

The TAO formula
(Topic + Approach + Objective)
will show you the way.

A Roadmap for

Completing Your CTM

By Shelia Spencer, DTM

**“View each assignment
as an opportunity to align
your topic with your approach
in order to fulfill your objective.”**

In Taoism, there are basic, universal principles used to guide human activities; to follow the Tao is to follow "The Way." Toastmasters are fortunate to have a roadmap to guide them on their way to the Competent Toastmaster (CTM) award. This roadmap is the Toastmasters International Communication and Leadership Program, and it can be found between the covers of your CTM manual.

Start with a pencil and a comfy chair. One way to prepare for the experiences ahead is to take a casual look at the entire manual. Read it as you would a travel brochure for a trip you'll take sometime next year. Use a pencil to mark notable passages and jot down questions, concerns or inspirations that may occur to you. Discuss any immediate issues with your mentor.

Why read all the speech projects now? Each assignment addresses a different element of effective speaking. Confidence, conviction, organization, clarity – and the use of effective voice, gestures and visual aids – are interdependent skills. This is your speaker's palette, to be used in creating a presentation masterpiece. How would an art student react to being told he or she could use only yellow paint for the next three months? When we hesitate to focus on the next manual assignment, it's as though we're limiting ourselves to the few colors we've already used. Every new project, when successfully completed, adds another color to our speaker's palette. Reading all the projects now will give you an idea of the spectrum of skills you'll be incorporating into future presentations.

The TAO of Creating a Speech.

Many members get stuck in their CTM progress because they don't know what to talk about. Here is a formula that has helped me select appropriate topics for each manual project: View each assignment as an opportunity to align your topic (*what* you talk about) with your approach (*how* you talk about it) in order to fulfill your objective (the *goals* of the project). Before you select your topic, read the manual project and identify the approach and objectives that are described in the assignment. Then pick a subject that complements the two other elements. This TAO (Topic + Approach + Objectives) formula will allow you to create a satisfying speech experience. Let's take a trip through the new CTM manual (released January, 2004) and see how to apply the TAO to speech projects 1 through 10:

1 The Ice Breaker – The objectives box informs us that we are to use examples, stories and anecdotes (this is our approach) in order to meet the goal of identifying our current speaking skills (objective.) While the topic is our 'self,' we need to refine this by selecting a few personal stories and anecdotes that we can share naturally and comfortably. How did a close friend or relative become

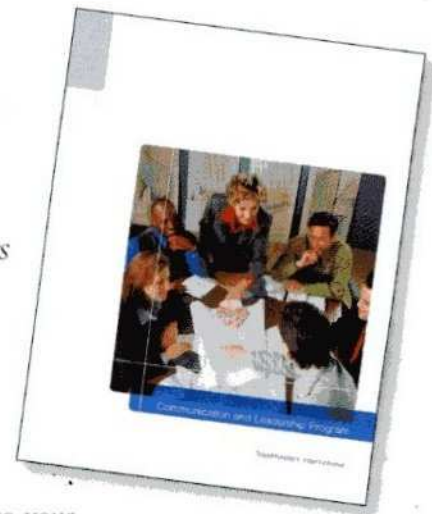
a role model in your life? Or, what series of events led to your current career? Focusing on one or two significant aspects of your life (not a long list of names and dates) will allow you to demonstrate your speaking abilities while introducing yourself to your fellow members.

2 Organize Your Speech – This time, our approach is to use supporting material and an appropriate speech outline to fulfill the objective of creating an easy-to-follow speech. How to pick a topic? This assignment is asking you to take your audience on a journey. Select a topic that has distinctive aspects worthy of discussion. Is there a "before" and "after"? A specific sequence of events, activities or steps? Open the speech at one end of this journey, use the body of the speech to mark the waypoints, and lead your audience to the conclusion waiting at the other end. You may talk about the fashion industry before and after the 1960s, or how to bake the perfect angel food cake. Either of these subjects can be approached via a logical sequence of information that your audience can follow.

3 Get to the Point – The manual provides us with an approach (organize your material into an opening, body and closing) and an objective (inform, persuade, entertain or inspire your audience.) This time, we aren't just speaking to people, we are attempting to have an impact on them. This effort is easier when we have an emotional commitment to our topic.

