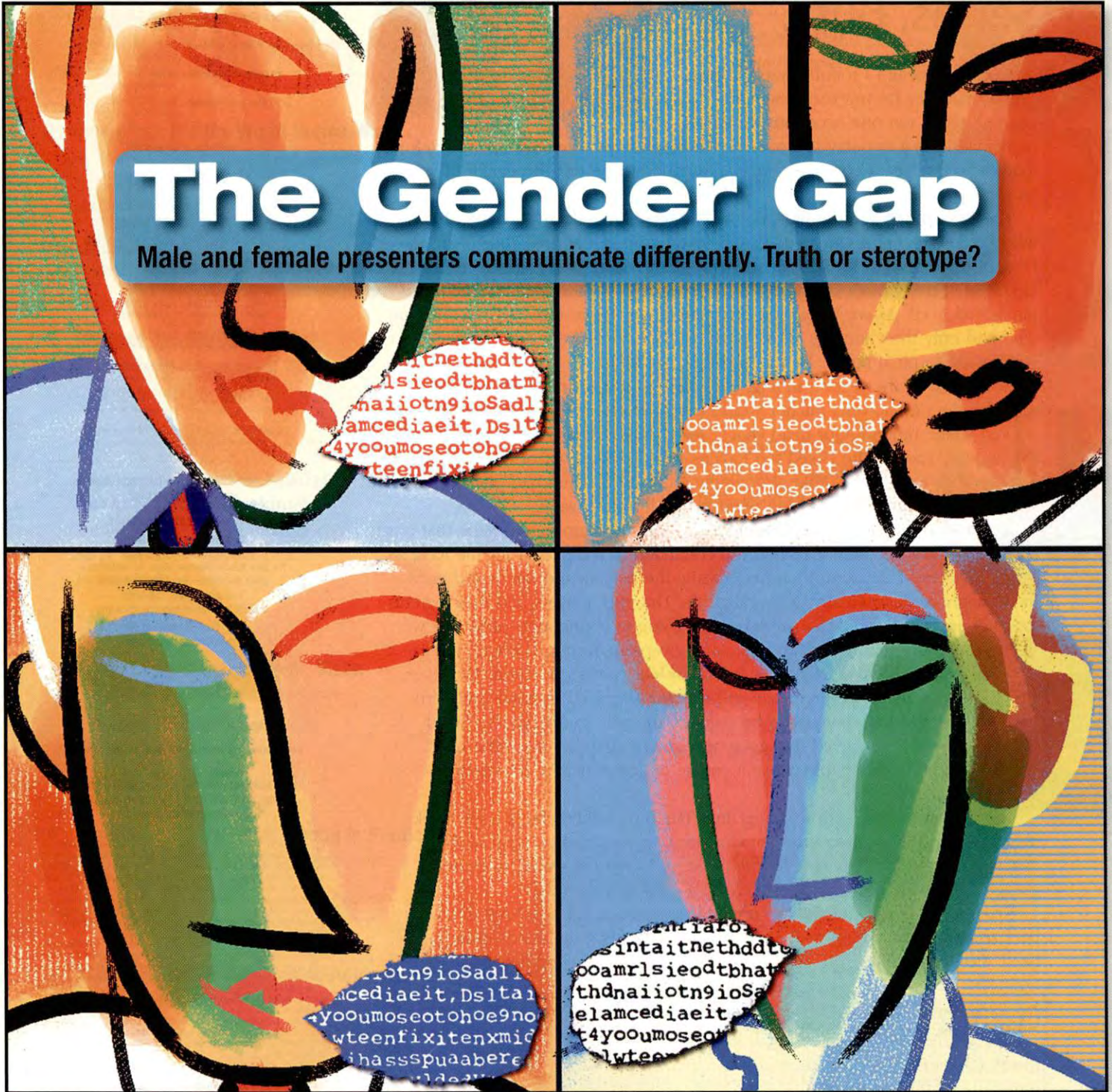


TOASTMASTER®

DECEMBER 2004

The Gender Gap

Male and female presenters communicate differently. Truth or stereotype?



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The Toastmasters Vision:

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.

The Toastmasters Mission:

Toastmasters International is the leading movement devoted to making effective oral communication a worldwide reality.

Through its member clubs, Toastmasters International helps men and women learn the arts of speaking, listening and thinking – vital skills that promote self-actualization, enhance leadership potential, foster human understanding, and contribute to the betterment of mankind.

It is basic to this mission that Toastmasters International continually expand its worldwide network of clubs thereby offering ever-greater numbers of people the opportunity to benefit from its programs.



By Craig Harrison, DTM

My Virtual Coaches: How the Internet Became My Co-Pilot

**Sites and services that
bring facts, figures and
frivolity to Toastmasters
around the globe.**

A good Toastmaster has many tools at her or his disposal. Once upon a time the local library supported members as they researched topics, looked up word origins in the dictionary and otherwise sought out reference materials.

