



By Craig Harrison, DTM

The value of holding the same office twice.

Take Two!

WE LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE PEOPLE ARE QUICK TO PROCLAIM "Been there, done that." Yet in my experience, it's often the second time I go somewhere or do something that I receive the full benefit of the experience. This has been especially true in Toastmasters.

For instance, the first time I served as club president it took me four months to even feel comfortable in the role. It was several years later, when I became president of a specialty club, that I really came to appreciate that function and what I could do to lead our club to success.

As an area governor, I barely survived my first speech contest in the fall. Yet when it was time to plan spring contests, experience had equipped me with confidence and a better understanding of what was expected and what possibilities existed.

We are constantly learning, both in our Toastmasters clubs and outside. Sometimes we aren't aware of how much we've grown until we find ourselves in situations similar to those we've experienced. Then we realize we have new skills and qualities to bring to bear.

I remember the first time I served as Timekeeper. I was so proud of the precision with which I timed each speech, Table Topic and speech evaluation. Yet it was when I served as Timekeeper a second time that I began to uncover ways I could make that role more valuable to my club – helping us start on time by giving a 30-second visual warning to our members, timing officer reports and giving yellow flashes when unscripted portions of the meeting threatened to disrupt the day's timetable.

It was also when I served the second time as Timekeeper that I realized I could assist our president and Toastmaster of the Day by driving the meeting from the back of the room, just as a hook-and-ladder firetruck has a driver leading from the front and another steering from the rear. Together they deftly navigate the terrain.

The first time I served as our club's Grammarian, I diligently counted "ums" and "ahs" and the occasional "and um." I gave my report of people's shortcomings in this

area and eventually noticed I wasn't the most popular member that day.

The next time I was asked to accept the role, I initially demurred. "Oh, I've done that before. Can't someone else do it?" Then a past president told me how much she enjoyed the Gram-

marian role. She liked to catch people doing things right, she said, using appropriate words and employing nice turns of phrase. Suddenly, my eyes opened to the possibilities.

Now I relish serving as Grammarian. I credit our speakers who use alliteration or double-entendres and those who draw nice analogies. I bring my dictionary to meetings and define some of the words used that day, as some members may not know their meanings. I still count filler words. But now I do much more. It was only when serving the second time around that I was able to look beyond the initially defined role and push the envelope.

I've completed the Communication and Leadership manual multiple times since joining Toastmasters in 1992, and each time I open the manual I find new ways of building on my current experience and get more out of each assignment.

Just as many people reread the Bible, textbooks and classic novels, I reread Toastmasters material. With each reading, I discover something new. If this isn't happening for you, read a little deeper. Albert Einstein said, "The important thing is to never stop questioning." So ask yourself how you can improve the quality of your meeting, club, and district each time you serve.

Whenever you're asked to serve a second time as a club or district officer – or to accept responsibilities at a meeting – I challenge you to approach the role with new eyes, new curiosity and newfound enthusiasm. The rewards will be twice as sweet!

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