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RACE FOR THE CURE
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A photograph of Elizabeth Gilbert speaking at a TED conference. She is a blonde woman with her hair tied back, wearing a dark turtleneck sweater. She is gesturing with both hands raised, palms facing forward, and has a joyful expression on her face. The background is dark and out of focus.

TED TALKS and the World Listens

Presenter Elizabeth Gilbert
at TED 2009

Annual TED conference
demonstrates the ultimate
melding of communication
and leadership.

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Renny Gleeson at TED2009, Session 4: "See,"
Feb. 5, 2009, Long Beach, California.



TEDx Curator Jessica Mah



Bono helps host the TEDGlobal2009
preview in London, England,
Nov. 19, 2009.

Photo courtesy of Anjelika Deogirikar

Photo by Bruno Vincent/Bruno Vincent for TED



Photo by TED / Asa Mathat

TED TALKS... AND THE WORLD LISTENS

Where the power of the story
meets the power of the big idea.

By Craig Harrison, DTM

Imagine being granted 18 minutes to deliver the speech of your life to an audience of brilliant and influence-wielding visionaries — people who can turn your “big idea” into a new company, public policy or even a worldwide movement.

Welcome to TED — which stands for Technology, Entertainment and

“TED is where the cool kids hang out,” says Vickie Sullivan, founder of Sullivan Speaker Services, Inc., in Tempe, Arizona. Sullivan is a marketing strategist who positions experts for opportunities such as TED.

The audience members at a TED Talk, she notes, “have been successful

“Keep in mind that your message is bigger than your talk, bigger than the audience or even the event itself.” — Trisha Bauman

Design. This is where the power of *story* meets the power of the *big idea*.

The interdisciplinary presentations given at these pricey annual conferences, where attendance is by invitation or application, are known as TED Talks. The time limit on TED presentations is 18 minutes, and emphasis is placed on dynamic content and innovative ideas.

TED is the ultimate melding of communication and leadership. TED Talkers persuasively present their most compelling ideas to enlist the support and input of a diverse, distinguished audience, full of company founders, culture-crafters and other movers and shakers.

in a variety of ways. And there are not a lot of venues where they gather in one place. That’s what gives TED conferences cachet with a very elusive segment of the marketplace.”

At a typical TED conference you may hear 40 or more speakers. Innovative musical pieces are also interspersed with the speeches. The talks can be persuasive, courageous, ingenious, inspiring, funny or some combination of these qualities. Energy comes from the speakers, the audience and the prominence of the event itself.

“The TED conference has its own mystique,” says storyteller, author and radio personality Carmen Agra Deedy, who delivered a TED Talk in 2005.



Elizabeth Gilbert at TED2009, Session 5: “Understand,” Feb. 5, 2009, Long Beach, California.

Photo by TED / Asa Mathat

HOW TO CRAFT A PRESENTATION, TED-STYLE

By Craig Harrison, DTM

Jessica Mah, curator of a TEDx conference last year in Berkeley, California, offers tips for applicants seeking to deliver a TED Talk.

- ▶ Begin with a thought-provoking idea to set a standard for the rest of your talk. For example: Jamie Oliver started his TED Talk by saying, "Sadly, in the next 18 minutes, four Americans that are alive, will be dead."
- ▶ Share intimate stories.
- ▶ Back up your stories with visuals.
- ▶ Don't lecture people — this is not a class.
- ▶ Be willing to take risks in your presentation.
- ▶ Commit to at least two in-person rehearsals. Some TED speakers have spent over 15 hours preparing for a 15-minute talk. Put in the time to be excellent.
- ▶ Don't recycle talks. People will know, and your talk won't be TED-website worthy.
- ▶ End with a takeaway. How does this relate to "doing the unprecedented" or your event's theme?



TED Prize winner Jamie Oliver at TED2010, Session 4: "Action," Feb. 10, 2010, Long Beach, California.

Talkers are typically thought leaders in a variety of professions including scientists, storytellers, musicians, inventors and entrepreneurs — all putting ideas together in new, surprising and sometimes paradigm-obliterating ways. Famous Ted Talkers include Bill Gates, Isabel Allende, Sir Ken Robinson, Al Gore, Bono, Google co-founders Sergey Brin and Larry Page, and other mavericks from around the globe.

After launching in Monterey, California, the annual TED conferences moved to the California cities of Long Beach and Palm Springs. Now a TEDGlobal Conference is held annually in Edinburgh, Scotland. Many TED conferences have themes, such as TEDWomen, TEDMed or TEDIndia.

Nearly 30 years after its founding, TED has become a powerful brand. Qualified curators now host independent TED events around the world, called TEDx. Hundreds of free TED Talks are available at **TED.com** for anyone to experience, with new uploads weekly and the TED Open Translation Project converts the presentations into more than 80 languages.

