



DISTRICT 84 TOASTMASTERS
SERVING CENTRAL AND NORTHERN FLORIDA
Volume 2, Issue 2 (August 2021)

Synergy



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SECRETS
of
SUCCESS

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Synergy is a publication of Toastmasters District 84. Published once a month, the newsletter aims to inform our audience through relevant information and tools to help members and clubs to think and work creatively to achieve goals, inspire through ideas and stories that can be applied to our personal and professional lives and finally, entertain through content that is interesting and presented in a way that is fun to read.

District Mission

We build new clubs and support all clubs in achieving excellence.

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Raising the Bar to Excellence

by Debi Jo Londono, DTM, District Director



Debi Jo Londono

Saturday March 14 2020 everything changed.

While our District leaders were having a District Executive Council Meeting, Toastmasters Board of Directors was also meeting. That evening we received an urgent letter from TI that stated: "Area, Division, or District events can no longer be conducted in person, on or before June 1, 2020."

It was our District Director Beth Ramsay's birthday, and many leaders stayed in town to attend her surprise birthday party. Therefore, we were able to assemble quickly. Even though we were stunned and in shock, we had to make difficult decisions quickly.

We called in technology experts to get their take on how to do online contests. It seems like years ago now, but just 17 months ago, many members not only didn't have a zoom account, most of us didn't know what it was or how to use it.

After much gut-wrenching deliberation, we announced the excruciating decision to cancel upcoming contests and the annual District Conference. I expected anger and hurt feelings. After all, some clubs had already conducted contests, and much planning and preparation for the conference had taken place. Instead, I watched in wonder as our members supported and encouraged each other, like a family. We all saw friends and club members get furloughed or worse. We lost members and clubs due to the changing environment.

Then the resilient nature of our members kicked in. We watched leaders step up and come forward to help the District adapt. We learned how to zoom around the world. You raised the bar and elevated the club experience. We had TLI's online. We not only chartered online clubs, but most clubs started meeting online.

Then you raised the bar again by having hybrid meet-

ings. With lots of engagement, support, and participation, we were able to have a hybrid annual conference.

Now, I ask you to "raise the bar" again, as I know only you can do.

We stand at a pivotal time in our District's history. We can march forward and elevate our club experience and personal growth, or we can use the excuse of "it's too hard" to stagnate and even go backward.

How can you "raise the bar"?

Start with the basics. Make sure you are enrolled in Pathways. If you completed one level last year, go for two. Get out of your comfort zone, invite people to attend your club meetings, and then ask them to join the club. You never know how far you can reach unless you stretch.

Conduct the "Moments of Truth" assessment early in the year, before September 30, ending the first quarter. Using the results of the Moments of Truth can help your club reach distinguished status. Distinguished clubs tend to be successful, fun, strong clubs that retain and attract members. Members of these clubs complete Paths, are engaged, and are continually growing and improving.

To become a Distinguished District, we only need a 2% increase in active clubs and membership payments, plus 40% of our clubs to be distinguished. There has never been a better time for our District to achieve this distinction.

Since we are "Raising the Bar," let's shoot for an 8% increase in active clubs and membership payments plus 55% of our clubs to be distinguished. Then we will find ourselves among the few Districts that can call themselves Smedley Distinguished.

Together, Let's Go for Smedley!

You have the power to make a difference. Will you raise the bar? ■



Trained Leaders = Engaged Members and Successful Clubs

by Paula Summa, DTM, Program Quality Director



Paula Summa

Leadership comes in many forms, especially when we refer to Toastmasters. We have leaders in our clubs (club officers), leaders in our District (from Area and Division Directors to the Trio), and leaders “in-between” (Chairs and Assistants). Among the many competencies offered, Toastmasters teaches us is how to enhance our leadership

skills. Education and training are a necessary part of every leadership role. Toastmasters provides us with the education, guidance, and resources required to become better leaders and better people. As leaders in Toastmasters, we then pass that knowledge and those skills to others.

Toastmasters International requires club officers to be trained twice a year, typically in July and January. Most Districts hold special training sessions called TLIs (Toastmasters Leadership Institute) or COTs (Club Officer Training). In these sessions, we provide clear, concise, and consistent education for all club officer roles and a variety of educational and fun elective sessions. Club officers network with other club officers, discuss concerns, share best practices and get to know each other beyond the club level.

Trained leaders = engaged leaders and a successful District! Toastmasters International provides training and education for the District Trio and the District Public Relations Manager and Finance Manager twice a year. The importance of regular training and education is paramount to a successful District by equipping leaders with the tools necessary for success.

Trained ADs and DDs = engaged and successful Areas and Divisions. The Area and Division Directors are trained by the Trio and

other District leaders when they begin the new Toastmaster year in July, giving them the guidance and the resources they need to do their jobs. District leaders meet regularly to provide continued assistance throughout the year.

Trained leaders = engaged members and successful clubs! District 84 offers monthly training and education on Pathways and new member orientation, special sessions for VPPRs on how to market your clubs, and so much more! In today’s world of virtual and hybrid meetings, there is so much to learn. New ways to market our clubs are constantly evolving with the many different online and social media platforms. By virtually visiting clubs around the globe, we are sharing ideas and developing new friendships.

Continued education and training are here for you - take advantage of it! Attend these training sessions and forums, invite other members to attend, and share what you learn with your clubs.

With most things in life, we learn as we grow, and we grow as we learn. Let’s continue to learn and grow together; let’s continue to educate ourselves and one another; and let’s continue to raise the bar! ■



Freshen Your Outlook and Restart Your Club

by [Vickie Goodman](#), DTM, Club Growth Director



Vickie Goodman

Sometimes it takes a painful experience to make us change our ways, and we certainly had some painful experiences this past year. All of us are ready to dump yesterday's junk and plan this year for success: new members, new focus, new club goals, new opportunities to experience the joy and fun that success brings. Fortunately, if we can

visualize it, we can achieve it - we need only take a few steps in the right direction. What is the right direction?

The right direction in Toastmasters always involves attracting new members. Diversity keeps us on our toes, challenges our thinking and enriches our lives. "Why aren't members joining my Toastmasters Club?" It's a question I hear a lot, and my initial response is always, "How many people have you invited to visit your club in the last few months?" If you're not inviting someone to every meeting, it's time to make a change. Every person you ask will not accept your invitation, but nobody will accept if you don't ask!

Pique the interest of those around you by sharing the value of your Toastmasters experiences. Talk about a great speech you heard, or the incredible improvements you've noticed in a fellow member. Give credit to your Toastmasters experience when someone notices your speaking or leadership skills, your ability to think on your feet or to

offer helpful feedback. Have you been complimented on your confidence and self-assuredness? Relate how practice at Toastmasters has helped instill those skills. Don't just invite someone to a meeting – share your Toastmasters experiences at every opportunity; share your vision of the success you will achieve thanks to your Toastmasters experience. Your enthusiasm will be so contagious! Before you know it, others will start asking you how to get involved.

Thriving clubs attract and retain members by always offering dynamic, professionally-run meetings that feature a variety of participants and lots of FUN! A skilled Toastmaster will plan a creative program, engaging members and guests alike with themes, props, stories and unexpected twists in the agenda. Think of your meeting like a theatrical show which you, as Toastmaster, get to direct. Invite a featured speaker or focus on a specific topic and give word-of-mouth advertising to associates, friends and family so they can enjoy the program, too.

Work together to rediscover that spark and sizzle, that fun and excitement, that exuberant excellence that compelled you towards self-improvement when you first joined. Whether online or in person, energy and laughter are contagious, so make sure your club meetings are full of both.

"If you really want to do something, you'll find a way; if you don't, you'll find an excuse." Jim Rohn

Visualize your club's success, and then work together to make it happen. ■

Monthly Sessions

Learn how **PATHWAYS** is the companion on your Toastmasters journey!

Zoom ID: 853 1202 4512

Passcode: 448672

17th of every month at 7pm ET

except January 2022

August Focus Base Camp Manager Tasks

— ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ —
TOASTMASTERS
PATHWAYS
— learning experience —

District 84 2021-2022 Incentives and Awards

Membership

Smedley Award

August 1- September 30, 2021

Talk Up Toastmasters

February 1 - March 31, 2022

Beat the Clock

May 1 - June 30, 2022

Add 5 new, dual, or reinstated members during the campaign dates above.

Receive the "Smedley Award", "Talk Up Toastmasters" or "Beat the Clock" Ribbon to display on your Club's banner. Receive 10% off next Club order from Toastmaster International.

Plus receive \$25 TI gift certificate from District 84

Banner Incentive

Any club chartered during the year will receive a Free Banner!

Open House Incentive

Any club holding an Open House may receive a one time \$30 reimbursement for expenses.

Education & Officer Training

Triple Crown Award

Member earns 3 educational awards from July 1 - April 15th

Receives District 84 Triple Crown pin at the Conference Awards Ceremony

Moments of Truth

Presents Moments of Truth (MOT) at 2 different club meetings, July 1, 2021 - March 31st, 2022

[Send copy of the Agenda to MOT chair.](#)

Receive MOT pin at TLIs or the Conference Awards Ceremony

Seven of Seven Training Incentives

Seven of seven club officers trained during the first and second round TLI - receive a \$10 Toastmasters gift certificate from District 84 (All seven club officers must be trained at the TLIs or primary Division Make-up Training).

Dues Renewals

The Notable 9

Any Club that pays for 9 members by September 9 or March 9 gets "The Notable 9" Ribbon to display on their banner.

The Incredible 20

Any club that pays dues for 20 members by September 20 or March 20 gets "The Incredible 20" Ribbon to display on your Club's banner PLUS, a \$25 TI gift certificate from District 84. Note: Receipt from TI showing dues paid is required for these awards.

Deadlines for requesting Dues Renewal awards are October 31st and April 30th. [Click here to email your receipt.](#)

District 84 Golden Gavel Award

Once your club has completed all seven requirements, submit proof of completion by April 15, 2022 to [PQD Paula Summa](#). Clubs meeting [all seven criteria](#) will be recognized at the District 84 Annual Conference in May 2022.

ToastmastersD84.org Gets a New Look and Feel

by Maria Martinez, DTM, Public Relations Manager



Maria Martinez

Have you visited our website recently? If so, you will have discovered the new look, feel, and functionality of Toastmastersd84.org. It is no secret that to achieve success, organizations rely on having a website as a means to obtain an around-the-clock, online presence; to be a hub

where prospective and existing customers alike can find more information about the products and services being offered, and to be the place where the organization's leaders can be reached, and their messages are heard.

Past District Director and new webmaster Mike McLean had a dream to transform the D84 website, and that dream has come to reality and is available now for all of us to share. A quick tour of the new Toastmastersd84.org reflects the vision of our District Director Debi Jo Londono for "clear, concise, consistent communication."

Getting Started

As soon as you navigate to the website, you find a cheerful, colorful, and interactive home page. Hovering over the top bar menu reveals a plethora of resources for guests as well as current members and leaders. As you scroll down, you begin to experience some of the new functionalities. For instance, under "Recent News" you immediately see the latest articles, all with a familiar "blog style" aesthetic to them. From the newest podcast to the PlayBook (resource guide of TLI materi-

als), to the latest edition of Synergy in readable and downloadable formats - it is all right there, within easy reach. Continue to scroll down, and you'll see information about our clubs, the District calendar, and an introduction of our senior leadership team with accessible connection links. Finally, at the bottom of the homepage, find links to all our social media channels and information about the District.

Check the Top Tabs

Guests - Providing answers to most of the questions a guest might have

News & Blogs - Fresh articles from our District TRIO and other leaders,

Members - Member-related information such as TLI and contests

Leadership - Relevant information for leaders across the District such as incentives, renewals, and Moments of Truth

Events - Information about all contests, TLI, and conferences will be housed here

Join our Email List and Contact Us - providing a fast and easy way to reach us

All of this information is packaged in a clean and crisp look designed to be interactive, with accordion-style boxes, tags, and search fields throughout, which makes the content engaging, searchable, and dynamic.

Your "Go-To" Resource for D84

- Want information for a prospective member? Go to: Guest tab
- Missed last month's Synergy? Go to: News & Blogs

“
For success,
attitude is
equally
important as
ability, and a
great website.”

Walter Scott

toastmastersd84.org

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ToastmastersD84.org

Continued from Page 7

- Stuck on a Pathways project? Go to: For members > Pathways Support
- Want to check the status of your club renewals? Go to: Leadership > For Club Officers > April Dues Renewal Status
- Want to share the benefits of Toastmasters with a prospective organization? Go to: Guests > Company and Community Benefits
- Lost your Club Leadership Handbook? Go to: D84 Home > Document Library
- Want something informative you can listen to while on the road? Go to: News and Blogs > D84 Synergy Podcast (and subscribe!)
- Want to make sure you don't miss anything? Go to: Events > District Calendar and get happy! Color-coded categories allow you to find information based on your interest and, thanks to its RSS and calendar-friendly format, you can subscribe to the newsfeed and receive automatic updates when they become available.

These are just some examples! Many report pages are directly linked to Toastmasters International and will open in a new window. The more you use it, the more you will enjoy and discover how the new website will help you and your clubs be successful.

But Wait, There's More...

Although the main objective of any good website is to serve its target audience, webmaster Mike McLean also shared some of the "less obvious" benefits:

Search Engine Optimized (SEO) blog format – Trio members and the Public Relations Manager can now log in and publish their news

Statistics and tracking data – which will enable us to determine what users find interesting and want more of

Intuitive discoverability – to help you find what you need, easily and fast

Our new Toastmasters D84 website meets all the hallmarks of an award-winning website: content, usability, aesthetics, search engine optimization, and engagement. Visit ToastmastersD84.org regularly and share with your club members, officers, and prospective guests. We know you will love it as much as we do! ■



TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL

So You've Joined Toastmasters.
Now What?

New Member Orientation with the Trio and Pathways Chair

1st Sunday of Each Month
7:00pm ET on Zoom
Meeting ID: 962 7944 2148
Password: NewMembers



CLUB CORNER

Dream, Believe, Achieve and Succeed!

by Vickie Goodman, DTM, Club Growth Director

Is your club focused on what was or what is to come? Success requires us to change our focus from what was to what will be. Visualize your stimulating and exciting club meeting that has attracted the needed members who are excited and energized by each meeting's jam-packed agenda and has fulfilled every member's expectation for increased confidence, as well as personal and professional growth. With just a little planning and teamwork, your club can make that dream a reality!

Put Your Training To Work

Club officers should have fulfilled their promise to participate in the Toastmasters Leadership Institute (TLI). Now it's time to apply what was taught, delve into those resources distributed and put them into play to make your club healthier and happier. Your club provides on-the-job training, but it doesn't work if you don't practice those skills. Hold your club Executive Council meeting, review the Club Success Plan and let every officer target a specific goal within the arena of their officer position. Develop measurable steps to show the progress you are making towards those goals and continue to focus on providing a club atmosphere that creates an electrical charge among your members. You are a club officer. What will you accomplish and how will you grow in that position this year?

Reinvent Your Meeting

There are lots of ways to add sizzle and sparkle to that monotonous Zoom screen; you need to do a little research. You're sitting in front of the computer anyway, so google some ideas! Check out other District and club websites or, better yet, get a few members to participate in the Club Ambassador Program by visiting other clubs (<https://toastmastersd84.org/club-ambassadors/>) and ask them to report what they saw and learned. Who says your club agenda has to flow in the same order meeting after meeting? The Toastmaster has control of the meeting and should feel free to stir it up for fun and entertainment. Remember, guests who visit

your club and notice your members having a great time will be more likely to return and join.

Recommit To Personal Growth And Excellence Now

Sure, dues aren't officially due until Oct. 1st, but there's no need to wait and worry. Treasurers can start asking for renewed member commitment now and help your club qualify for a variety of Dues Renewal Incentives (<https://toastmastersd84.org/club-incentives/dues-renewals-incentives/>). Encourage members to renew Once and for All (Year), pre-paying through Sept. 2022 (<https://toastmastersd84.org/club-incentives/once-and-for-all-year/>). Distribute "I RENEWED" stickers for members that have paid to wear at your meetings.

Make A World Of Difference

Register to participate in the Toastmasters International 2021 Virtual Convention as a club (<https://www.toastmasters.org/events/2021-international-convention>). Attend specific sessions and then get together to talk about them or even have members share at club meetings what they saw, felt, and learned as they meandered through the incredible workshops, amazing International Speech Contest, and fun-filled networking opportunities. You'll connect with Toastmasters from around the world and make some amazing friends in the process. Follow these tips (<https://www.toastmasters.org/Leadership-Central/featured-article>) to make the most of your convention experience.

Success: The predictable result of preparation, focus, hard work, and learning from failure. ■



Nurturing Success

by Brian Rademacher



Brian Rademacher

Success rarely happens by chance.

