

How to be a STAR Speaker with the Leadership Excellence Series By Robert Christeson, ACB, ALB

When I started on my Advanced Leader – Bronze award (some of you may still think of it as the “Old CL”), I realized that not only would there be some interesting leadership challenges in achieving this goal, but I also needed to do two of Toastmaster’s prepared speeches from either the Successful Club series or the Leadership Excellence series.

I want to focus on the Leadership Excellence series for two reasons. First, I think this may be the most under-utilized program in the Toastmaster’s arsenal. Second, this series is among the most powerful for helping your clubs retain and attract new members.

Why do I say it’s under-utilized? Between my club and various unscientific surveys (random club visits, talking to Mike Tuttle, etc.), I’ve found that clubs are likely to present modules from the Better Speaker or Successful Club series, but almost never have a Leadership Excellence module given. It’s likely that you knew this part already, and now you know your club isn’t alone.

Of course, you’re thinking “Get to the POWER part already!” right? Okay, I will. As many of you already know, the Leadership aspect of “Communication and Leadership” is often thought of as the “rest of the story” in Toastmasters. Think about it, how many AL – Silver members do you know still working on their communications track? In case you’re wondering, it’s roughly zero per district. Meanwhile, there are plenty of AC – Gold members that had little problem working through their communication track, but are now struggling with the leadership side of the DTM path.

Here’s the rub: when you tell someone that you can help them improve their leadership skills, they probably have one of two responses. Either they’re not very concerned about it, or they ask how a speaker’s organization can help them with leadership. The Leadership Excellence series is the answer to both of those.

Even those members that don’t aspire to greater leadership growth can benefit from programs such as **Resolving Conflict, Goal Setting and Planning, Developing a Mission** and **Motivating People**. These programs don’t just focus on leading others, but how to improve your own situation, whether at work, in your community, or at home.

Those who like to be active in their community could learn much from **Service and Leadership, The Leader as Coach**, and **Building a Team**. These excellent programs focus on the softer side of leadership. They can even help with ideas for fine-tuning your club’s executive team.

For your business members or those in corporate and military clubs, any of the above can apply, along with the remaining modules **The Visionary Leader, Values and Leadership, Delegate to Empower** and **Giving Effective Feedback**. The first three are directed to more high-level leadership, but the last one is a great way to help you bridge that gap between what you’ve already learned in giving speech evaluations and working with others to improve their work performance.

Although these programs are scripted, the beauty of them is your ability to tailor them to your club or other group’s needs (yes, you can give a Toastmasters program at work, at church, or anywhere there’s an audience). I’ve mentioned above how the programs could be focused on a certain audience, and I’m confident you can think of ways to make them work for you and your audience.

Through these programs, you can champion the cause for improved leadership in your clubs, places of employment, and communities. We’re counting on you to be the STARS of Leadership in District 22. Step up and Lead!