





# Lead From Where You Sit

## Each of Us Can Lead, Regardless of Official Toastmaster Title

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When I first joined my Toastmasters I look admiringly at the seven elected officers of our club for leadership. Over time I've come to see we *all* have the opportunity to lead, and not just when we are that week's Toastmaster. Consider the many opportunities for you to demonstrate leadership within a typical Toastmaster meeting.

### 1. When Guests Arrive

Each of us can embrace leadership by reaching out to welcome guests to our club. The willingness to approach them, introduce yourself, extend a handshake and welcome them is what a leader does. Your warm smile, inviting personality and facility at introducing them to others and seating them accordingly is a marvelous application of leadership. You don't have to be the club's sergeant-at-arms or membership vice president to welcome guests. As a leader you do this naturally.

### 2. Closing the door

While Toastmasters is an inviting organization once the meeting starts a premium is placed on being able to hear participants without distractions. During many a meeting if an open door is allowing noise from the hallway to intrude, you can quietly get up and close the door. It's a subtle example of leadership that improves the quality of the meeting for all. Again, you needn't be an officer to lead. See a need and act upon it. That's what leaders do!

### 3. Sharing Handouts

Most agendas, evaluation and voting forms are passed out in advance of the meeting. A speaker's handout, however, may be passed out during the meeting. Leaders make sure everyone gets a copy. They take responsibility for fellow club members as well as themselves. Especially if latecomers arrive and aren't at the main table your leadership insures they too are cared for accordingly.

### 4. Filling In On Short Notice

A leader is always willing to fill in to cover for an absent or late arriving club member. They effortlessly slide over to become Timekeeper when the official meeting time arrives and the scheduled Timekeeper is nowhere in sight. Ditto Opening Thought, Closing Thought or Speech Evaluator. Leaders are always on call to serve the needs of the club. Be a leader and make yourself available for the good of your club.

**5. Modeling Good Listening**

I used to think what distinguished leaders from followers was what they said and how they said it. I've come to realize silent leadership is powerful too. Your actions model proper behavior. When you focus on being a good listener you are modeling appropriate behavior for others. Ignoring distractions and cross chatter during the meeting, concentrating fully on the speaker at the lectern and even taking notes of important information models good listening. That's leadership in action; others will follow your lead.

**6. Helping Others Look Good**

Anytime you say or do something to help others within a meeting that's good leadership. When you remove an impediment in the path of arriving speakers, reorient the chairs or tables for improved sight lines, give visual cues to colleagues to speak up, button up or smile, or otherwise be more effective, that's leadership! When I am in the back of a room listening to a soft-spoken speaker I might cup my hand to one ear to indicate I can't hear them in the back. Nobody else sees me do this but it makes a difference to many. Opportunities abound to help others succeed during a meeting. Look for and act upon them for the betterment of all.

**7. Arriving Early**

I've always believed that arriving early is a form of leadership. That's when you assure the room is set up, when you connect with other meeting participants and deal with the unexpected: a room is locked or configured differently, word arrives that a key player isn't arriving, or something else altogether. Leadership involves being in a position to assert yourself for the benefit of your club. To do, you have to be. Be early and do more!

While the world knows Toastmasters as the world's foremost organization dedicated to promoting oral *communication*, we know it for its marvelous *leadership* development opportunities too. Don't be fooled into thinking only club and district officers are honing their leadership muscles. We can all lead from where we sit, and in doing so become outstanding. Lead on!

Professional speaker Craig Harrison is a past district governor who uses Toastmasters leadership lessons as a leader with the National Speakers Association and International Customer Service Association. Visit [www.craigspeaks.com](http://www.craigspeaks.com) for additional tools for communication and leadership, call Craig directly at (510) 547-0664 or e-mail him at [success@craigspeaks.com](mailto:success@craigspeaks.com).

## Making the "Ask"

By Craig Harrison DTM

How you ask for help often determines the results you receive. Understanding how to make the ask is an important skill that can help you build boards and committees, form teams and complete projects, and even help you find a marriage partner. Recognize these keys to asking for help from someone.

1. Phrase your request in terms of the benefits to the listener. Speak to "what's in it for them?" Why will *they* benefit from saying yes to your request?
2. Be positive. Don't focus on why someone shouldn't say yes or the negative aspects. High profile? Build new skills? Lead to a promotion? Give all involved a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction? Will it make the world a better place?
3. Show respect and appreciation for your prospect. When you recognize their skills, past track record, personality or other attributes they in turn feel special. It's flattering and affirming to be asked to participate, whether as a mentor, judge, contest chair or other role.
4. Give accurate and clear expectations of what the position requires. It's tempting to tell people what they want to hear, or only emphasize what is easy or fun. Give a fair explanation of your request.
5. Make sure to listen to the issues or concerns of the listener. What are they worried about? How will they base their decision? Strive to understand their needs, their fears, their constraints.
6. Give your prospect an appropriate amount of time to make an informed decision. Don't pressure, manipulate or overwhelm your prospect in hopes of their saying yes. This often backfires later,
7. Strive for win-wins. Use flexibility, creativity for mutually acceptable outcomes.
8. Accept their answer whether they agree to your request or not.
9. Should your initial request be rejected, consider a counter-offer or secondary offer. Having a fallback offer allows your prospect to join your team or work with you in whatever capacity they are able to.
10. Thank them either way for their time and willingness to consider your offer. By treating them with respect and care they are more likely to say yes in the future.