Would you like to inform your fellow members of a recent scientific discovery? Can you persuade them to develop a family fitness program? Would you enjoy entertaining them with anecdotes about your new puppy? Or do you want to inspire them to join a worthy charitable effort in the neighborhood? Now is a good time to start focusing on speech subjects that interest you and that your fellow club members might care about too.

4 How to Say It – The manual provides the approach (select and use concise, vivid words) and an objective (vividly communicate your ideas to the audience). Your topic needs to benefit from careful choice of words and phrases. Remember a time when you experienced mis-



What If I'm Working from an Earlier CTM Manual?

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Toastmasters International is constantly reevaluating and refining its educational materials, and the *Communication and Leadership Program* manual is no exception. The manual has changed numerous times over the years to help us develop our communication skills in an easy, methodical way.

The latest version of the *Communication and Leadership Program* manual was copyrighted in 2003. It has been updated to include new information, and some projects have been replaced. Members who are working with an older manual can continue working in that manual, but they might still want to purchase a copy of the new manual as a reference and additional resource. Toastmasters International will continue to accept CTM applications from previous manuals, so you will still be eligible for the CTM award after completing the 10 projects.

If you prefer, you can switch to the new manual. The only stipulation is that you complete projects in the new manual that you haven't done in the previous manual. For example, if you completed the "Vocal Variety" speech, you shouldn't complete "Vocal Variety" in the new version. Likewise, if you completed "Work with Words," you shouldn't complete "How to Say It" in the new version.



communication during a conversation or presentation. What was being discussed? What went wrong? Select a topic of interest to your audience, and explore ways to ensure that your message is clearly understood.

One new grandmother used this speech to explain the emotional importance placed on terms of affection such as "Granny" and "Nana." A Human Resources employee talked about the difference between "affirmative action" and "diversity awareness." Both speakers satisfied the goal of using careful word choices to accurately convey a message.

5 Your Body Speaks – The approach is to use gestures and facial expressions, and the objective is to convey a message to the audience. This assignment focuses on physical delivery, so the topic should be one that benefits from (and may even rely upon) physical movement and expression. Consider subject matter that exists in the real world, where size, shape, motion and emotion play a natural role. Pick a topic that involves people, or things with specific dimensions, movements or reactions.

How does a golfer use posture and motion to achieve his/her purpose? What did you see the last time you visited a circus, an art gallery or a busy street? How did you feel about what you saw? Can you describe these events so that we "see" and "feel" them too? This will achieve your goal of using natural, varied body language to convey key elements of your message.

6 Vocal Variety – Your approach is to use vocal volume, pitch and rate, and the objective is to enrich the message with pleasant voice quality. This assignment focuses on vocal delivery, so the topic should be one that benefits from a wide range of vocal expression. Many of us have learned to keep our voice level, moderate – and monotonous! Now is the time to experiment and see how many different sounds you can make.

Consider topics that involve interesting voices or sounds that you can produce (or approximate) well enough for your audience to recognize. Imitate conversations you've heard among eccentric relatives, or noises that bombard you during your morning commute. Don't tell us about these sounds – let us hear what you hear!

7 Research Your Topic – Your approach is to collect information from numerous sources, and the objective is to use these facts and examples to support your message. We are specifically asked to select a topic that requires research. Consider a subject that has recently interested you, but which you have not yet explored. Conducting your own research assignment should be fun, and will not only provide you with the information you seek but will also teach you to evaluate and edit your material.

Sift through the mass of data, then select and organize a few significant elements to share with your audience. This assignment encourages us to bring curiosity and a sense of adventure into our speaking experience. It also equips us with a strategy for identifying new, exciting speech topics.

8 Get Comfortable with Visual Aids – The manual provides the approach (use visual aids) and an objective (convey our message to the audience). This time, you are being asked to work with words, images or physical items that are projected onto a screen, physically written or presented as a prop. Your topic needs to be one that can benefit from a chart, diagram, written synopsis or other visual reinforcement.