Whether it is training for an athletic event, learning to play a new instrument, giving a speech, or achieving a milestone at work, I consistently use three elements to achieve success: collaboration, practice, and visualization.

These elements, the same that I use with any Toastmaster speech or project, were instrumental in helping me achieve an important milestone in my career—accreditation as a Certified Economic Developer. I spent three years completing the required coursework and another six months of preparation before passing a 3-part exam over two days that included essays, short answer and multiple-choice questions, and an oral interview conducted by a panel. Collaboration, practice, and visualization were key in achieving this milestone, just as they are in accomplishing milestones in Toastmasters.

Collaboration.

I did not study alone. A good friend who was also set to take the exam agreed to work together with me. Over six months, we reviewed the course material, challenged each other with questions, and reviewed each other's work as we wrote mock essays and posed potential interview questions. I received critical feedback and provided the same to my friend, which required us to defend our answers and reassess our understanding of the material. Our collaboration gave me a broader view of the material that I would not have had if I had studied alone. In Toastmasters, evaluations and mentoring are critical components that support this same collaboration principle.

Practice.

We have all heard the adage, "practice makes perfect." My preference is, "practice makes progress." Perfection is elusive, especially when writing essays and answering interview questions which were merely suppositions on my part. Nonetheless, the effort put into writing countless essays on the course material helped me refine my writing style, get to the point faster, and analyze my content through the eyes of the person grading the exams. I couldn't know if my answers were perfect, but I could see progress towards refined, more succinct, and relevant responses. In Toastmasters, practicing our presentations more than just a couple of times, leads to greater progress and ultimately to more successful speeches.

Visualization.

The final element of success that helped was to visualize success. During the six months I spent studying, I spent at least 10 minutes every day watching myself succeed. I closed my eyes and visualized walking with confidence into the exam room; calmly and confidently writing essays and short answers within the allotted time frame; the answers flowing freely from my pen to paper;

and composed and smiling as I answered questions from the interview panel, all the while enjoying the challenge. When it was time for the exam, I walked in feeling more confident and at ease as I started the two-day process. This visualization technique can be applied when preparing and delivering confident and engaging speeches too.

Collaboration, practice, and visualization helped me pass the accreditation exam to become a Certified Economic Developer. These same principles help me overcome challenges and projects in Toastmasters too. I encourage you to take time to reflect on successful moments in your life when you achieved an important goal. Then take a few steps back and uncover the elements that led you to succeed. Write them down. And nurture your elements of success. ■

An accomplishment of a goal or purpose is achieved by applying tried-and-true elements through a disciplined approach over a period of time."

On Mission: To be in Power? Or to Empower?

Part 2 of 4
by Debby Kerr-Henry

We provide a supportive and positive learning experience
in which members are empowered
to develop communication and leadership skills
resulting in greater self-confidence and personal growth.



Debby Kerr-Henry

In the early 90s, while living in Dallas, my boss highly recommended I join Toastmasters. In a last-ditch effort to save my educational trainer job, I joined for a few years, and in April 2019, I rejoined in Daytona Beach to hone communication skills that I had first learned so many years ago.

I met Al and Carey Garrett through the Greater Dallas Toastmasters, who insisted that I meet their good friend Patrick, whom I would later marry. A few weeks ago, Patrick and I returned to Dallas to attend the Garrett's daughter's wedding. Just yesterday, this beautiful young woman was born, and now we were watching her walk down the aisle to begin a new chapter in her young life.

Patrick and I stayed at the Embassy Suites near Love Field Airport and checked into a room with a view — not of the usual parking lot or AC unit, but a spectacular view that showcased a greenbelt that stretched to the Dallas skyline. To the right, jets lifted from the runway over skyscrapers and disappeared toward their destinations.

Toastmasters founder Ralph Smedley said, "We provide a supportive and positive learning experience in which members are empowered..." My Dallas view illustrates how it feels to be *empowered*—to lift off and take flight over tall buildings toward a place destined to be explored.

Smedley, as a YMCA employee, was in the business of lifting up people, not by offering programs for the sake of programming, but rather to empower people to rise to their potentials. I believe Smedley intentionally included *empowerment* in our mission statement because

he wanted us to know and own our "whys".

Why are you in Toastmasters? Is it purely to learn how to speak or lead better? If so, then why is that important to you? For me, I initially joined because of my job. But since rejoining and stepping into leadership, my "why" has transformed into something more, something that contributes to my larger purpose of writing, speaking, and positively impacting my world.

To better understand empowerment, it's helpful to understand its root word *power*. One definition speaks of command and control, self-promotion and self-serving—a word that can be, and is, abused. Power can also mean the ability to act or do; strength, might, mastery and vigor, which in turn means effort, energy, and enthusiasm—all uplifting. Empowerment is this latter selfless ambition. It means "to give power or authority to."

People who empower me live imperfectly courageous lives, serving as examples of how to navigate days to the best of their ability regardless of their circumstances, focusing on their "why" and supporting others in theirs. They face challenges, as opposed to attacking or ignoring them. They strive to live their best selves.

In the context of Toastmasters, we can empower by:

- ① providing a supportive and positive learning experience (see "[On Mission, Part One](#)" on Page 9);
- ② knowing, understanding, and supporting the 'whys' in our clubs (see [Member Interest Survey](#) and [Pathways Mentoring Program](#)) and
- ③ accepting challenges that could lift us to our potentials—places destined to be explored.

Why did you join Toastmasters? Was it to be in power, or to empower? Maybe it's both (in a good way). Whatever it is, make it a goal this year to know and own your "why". ■

Toastmasters + YOU = Success ... Right!?

by Angela Ardrey-Reynolds, IP5



Angela Ardrey-Reynolds

Simple formula . . . join a club, study Pathways, participate and volunteer, and ta-da . . . you're a success. Right?

