something in the misfortune of our best friends which doth not displease us." Ouch. Are we really that bad? Well, consider this "dumb blonde" joke: *What are the worst three years in a blonde's life? Third grade.* You laughed, didn't you? You tried not to, but you did—and you felt superior. I know I did. It only took me two years to get out of third grade.

If you really didn't laugh you might be British. Humor does vary by geography and the English are too dignified to laugh at others—in public. They prefer sophisticated wordplay.

*Patient: Doctor, I have a strawberry stuck in my ear.*

*Doctor: I have a cream for that.*

Vladimir Putin might not think that's funny, but if you live in Burnham-on-Sea, you just fell out of your chair.

So, what do you think? Was I funny? Please tell the editors—and be specific. My compensation is based on degrees of hilarity: \$25 per grin, chuckle or giggle; \$50 for chortles and guffaws; \$75 if you split your sides. And \$100 if you wet your pants. Be honest. I need the money. ■

---

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

# eBookIt!



Self-Publishing Solutions for the Independent Author & Small Press

Read any good books lately? Try one of these:



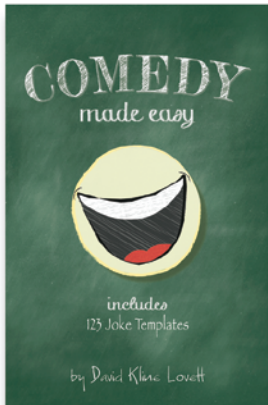
In a win-win action both parties win. A common victory is greater than it is possible to achieve alone. There is no upper boundary to how good the results that are possible to achieve together, compared to pursuing one's own advantage.

Real win-win thinking is never a game against other party, but it involves cooperation with all the players.

To act in competition with an opponent is not as successful as acting in win-win cooperation with such a party who has

the same values and goals. Win-win thinking can, in world politics, completely compensate now reigning violent-based power politics.

Buy Now at [eBookIt.com/winwin](http://eBookIt.com/winwin)



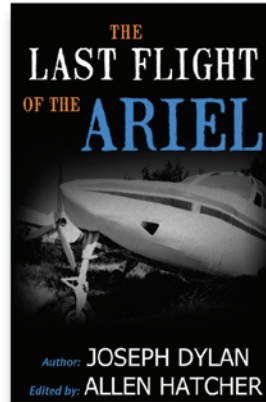
This book helps you to write and deliver jokes to attract more money, honey, and health into your life.

What makes this book unique is that it has 123 joke templates. The templates allow even someone who considers themselves as not funny the ability to easily write and present original funny jokes.

This book is much more than simply writing and delivering jokes. When one has the ability to create and present original humor they have the power to create a better world for themselves. Having the gift of humor

gives you more health, wealth, and love. It is proven that laughter and humor improves your health, that funny people are more liked and respected. People who are more liked and respected have an easier path to more financial success.

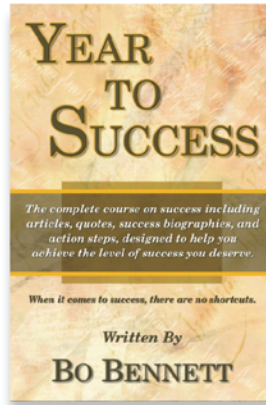
Buy Now at [eBookIt.com/comedymadeeasy](http://eBookIt.com/comedymadeeasy)



A drug dealer who doesn't want to deal anymore, Brazilian hit men, two shrewd trailer trash brothers, a mafia boss with a bad leg and a Chinese bodyguard fly through the pages of *The Ariel*. When the Ariel crashes, with 300 kilograms of pure cocaine, the trip is just beginning. Paul Hewlett is an Ivy League stockbroker who crawls from the wreckage salvaging half the cargo. He has to unload it and disappear before the mob makes him disappear. The flight path takes you from Miami in the 80's, to an airstrip in Colombia, to the homes of Hollywood's rich and powerful,

to an oil rig off Nigeria. Ahead of him is the American dream. Behind him is a trail of dead bodies.

Buy Now at [eBookIt.com/lastflight](http://eBookIt.com/lastflight)



Have you been promised success if you follow a few quick and dirty "rules" or "secrets" of success? Are you tired of irrelevant analogies that do nothing for you but make you feel inadequate? Have you had enough of highly metaphysical concepts and not enough practical solutions? Have you had your fill of grossly exaggerated claims that try to trick you into thinking success is easy? Are you all "affirmationed" out? You are not alone. Think of success as a game of chance in which you have control over the odds. As you begin to master concepts in personal achievement, you are increasing your odds of achieving success. *Year To Success* is a full year course in success, designed to be a practical guide to achieving your definition of success. It has been said that one line of wisdom can change your life more than volumes of books. Imagine what hundreds of pages of wisdom can do.

Buy Now at [eBookIt.com/yeartosuccess](http://eBookIt.com/yeartosuccess)

All these titles also available online at

amazon.com



BARNES & NOBLE  
www.bn.com

kobo

Google

Are you ready to publish YOUR book?

Visit [www.eBookIt.com](http://www.eBookIt.com) or call us at 978-440-8364

ebook conversion & distribution ★ print on demand ★ audiobook creation & distribution ★ promotional services

# WORDS ARE POWER

— **Mohammed Qahtani,**  
2015 World Champion of Public Speaking



Tap into the power of words when you challenge yourself to compete in a Toastmasters speech contest.  
To learn more about the World Championship of Public Speaking, watch this video at [www.toastmasters.org/World-Champs](http://www.toastmasters.org/World-Champs).

**TOASTMASTERS**  
INTERNATIONAL®

WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE