Congratulations
District 47
2006-07
#3 In The World!

Become A Champion At Work
Put Wind In Your Club’s Sails
Colorize What You Verbalize
How To Get A Website To Promote Your Club
Area Governor Tips
A Champion At Work
by Jim Bussey, ATMS/CL
West Kendall Toastmasters
"...and that's why this project is so important!"

This is how I imagined my informative, impassioned, and persuasive argument to the executives of my company would be delivered. They would then rise as one, nodding and showering me and my team with praise and money.

What really happened? "John, would you explain what Jim just said?" This question was directed to my boss. My presentation was too technical, my arguments disjointed, my voice quiet and timid. I couldn't wait to sit down, and the meeting participants felt the same way.

I was a computer programmer back then, and was given my first chance to present a key project to the executive team. It was awful, and I was never asked to do it again. Other more articulate people got the job...and the promotions.

Programming computers was perfect for me—I was shy, uncomfortable in groups, and avoided most social contact. I was in control. Or was I?

As my progress up the corporate ladder inched along, I did gain some composure in front of a group, but my career never recovered from the loss of time due to my poor communication skills.

A Champion At Work (continued from page 6)
...participants one-on-one, learning their position on the issue, telling them mine, and distilling the issues into something we could agree on. By the time we had our meeting, we all knew what the outcome would be. Wow!

I owe all that to Toastmasters.

Speaking humorously, persuasively and passionately are certainly the most obvious attribute one gains from participation; however, there are more subtle, equally important things that Toastmasters taught me:

- **Learning to listen** (evaluators, AH counters, and grammarians do that). I used to think a presentation was a one-way process; that a conversation consisted of waiting for the other guy to shut up so I could speak. Listening, really listening, is so much more powerful. As Steven Covey said, "Seek first to understand, then to be understood."

- **Learning to read an audience.** When do you need to "kick it up a notch?" When do they need clarification of a complex point? When should I ask questions?

- **Learning that the visual is just as important as the audible.** How should I dress? Is that wad of keys in my pocket distracting? Have I looked each person in the eye? Do all my gestures and movements have a purpose?

- **Finally, learning to have a good time!** I love walking up front, standing for that one moment, taking in the audience before launching my presentation. It's simply energizing, and the nerves (yes, I always get them) seem to dissipate as I move, smile, and get the reactions I know the audience wants to give.

I rose to become a senior executive in a major corporation, giving countless presentations, mentoring countless employees, and yes, making countless mistakes. But that's always a part of life. The prospect of mistakes, bombed jokes, faulty equipment, and second-place finishes is always lurking; however, it's not what happens to us, it's how we react to it. Meeting those challenges positively rather than becoming deflated will make you stronger. I guarantee it.

I am about to compete in the World Championship of Public Speaking, representing my club, Area 1, Division E, District 47 and Region VIII. What an honor! What a great journey, beginning as that nervous, shy, reclusive young man who took a few chances in a few contests. I competed again and again before making it past the District competition. It's hard. It's frustrating. It's discouraging. It's all about trying again, and again, and again.

Take it from someone who loves speaking and learned style and technique from some wonderful people in a wonderful organization. If you love it, you can do it. All the resources you need are there, inside and out.

Whatever happens in Phoenix this year, I am having the time of my life. Thanks.

Then, my life changed forever.

A Toastmasters club was formed in my company, and I became a charter member on the advice of just about everyone I knew. I struggled with my first speech, uttering more ahhs and ums than actual words, but the positive and supportive advice from the club members took hold. My speeches evolved from a fiesta of maladies to a more cohesive style, and I decided to enter my first contest. Contests are nerve-wracking for a first-timer. I didn't know what to expect, and since I breezed through my club contest (there were two other contestants), the Area competition would be easy, right? Wrong. The contest was tough! The winner was at a level I hadn't encountered, and her speech was everything mine wasn't.

Here is where the value of a mentor comes in. A mentor would have told me to analyze my audience—who was I speaking to? A mentor would have told me that my message could have been stronger. A mentor would have listened to my speech several times with an eye on my gestures, movement, eye contact, facial expression—all the things that combine to form an effective performance.

It would be several years before I would find one, when I joined my current club, West Kendall #8370 in Miami. Again, my progress had been hindered by not having good support, but now, with a good mentor, I was on the road.

The biggest change for me, as I traveled through the basic manual, was in my level of communication. I not only developed a style of my own in business presentations; I also found it easier (and eventually fun) to interact more socially at work and at home. I wasn't kidding: Toastmasters changed my life, releasing the gifts that had lain dormant all those years.

The executives were impressed. I understood, for instance, that when a decision is to be made in a meeting, it's actually made before the meeting. I learned to speak with each of the participants one-on-one, learning their position on the issue, telling them mine, and distilling the issues into something we could agree on. By the time we had our meeting, we all knew what the outcome would be.

Wow!

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Toasters Leadership Institute (TLI)
Over 250 officers were trained in Orlando, Florida on July 7th at the Darden Training Facility. A wide variety of workshops were held to better equip officers and members in fulfilling their Toastmaster goals. Thank you to all who participated.

Comedian and educator Andy Dooley gave a special session at the event. He was quoted as saying, "There should be constant change of energy when delivering a speech or presentation."

Special guest speaker Andy Dooley and Kristina Klihberg, Lt. Gov. Mkt. kibitz between sessions.

(Quote and photos contributed by Scott Hoehn, DTM)