Well, not exactly. Let's deconstruct this formula.

Toastmasters = educational program. Their website states, "Join Toastmasters and you will:

- Improve your public speaking skills
- Build leadership skills
- Maximize your potential
- Enjoy unlimited personal growth
- Work on networking in a small and supportive environment
- Practice writing speeches and presenting in a group setting
- Gain a competitive advantage in the workplace
- Build self-confidence and self-awareness"

YOU = the STUDENT, who is given the opportunity to learn and develop skills.

SUCCESS = goal achiever, task completer, a job well-done.

When I look back at my own success with weight loss, I remember pondering, "Is it the trainer or me? Who is creating my success?" I used to credit the trainer. But over time, I realized most of her clients weren't achieving their goals. My trainer grumbled, "They show up and pay me to train them. But they're not committed; they are not doing the work." She opened my eyes! Oh my, is it all about commitment?

In Toastmasters, we are all students, presented with the same educational program. But one variable affects our success—commitment.

Let's take a glimpse into the Toastmasters journeys of three committed students.

Beth Ramsay DTM, Education Chair, PDD



My District Director year (2019-2020) was a personal growth journey. Toastmasters allowed me to work on my skills of letting people have their own learning journey. And this was a big aha for me.

It was freeing, if that makes any sense. It's a freeing thing when I'm not taking responsibility for everybody else's journey. Their commitment is their own. So, unless things were going off the rails, I would leave it alone. And that way, they would learn.

I have taken this into my personal life—with my husband, kids, my friends and family. I encourage their commitment. But I shouldn't help them unless they ask. I have utilized this principle in my career. When people hire me, they want a coach to tell them what to do. However, my job is to arouse in them a personal commitment to the journey. Toastmasters will change your life based upon your commitment.

Lea Tran, DTM



Toastmasters polished me and gave me confidence. I knew that faking it to make it was not enough. I had to become it.

I have a story to tell, a story of how to overcome difficulty. This story will help a lot of people break their own silence and not hold back like I did.

Continued on Page 13, Success

Success

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I've learned when you try something, many doors open. I am the testimonial thereof. I tell people to have a destination and not to worry about how to get there. They just need to work on the short distance their fog lights show. That's how I got to my destination—by driving in the fog.

Whatever you do, be fully committed. And along the way, you are going to meet people who want to support and help you. Treasure that and thank them. Then turn around and support them. Life is a tango. You can't just dance by yourself. It takes two to tango.

Marcia Carter, Area 52 Director



Toastmasters taught me how to give constructive feedback. I also learned how to listen and how to read people's body language better.

I coach interviewing skills. Interviewing is thinking on your feet — getting the question, processing it, and telling your story with a beginning, middle, and end. Interviewees learn how to get comfortable selling themselves. Many of these same skills are learned in Toastmasters.

I have the tools. What Toastmasters did was give me the instructions.

Toastmasters is a great asset. It makes you think and organize your thoughts. Listening to feedback has taught me a lot, including my value. As long as I am authentic, the message gets across and people grow.

This is the place where we get to learn from our mistakes without guilt. Our commitment makes the difference. ■

Strong Mind | Strong Body | Believe the Unbelievable.
Professional Coach, Speaker, Writer and Photographer.
Connect with Angela on [LinkedIn](#).

Saving Face

by **Stephany Bonnie Byrne, DTM, Member of Find Your Funny Toastmasters Club**



Stephany Byrne

Did I properly plan and prepare?

But why would I?

What kind of preparation is needed to make a simple return to a local store?

What's so difficult about returning unused, un-touched, unwanted

merchandise, in compliance with the store's published and posted policy on refunds? I even had a receipt. Slam dunk, right? Well, keep reading.

It's midday at the party store, which is empty save one lone customer whose transaction seemed to require the complete attention of both store clerks. To my credit, I waited...and I waited. Then, I waited some more, as heat began to rise from my scalp.

I shifted my feet: right foot then left foot, repeated twice; all the while knowing that my patience quotient was about to expire. By this time, I'm regretting leaving my COVID-19/anonymity mask in the car, because I recognize that I am about to pepper this quiet atmosphere with some righteous indignation. Finally, I drew myself up to full exasperated measure and blurted out, "Is there really no one here to help me? Is that lady's transaction so special that not one of you can take care of me?"

An associate promptly came over, pulled out the proffered merchandise with receipt and to my horror very sweetly announced, "I'm sorry but you are in the wrong store. Your merchandise is from the hobby shop next door."

How embarrassing! If I had not forgotten my mask, I might have at least saved some face! How could something so simple go so wrong?

Easy! We tend to save planning for big undertakings, taking the simplicity of small tasks for granted. Something, I can assure you, I will never do again! ■

CLUB COACHES NEEDED



www.toastmasters.org

District 84 Clubs with 12 or fewer members need your help...

Invest in the future of Toastmasters!
Share your expertise!

The Club Coach Team needs volunteers!

Our Club Coach program offers ongoing training to all Club Coaches AND to the club officers of clubs that qualify for Club Coaches!

- A Monthly ZOOM “Club Coach Forum” to discuss best practices and network with other Club Coaches!
- A Monthly ZOOM “Club Coach Education Session” for Club Coaches and club officers to discuss the “who, what, where and why’s” of what is expected of the Coach and the club.
- A WIDE variety of resources to assist the Coach and the clubs to reach success!

The many benefits of becoming a CLUB COACH!!!