Consider recent subjects you've discussed where someone needed to use a pen and paper (or physical item) to make their point more understandable. In these cases, the visual aid allowed you to see details that could not be conveyed by words or gestures. After you've chosen your

subject, select the visual aid (computer program, overhead projector, flip chart, prop or combination of these items) that would best illustrate your message.

9 Persuade With Power – Your approach is to use logic, emotional conviction and awareness of the audience's interests. The objective is to persuade them to either adopt your view or take a specific action. For this speech, the topic must not only be of interest to you, but also significant for your listeners. Consider topics that have been raised in your club meetings, and how the majority of members responded to those topics. Select an idea that you would like them to reconsider or act upon.

Perhaps a mentoring program has been discussed, but not implemented. Or your meeting has frequently been disrupted by noisy activity outside the room. Will your goal be to encourage the group to formulate a plan or rouse them to immediate action? Select a relevant subject and determine a reasonable goal in order to ensure success for this manual assignment.

10 Inspire Your Audience – Almost home! But No. 10 sounds like the most challenging assignment of all: The objective is to inspire the audience toward a higher level of belief or achievement. Your approach will be to appeal to the audiences by using stories and quotes. You do not need to convince the audience of something new; the topic should be one your fellow members already believe in.

The purpose of this speech is to support and reinforce the values of your listeners. How will you know you've met your goals for this assignment? When you see the light of recognition and appreciation in the eyes around the room. You will be speaking their thoughts and feelings, validating their hopes and giving them a sense of direction and purpose. Rather than being your most daunting speech, this has the potential to be your most rewarding one!

Learn By Doing And By Watching

Did the TAO formula help you clarify some of your current speaking goals? Are you motivated to tackle your next manual assignment? Remember that the Toastmasters program is self-paced; no one will demand that you give a new speech every month. But to gain the most from the Toastmasters program, read your manual and actively participate in club meetings to practice and improve your skills.

Observe fellow members when they give manual speeches and notice their choices in selecting and pursuing their topics. Listen to all evaluations for hints about how to approach your next manual project. Speak with your mentor and schedule your next speech at the earliest opportunity, so that you can develop and use the entire palette of Toastmasters speaking skills. **T**

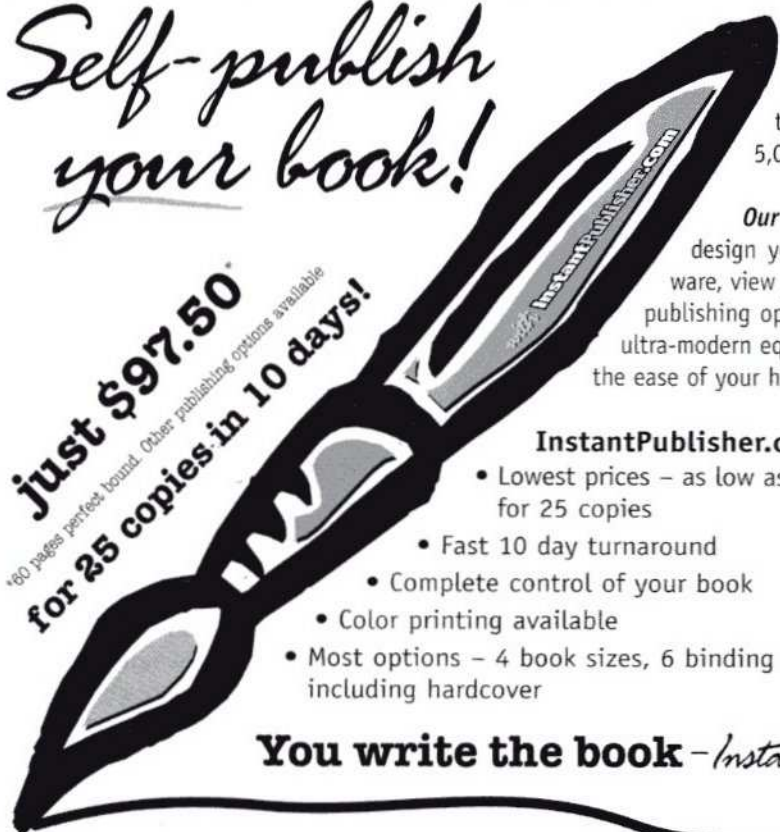
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