Thus, TED has created a global classroom where ideas take fire and hopscotch borders, spawning conversations, collaborations and innovation.

Preparing the Talk of a Lifetime

The lead-up to speaking at a TED conference can be daunting. How do TED presenters, many of whom are not speakers by training, manage? Trisha Bauman has coached several TED Talkers. As founder and CEO of Sightlines Communications in New York City, she helps guide businesses, nonprofits and professionals in strategic communications and leadership development. Her tips

Deedy has spoken to the Library of Congress and other prominent audiences. "I can assure you TED's reputation is wholly and utterly deserved. I was surrounded by such intellectual energy! All I wanted to do was listen to other speakers, visit the mind-blowing exhibits and stand on the periphery of the spontaneous discussions that were taking place in the

lobby. I was electric with mental stimulation."

The Birth of TED

The event was created in 1984 by architect and graphic designer Richard Saul Wurman to show how great ideas often transcend a particular field — thus, the intersection of technology, entertainment and design. TED



Read it online @ www.toastmasters.org/magazine.

apply not only to a TED presentation but to Toastmasters as well.

“As you prepare to present for any platform, and especially one where the conditions might be particularly intimidating, try to keep in mind that your message is bigger than your talk, bigger than the audience or even the event itself,” she says. “Knowing that, paradoxically, quiets your individual anxieties.”

Success derives in large part from one’s preparation, adds Bauman, who attends and follows TED events. “Be ready for unexpected ‘hiccups’ —

who couldn’t afford the \$4,000–\$6,000 tickets, she became a curator of a one-day TEDx conference on campus — an independent event licensed by TED.


“Our conference featured a professor who melded politics and philosophy, and a neuroscientist who brought a real brain we could touch and poke while wearing plastic gloves,” says Mah.

One attendee heard author Elizabeth Gilbert give a talk about nurturing creativity, and she literally sprinted back to her hotel to finish

The event was a big success, says Masler, president of the Oakland 88 Toastmasters club in California. The presentations “were inspirational, educational, entertaining and even historical, all in a little under 18 minutes. With our tight schedule, we saved valuable time on travel between breakout rooms and our members loved hearing from more voices!”

A Party Featuring TED Talks

Donovan Rittenbach of Lakeview Toastmasters club in Alameda, California, and his wife, Therese, hosted a TED-themed party where invitees each submitted their favorite TED Talk to the hosts in advance. Donovan then sequenced and projected the presentations on a big screen in his living room for guests, with breaks in between for discussion and delectable treats. It was a fun and intellectually nourishing event for Toastmasters and prospective members.

Do you have a paradigm-shifting concept? An innovative fusion of ideas, disciplines or methodologies that will turn the world on its axis? And can you deliver it in a compelling fashion in 18 minutes or less? If so, apply your communication and leadership skills to present ideas worth spreading. People are interesTED! 

To explore TED, visit **TED.com**.

Craig Harrison, DTM, is Past District 57 Governor and a member of the Toastmasters Leadership club in Oakland, California. He is a keynote speaker and principal of the training firm Expressions of Excellence! To contact him, visit **SpeakAndLeadWithConfidence.com**.

“TED has created a global classroom where ideas take fire and hopscotch borders, spawning conversations, collaborations and innovation.”

problems that could come up in your delivery or the presenting conditions. How you handle these unforeseen challenges can either bond or weaken your connection with your audience. Accept what is going on, see the humor in it, and know that you can’t control every moment.”

In terms of compelling content, Bauman suggests including a certain amount of storytelling. This engages the imagination of the audience — their intellectual, emotional and psychological understanding of your message. It connects your talk with what is human, with the underlying “why” of what you are addressing, and it makes your message stick.

Curating on Campus

Jessica Mah began attending TED conferences in Long Beach as a computer science major at the University of California at Berkeley. Wanting to share the experience with other Cal Berkeley students

her stalled book project. Jessica herself obtained three investors for her startup company, InDinero, from the exposure she received as curator and emcee.

TED Comes to Toastmasters

For District 57’s 2011 spring conference, held on the USS Hornet Museum in Alameda, California, breakout space was held on a different deck with constricted access. Concurrent breakouts for 300 attendees couldn’t be accommodated.

“We chose to implement TED-style talks on the main stage so all attendees could hear all breakout speakers,” says Alison Leigh Masler, education co-chair. “This way speakers had bigger audiences and used our best sound system.”

“To honor Ralph C. Smedley,” she adds, “we called ours RALPH Talks: Riveting, Alluring, Learning/Laughing Presentations on the Hornet.”