1. Grow and practice your leadership skills.
2. Help to support and guide other clubs in our District.
3. Share your knowledge of Toastmasters.
4. Gain more insight on how to bring our clubs to excellence.
5. Meet new Toastmaster friends.
6. Step “outside the box”.
7. Help other Toastmasters learn and grow.
8. Assist and guide other clubs to reach Distinguished.
9. Earn credit towards your DTM!

Submit your application to be a Club Coach here

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

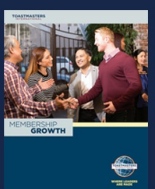
<https://www.toastmasters.org/resources/club-coach-troubleshooting-guide>

<http://dashboards.toastmasters.org>

clubcoach@toastmasters.org

www.toastmasters.org/membershipbuilding

Club Growth Director, Vickie Goodman, DTM
vgoodmandtm@gmail.com



Sounds of Success

The Big “Golden Gavel” Bang

by Sowjanya Athmakuri Ramini,
LD5, DL5, Area 93 Director



Sowjanya Athmakuri

Great stories do not always begin so great. What makes them stand out is their ending.

The following five D84 clubs began without pomp and circumstance, but in the midst of an agonizing and confusing pandemic year, they finished with a Golden Gavel bang.

5-Star Toastmasters: well-defined plan with fun

The new kid on the block, just chartered in 2018, lived up to its name by earning the Golden Gavel in its infancy. Members attribute their success to a well-defined plan that kept everyone on point. With fun and engaging meetings, their team worked methodically to achieve each of the Golden Gavel goals.

“Every guest and new member was enthusiastically embraced and encouraged to add his or her personal genius to the club fabric and atmosphere,” Treasurer Becky McGilton said. Watch out for this new club. They are just getting started.

Downtown Ocala Toastmasters: planning, preparation and persistence

The Golden Gavel bang resonated not once, but twice in a row from Downtown Ocala Toastmasters. This club’s officers, with their unwavering dedication, achieved the lion’s share of goals—five of seven, with members’ support meeting all educational deadlines.

“Planning, preparation, and persistence, these three Ps made it possible to achieve the Golden Gavel Award,” Gary Blasczienski, VP Education and Secretary, said.

Jacksonville Toastmasters: supportive and competitive

President Heidi Vetter said that the Jacksonville Toastmasters Club balances dual roles. On one hand, mem-

bers are a supportive family that loves to see and encourage each other. But on the other hand, they can get a bit competitive, always aiming to achieve pins, ribbons, certificates and plaques.

In spite of Zoom fatigue, as Amanda Howard, VP Membership, described it, members still showed up for meetings with perseverance and positivity. And in the end, by embracing both a supportive and competitive environment, Jacksonville Toastmasters achieved golden status.

Plant City Toastmasters: determination and clear blueprint

When the pandemic threw curve balls, leaving members of Plant City Toastmasters feeling as if they were “punched in the gut,” its leaders simply refused to give up. “Leadership had ignited a hunger in its members,” VP Education Angela Ardrey-Reynolds said.

Leadership set a clear blueprint that focused on required goals to achieve the Golden Gavel Award. And with unwavering commitment from the team members, Plant City achieved the unthinkable.

Toastmasters at Twelve: teamwork and perseverance

A roller coaster ride describes Toastmasters at Twelve’s year. Beginning with a loss of seven members, the year kicked off to a rough start. However, as former president Debby Kerr-Henry put it, teamwork and perseverance held them together. In the end, members trusted its leadership and whether it was serving as an ambassador, fast-tracking through a Pathways level, renewing memberships or recruiting new members, every person contributed in some way to the club’s success. The ever-persistent Toastmasters at Twelve crossed the finish line mere hours before the Golden Gavel deadline.

So what is stopping you from grabbing the gold?

Will I hear a big Golden Gavel bang from your club this year?

See the [Golden Gavel](#) requirements for your club’s chance at a standout year. ■

Steps to Success

by Sandy DePrimo, DTM



Sandy DePrimo

Henry Ford said, “Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.” This quote personifies the success of Toastmasters International overall.

July is an exciting month as new leaders, with new ideas, step into officer roles and begin a year-long journey. It is a time to bring all

new ideas together and form a cohesive and *dynamic* leadership team!

① **Create a Club Vision and Mission Statement:** *Who are we and what do we want to become?*

A **vision statement** represents the club’s overall purpose and motivation for the future. It gives its stakeholders the ability to understand why the group exists. A **mission statement** informs stakeholders how it seeks to serve each member while supporting the company vision. Together the vision and mission statements act as a compass to determine the strength of the group or organization’s strategy.

As an example, the statements below are the club vision and mission statements provided by Toastmasters International:

Vision Statement: Who are we?

“Toastmasters International empowers people to achieve their full potential and realize their dreams. Through our member clubs, people throughout the world can improve their communication and leadership skills and find the courage to change.”

Mission Statement: How do we support the club vision?

“We provide a supportive and positive learning experience in which members are empowered to develop communication and leadership skills, resulting in greater self-confidence and personal growth.”

② **Create Core Values:** *How do we present the club to the public?*

Values represent the highest precedence of organiza-

tional standards. They are the face of the organization to a guest. The actions of the members form the first impression. Supporting the vision and mission with Integrity, Respect, Service, and Excellence can only enhance the public image of Toastmasters International.

Toastmasters International Core Values

Toastmasters International’s core values are integrity, dedication to excellence, service to the member, and respect for the individual. These are values worthy of a great organization, and we believe we should incorporate them as anchor points in every decision we make. Our core values provide us with a means to guide *and evaluate* our operations, our planning, and vision for the future.

③ **Be a Leader and Motivator:** *What can be done to bring out the best in people?*

To quote Pablo Picasso, “Action is the fundamental key to all success.” A leader is a coach, a motivator, a goal setter, a trendsetter, and a decision-maker. A leader’s goal should be to provide continual support and guidance to members while modeling the Toastmasters core values. Club success comes from strong, supportive leadership.