Today the Internet brings us more information faster and from the farthest reaches of the globe. Each week I find facts, figures and frivolity I can apply to my weekly role in my club. What an indispensable tool for Toastmasters success!

Wordmaster

This week I'm our club's Wordmaster. Choices abound. First I'll check my e-mail program's inbox. Like 520,000

others in 201 countries, I subscribe to the free "A Word a Day" service of www.wordsmith.org. Today's word is *armamentarium*. Hmmm, I won't win any friends with this one! (It means the collection of equipment and techniques available in a particular field. I wonder if our Sergeant-at-Arms knows it?)

Next I check the free Words of the Month posted by District 56 Toastmaster VJ Singal, www.verbalenergy.com. VJ authored the book *The Articulate Professional* and has helped thousands build their vocabulary through his site. His words have added polish and professionalism to my speeches and day-to-day dialogue. Ever since meeting VJ at a Toastmasters convention, my vocabulary, and that of my club members, has expanded exponentially.

Opening Thought

A new member of our club has been given her first assignment: the Opening Thought. She's at a loss to find one that matches next week's meeting theme. She e-mails me, her newly assigned mentor, for help. After a chat on the phone I send her one of many links to quotation pages: www.startingpage.com/html/quotations.html#bestlistings. If it's worth quoting, it's here or linked from here. Of course I encourage her by suggesting that she'll some day say something so profound she will be quoted by others. She purrs back with a combination of appreciation and bemusement. Nevertheless, the idea has been planted.

Several weeks ago I was given one day's notice to provide our meeting's opening thought. I wanted to share something inspirational. A double click later I had my choice of many. www.realage.com offers uplifting health-related tips that keep me as centered, balanced and aligned as my car. Another site for inspiration is www.motivational-inspirational-corner.com. Depending on the theme of the day, or my mood, I'll use this site's search engine to find an appropriate quote based on topic or source.

Serving as Toastmaster

Over the years a variety of sites have helped me when serving as Toastmaster. Some I visit on a regular basis for ideas and tips to apply in meetings.

The 3M Meeting Network at www.3m.com/meetingnetwork has many meeting resources to help a Toastmaster plan, implement and evaluate meetings. I also learn from its e-mail newsletter (www.3m.com/meeting_network/form_newsletter.html).

To answer my questions about parliamentary procedure I often surf *Robert's Rules of Order* (www.robertsrules.com) for answers to procedural questions that arise in planning and executing meetings. I especially like its question-and-answer forum where I can post questions and view past discussions.

To find out what happened on a given day in history when I am to officiate as Toastmaster, I visit www.scopesys.com/today. This site tells you who among famous people were born or died on a given date, and also what other events, including holidays, occurred. On the day I wrote this article, in 1789 the first American novel, WH Brown's *The Power of Sympathy*, was published. On this day in 1941, opera tenor Placido Domingo was born in Madrid, Spain, and in 1950 author George Orwell (born Eric Arthur Blair) died from tuberculosis in London. Who knew?

By the way, did you know every day's a holiday somewhere in the world? Visit groups.yahoo.com/group/multicultural-holidays for information on today's holiday!

Writing and Giving A Speech

The Internet is full of sites that archive great speeches, given by statesmen and stateswomen, scientists, artists or poets of any era. There are political speeches, famous commencement addresses and other oratory that has withstood the test of time. Such texts and transcriptions are often revealing and inspiring at the same time.

When it's time to pick a topic to speak on, I am often inspired by subjects featured in television programs aired on the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) in the United States. This site (www.pbs.org) lets me dig deeper on any topic a PBS program covers.

Two other extensive sites for research are the United States' Library of Congress site, full of books in print www.loc.gov, and a site for anything related to any branch of the U.S. Government, www.fedworld.gov/firstgov.html.

Speech delivery tips are also plentiful on the Web; Toastmasters' own site (www.toastmasters.org) has tips on giving speeches; and many districts around the world offer articles, tips and guides to speechmaking. I've even been known to upload to a few such sites to share my own wisdom. I hope you do too.

"The Internet is full of sites that archive great speeches given by statesmen and stateswomen, scientists, artists or poets of any era."

SpeakerNet News You Can Use

My secret weapon as a speaker comes from www.speakernetnews.com. SpeakerNet News is a weekly compilation of speaker tips from more than 5,000 professional speakers, trainers, consultants, authors and vendors from around the world. It's free, it's e-mailed to me each Friday, and it's chock full of fascinating tips to help me be more impactful as a speaker. There are platform and performance tips, recommendations on various audio-visual equipment and much more.