- Create an action plan with measurable goals and deadlines for accountability
- Start a mentoring program with a focus on individual growth
- Be open to new and creative ideas from the club members
- Produce realistic, obtainable goals for each member
- Recognize and celebrate individual growth, whether big or small
- Endlessly reiterate the vision and the mission for the club

④ **Reflect:** *Look back to plan forward*

“We do not learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience.” John Dewey

Reflection brings small efforts to light. It gives us a much-needed reminder that the definition of success lies within ourselves. ■

Succeeding within Time Limits

by Julie Salgo, Retired Learning and Development Consultant



Julie Salgo

I was once asked to give a 5-minute presentation to “sell” an idea to the CEO. I prepared what I thought was a great presentation (without Power-Point), but it was about 10 minutes long. How was I going to cut the time in half? Frankly, it took many more revisions and practice sessions with a friend who used a timer with an annoying, sharp ring. It soon became

quite clear which words were unnecessary. I ended up with a convincing and straightforward talk that fit into the 5-minute time frame. Even with a few questions, the whole “show” lasted only about 8 minutes and, to my surprise, I got the buy-in from the CEO!

“Managing time” - what an oxymoron! Even the related expressions are misleading: “save time”, “make time”, “spare time”, “waste time”, and, most curiously, “do not have time”. Time is not money. Nobody has a bank account where your saved time can collect interest. Time is a great equalizer: everyone has the same amount, no matter who or where you are. What can be managed are the activities we value and try to fit into an hour, a day, a month, and eventually into our lives.

Lots of people struggle with staying on track, going off on tangents, simply talking too much or not relaying enough relevant information. In casual conversations this may not cause any problem, but at work it can be detrimental to your career advancement. If you speak during a meeting, especially if you give a presentation, people will remember how well you “managed time”- yours and theirs, meaning that you not only stayed within the assigned time frame, but your audience felt well-informed, motivated, or even entertained after listening to you.

There are definitely negative outcomes when our presentations last much longer than planned. Your overtime may result in frustration to other speakers or meeting participants because they will have less time, or no time at all, to be heard. Members of the audience may become agitated, wondering if they will make it on time to their next activity.

Emphasizing the role of the timekeeper at a Toastmasters meeting shows respect for everyone’s time.

Whether delivering a prepared or impromptu speech, pay attention to the timekeeper’s precise signals. When you see the red signal, move straight to your closing remarks regardless of where you are in your speech. You will soon develop a sixth sense for discovering the relationship between minutes and message.

Rehearsal offers the best method for staying within your allotted time. Practicing aloud helps you discover what flows without effort and where you tend to stumble. Rehearsal also reveals how many pages of notes and/or charts will fit into the given time slot. With practice, you will become a role model for effectiveness and efficiency. Hang in there!

Everyone has time. People claiming the excuse, “I don’t have time,” are really giving you the message that your invitation was not as appealing as it could have been. Don’t hesitate to credit your Toastmasters experience when receiving a compliment about your communication or leadership skills or your confidence. Enthusiastically invite guests to your club to experience a high-energy, well-structured and well-conducted meeting. They will recognize the value of the skills practiced by Toastmasters to help advance their careers and enrich their lives. They may have no “spare time”, but they will “find time” to “save time” on self-improvement and avoid “wasting time” accepting the status quo, because Toastmasters offers an opportunity to “manage and invest their time” developing skills that matter. Timing is truly everything. ■



Competing Provides Opportunity for Success

by Serena Piper



Serena Piper

My fellow Toastmasters encouraged me to compete in last year's evaluation contest. As hopeful as I was that someone else would step up and compete, it ended up being me. I was full of angst thinking about "competing," doubting my ability to provide helpful feedback, and dreading pre-

senting in front of who knew how many people. I mentally dug in my heels. However, the support I received from my fellow Toastmasters empowered me, and I began to feel like competing would be a good thing for my personal growth.

I spent nearly two months serving as an evaluator at every Toastmasters meeting, practicing different opening techniques, using pointers winning evaluators shared on YouTube and considering feedback from other Toastmasters on how to improve my evaluations. However, the most valuable lessons I learned didn't come until after I debriefed the contest. Here are my three biggest takeaways:

① Avoid Predictability

There's comfort in resorting to a familiar evaluation format, but too many evaluations start with "Thank you, Mr/Madam Toastmaster, fellow Toastmasters, and especially [insert speaker's name]." And many end with, "I look forward to hearing more from you in the future." Is anyone else tired of predictable evaluations?

In the area contest, I started with a strong opening. The speaker I evaluated mimed a phone conversation for the first minute of his speech, and since it was funny and stuck with me, I started my evaluation pretending I was on the phone with him. I ended my evaluation, commending him for his skit-like speech, something other Toastmasters could try in their speeches.

② Visualize Your Evaluation

Picture in your mind the words you are saying. It's not just speeches that need organization, evaluations do too. If what you say is unclear and leaves the speaker wondering what you actually meant, it's not a helpful evaluation. If you have time, try to rehearse mentally. That's when you can see how your words will come

across. Numbering what worked and didn't work for the speaker helped me stay on track so they weren't left with a cartoon bubble hovering overhead.

③ What You Wear Matters

When I competed in the area contest, I dressed professionally — at least from the waist up since it was virtual. I wore a nice shirt and neatly combed back my hair. Surprisingly, I came in first place which meant I qualified for the division contest.

However, on the day of the Division contest, I was rushing home from a work event an hour before to clean up and do last-minute prep. Unfortunately, I was so concerned with arriving at the Zoom event on time that I completely ignored my tank top and wet hair in its messy bun.