Last week alone I picked up a tip on how to be a better emcee, learned some insider secrets for designing and delivering PowerPoint presentations, and even read about a Web site (www.t-mail.com/cgi-bin/tsail) that will translate other sites into the language of your choice.

The best part of SpeakerNet News is that you can pose questions to its 5,000 communicators and get a variety of responses to your queries. If you want to research a certain audience, a region or a culture, ask SpeakerNet News. If you want suggestions on powerful speech openings, closings or use of props, ask SpeakerNet News. It's a

wonderful virtual community full of sharing and support available for you to tap into. Best of all, it's free.

Closing Thought

There are so many sites for closing thoughts to choose from. Some days I prefer Shakespeare: www.allshakepeare.com/quotes. Other weeks I opt for the poetry of Rumi: www.allspirit.co.uk/rumi.html. On occasion I prefer funny or quizzical quotes and ruminations such as those found on www.comedy-zone.net/guide/quotes.htm or funny things other people, including kids, have said: www.rinkworks.com/said.

Joke Master

Several free services that e-mail me a joke a day include www.joke-a-day.com and www.ajokeaday.com. The two challenges I find in delivering humor in Toastmasters are picking the right joke and telling it from memory. These sites give me ample content to choose from. Jokes are clean, short and plentiful so the odds of finding the right joke for my club mates, meeting theme and tone are high.

I've bookmarked the late John Cantu's site, www.humormall.com and revisit it often. John remains a humor helper to Toastmasters worldwide through his rich humor-laden Web site.

On a monthly basis I receive the warm and gentle humor of Karyn Buxman's LyteBytes at www.humorx.com. There's also the enjoyable Humor Power e-zine from Toastmaster John Kinde's site, www.HumorPower.com. I visit www.familyjokeaday.com and many topical joke sites and services. Depending on the type of humor you prefer, you may surf the Web for riddle sites, spoonerisms, knock-knock jokes, and more.

Grammarian

I've found various sites over the years that help me be a better grammarian. Wordsmith Barbara McNichol's site (www.barbaramcnichol.com) alerts me to word trippers, teaching me which homonym is the right word to use in every situation. Her e-zine brings them to me regularly. One site that offers a portal to over a hundred relevant links comes through Toastmaster-favorite Dr. Richard Lederer (pw1.netcom.com/~rlederer/rllink.htm). Sites linking to this page address grammar and usage, etymology, linguistics, puns, oxymorons and much more. For idioms of speech heard in meetings, I use and refer others to www.phrases.org.uk/meanings. This site explains turns of phrase and colloquialisms not commonly known by all members.

Speaking Outside of Toastmasters

When I am asked to give a speech outside Toastmasters, I'll do my best to research the group, audience or location using the Internet. When I speak at a new-club demonstration meeting for a local company, I will use www.hoovers.com to learn more about them and recent events. I'll also look at related newsgroups found through search engine Google's group category at www.google.com to learn more about companies or organizations. You can too!

After Meetings

I often hear figures of speech that I am unfamiliar with during meetings. Various sites offer etymological information on idioms and vernacular – these sites allow me to learn between meetings. I've been known to send out a postscript to our meeting with follow-up information and clarifications on topics addressed in our meeting.

It's a form of lagniappe I believe in, giving Toastmasters "a little something extra" to enhance the meeting experience.


Ideas for your Club

I've become a big fan of newsgroups. When I want further dialog on a topic broached at a club meeting, I use Google's talk search for appropriate online discussion forums to interact with: **groups.**

google.com/groups?group=talk&hl=en.

As a member of this free cyber-community you can pose questions of Toastmasters worldwide and learn from thousands of others who've traveled the path you're on. Check it out!

Many clubs, districts and regions have their own virtual groups to share information, opinions and resources. Tap into these virtual Toastmasters communities for local and regional news and nuggets.

Since 1924, Toastmasters has been making effective oral communication a worldwide reality. Now the World Wide Web helps us all connect to each other. Let the Internet be your virtual coach as you matriculate within Toastmasters. Happy clicking! 

"The best part of SpeakerNet News is that you can pose questions to its 5,000 communicators and get a variety of responses to your questions."

Professional speaker **Craig Harrison, DTM**, of Berkeley, California, turned a virtual group, Laugh Lovers, into an advanced club in Oakland, California. Craig received a Presidential Citation from Toastmasters at its recent annual convention in Reno, Nevada. You can surf Craig's site at www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com



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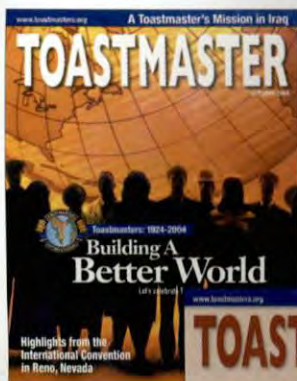
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