It wasn't until later that I realized my mistake. A fellow Toastmaster texted me to say that while my intro was superb and the content was great, I probably would've placed higher than third had I put more thought into what I was wearing. My biggest mistake was assuming that what I said was all that mattered. When giving an evaluation, apply the same rules you would follow for a job interview. It's not just what you're saying but also how you present yourself. Many of our Toastmasters clubs are virtual or hybrid, but impressions still matter. Dress the part.

Although competing stirred up anxiety and challenged me more than I would have preferred, in the end, it helped me see that my success came from deciding to participate in an unknown and doing my best to be fully present in the experience. My goal was to be thorough and thoughtful and genuinely try to provide feedback to help the speaker and my fellow Toastmasters be better presenters. That, to me, is a win-win. ■

Food Rules — Make it a Date Night

by Pim Parpart, DTM, IPDD



Pim Parpart

Many Toastmasters clubs take advantage of free meeting rooms at their local restaurants. Is it really free? Or is it the cost of members' meals?

It depends on who you ask. I belong to two clubs that meet at restaurants, and I love every minute of their meetings.

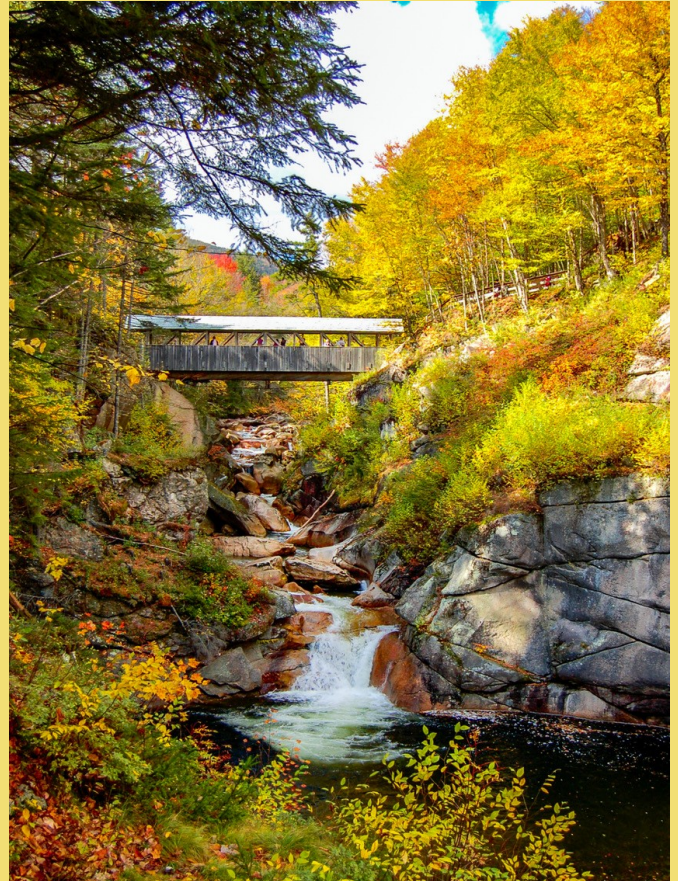
Pros:

- ① You can make it a Date Night. No more feeling guilty for leaving your significant other for an hour or two to attend your Toastmasters meeting!
- ② When members go early to eat, they get a chance to chit chat and bond with each other. It's social time.
- ③ People should pay themselves first. Buying yourself a good meal is one way to do it.
- ④ Most restaurants already have a big screen TV on the wall, so you can easily set up your hybrid meeting. Yes, hybrid meetings are here to stay.
- ⑤ The restaurant has a private room, so you don't have to deal with other patrons. If they don't have a private room, you shouldn't use them anyway.
- ⑥ Our members will get used to going early to eat and be done eating before the meeting starts, or ordering food before they come into the meeting room if they are late.
- ⑦ You can ask the restaurant to buy conference ads or to give gift certificates for the raffle table.
- ⑧ Most restaurants have a Facebook page with many followers. If you post pictures from your meeting, you get free advertising.
- ⑨ You don't have to cook or clean. Who wouldn't like that?
- ⑩ Waitstaff can be trained not to come in when the door is closed, or to be very quiet when serving the food.
- ⑪ People with full stomachs are always happy.
- ⑫ Even if you have poor attendance, at least you get to enjoy a good meal.
- ⑬ Tell a friend you want to go to dinner together. Surprise them by taking them to a Toastmasters meeting.

Cons:

- ① Some restaurants require a minimum purchase. (Tell them we are a nonprofit; they will normally reduce it to a reasonable amount.)
- ② Not all members want to spend money to buy food. (If you have enough members who will, that should not be a problem.)
- ③ If the club doesn't have enough committed members who like to eat, the restaurant may give the meeting room to a bigger party. (They normally give you notice and set you up in a corner somewhere in the restaurant.)
- ④ Some restaurants don't have equipment for a club to use. (That's why you have a Sgt. At Arms to haul the equipment to the meeting. It is not always possible to recruit an Olympic weightlifter as the Sgt. At Arms.)
- ⑤ Waitstaff coming in and out are a distraction. (Go early and eat first.)
- ⑥ The audience may be distracted by looking at their food and not at the speakers while eating. (Go early and eat first.)
- ⑦ The audience may be looking at the spaghetti sauce you spilled on your shirt instead of listening to your speech.

As you can see, in my humble opinion, the Pros definitely outweigh the Cons. Here is the tagline you can use to promote your club: "Great Food, Good Speeches and Awesome Evaluations!" Let's Eat! ■



"Covered Footbridge, New Hampshire"

Pamela Winter

Member of LensMasters Advanced

<https://www.toastmastersd84.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/toastmastersd84/>

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