Effective Evaluation

In conclusion, camping is messy. It is uncomfortable. But it builds memories. I encourage everyone to look past the discomfort and focus instead on the memories it builds, memories that will warm your family reunions for decades to come.

Mary has just completed her speech and I am about to give her evaluation. But there is a lot more to effective evaluation than the two minutes I am going to speak.

First of all, why is evaluation important and why it is an important part of Toastmasters and becoming a more effective speaker?

Over the next forty minutes, we are going to explore what goes into an evaluation.
THE BENEFITS OF EFFECTIVE EVALUATION

Effective evaluations benefit the speaker. Why? Because it is hard to put a mirror to your speech. “What do I sound like?” “How do I come across?” “Is the message being received?” These are messages that are hard for us to answer on our own. As a result, evaluations give us feedback so that we can improve and become better communicators.

However, evaluations don’t just benefit the speaker. Effective evaluation also benefits the evaluator. The person evaluating is forced to become a better listener, and more effectively communicate what he heard. The evaluator needs to motivate and encourage the speaker to improve.

Effective evaluations also benefit the club. They encourage speakers, motivating them to do better and to challenge themselves to climbing greater heights. As other members see great evaluations, then they are inspired to work on the program and to speak more effectively. The members know the club is a safe place to stretch and to grow – and they will receive feedback to encourage them and improve.
WHY PEOPLE WANT TO LEARN TO SPEAK

We want to learn to speak so we can:

1. Gain Knowledge and Skills.

I always admired people that could stand in front of an audience and speak. I wanted to be able to have the same confidence and poise that these people had. I wanted to be able to persuade, to motivate and inspire, and to give a technical speech without boring my audience half to death.

2. Meet a Specific Need

There was a position that was coming open at work and good presentation skills were part of the requirements. I needed to learn some communication skills if I wanted to get that job. Or at the very least I had to show that I was doing something about gaining those skills.

3. Gain Material Rewards

That other job pays more than my job. But that’s not all.

I recently purchased a set of CDs from past winners of the World Championship of Public Speaking. On one CD, Craig Valentine talked about how he was asked one day to give a speech to a group of people. He said, “I talk for free.” “What’s your fee?” the fellow said back to him, mishearing what Craig said. “As I said,” Craig quickly said, “I talk for fee.”

Wouldn’t it be great if one day someone asked me to speak and actually paid me for it? If I was actually so good that I could earn some extra pocket money from it?
4. Earn Credit Towards Recognition

*I can hardly wait until I finish the first manual so that Toastmasters will send a letter to my boss. And I’m going to frame my certificates and hang them on my wall at work. I know my boss and co-workers will be impressed.*

5. Gain Pleasure

*I can remember when I was only 4 years old an mom was teaching me to cook, that dad would always make such a fuss over how good the food I made tasted. I feel good just remembering it. And I get that same feeling from Toastmasters. When I entered the humorous speech contest, I didn’t expect to win – and I didn’t. But my boss came to hear me present and she told me afterwards that she didn’t realize I was that funny. My fellow Toastmasters? They all came up afterwards and told me what a great job I did and they wanted to see me in the contest next year.*

6. Build Self-Esteem

*When I take on a presentation that stretches me, and perhaps scares me a little, and yet I do a good job of it, I sure feel “I can climb any mountain” afterwards. Somehow, doing a good job of something that I never would have done a year ago gives me the courage to stretch in other ways and not to put limitations on what I can and can’t do.*

7. Win Acceptance and Esteem From Others

*I like to think I’m doing well. I like being part of a group and feeling that my efforts are appreciated. I couldn’t do this if I didn’t fit in and that what I have to think and say has value.*
THREE ROLES OF AN EVALUATOR

But that’s not all that’s important to me. Sure, I like toastmasters, but what the evaluator does is important to me. It affects. I want an evaluator to be a:

1. **Motivator**

   The role of the evaluator is not to be a critic. The evaluator’s job is to encourage the speaker – to recognize their effort and courage, and to motivate them to continue their development. It’s important to recognize their improvements towards growth and to also let them know that the improvements ARE noticeable. Knowing that they are improving and are contributing to the club will help drive them to continue working on their speech program.

2. **Besides being a motivator, I also want my evaluator to be a Facilitator**

   Knowing what the goals of the speaker are will help you to let them know if they are obtaining that goal. Everyone joins Toastmasters for different reasons and if you know what the speaker is trying to achieve then it is easier to let them know if they are on track. For example, Mary wants to ensure that her body language is appropriate and that it fits the speech she is doing, and the audience that is listening to her. At her job, she wants to appear enthusiastic but not over the top. So it is my job to help her meet that goal. To facilitate her progress towards it.

3. **The third role I want my evaluator to undertake is that of Counselor**

   Sometimes, something in the speech needs to be corrected. As a counselor it is your job to point that out, indicate why you do not think it works, and to suggest alternatives. If you can’t think of a possibly better way to do it, then don’t mention it. A couple of weeks ago, one of our new members gave a great speech but had a tendency to look up to the ceiling or down at the floor. By the fourth speech they should have been making good eye contact. So as a counselor, it was my role to point this out, to explain why I felt the
lack of eye contact took away from her speech. I then gave her several suggestions to overcome this tendency because I felt that eye contact builds trust so it is important to improve.
HOW DO WE IMPROVE AS SPEAKERS?

Improving our skills as a speaker is no different than improving our skills in any field. We can learn that process.

A friend of mine’s daughter is a diver. One night I had the opportunity to go and watch her practice. She would climb out on the board and do her dive. Each time she would make a couple of twists and then – splat – onto the water in what looked to be a very painful belly flop. She would get out of the water, talk to her coach and then head up onto the board again. She would try the same routine again – 2 twists and a splat. Back out of the water, she would talk to her coach and head back up on the board. She would repeat this over and over and over. To me, this looked like more punishment than I could bear, but as the hour wore on, she started to master the dive and at the end she was doing quite well.

Carla was practicing the method that we use to improve. Practice – feedback – practice – feedback – practice. And it was paying off. She was getting feedback both from the dive (in the form of pain) and from the coach.

As speakers, I hope our belly flops do not hurt as much as hers did. But we use the same method. We speak, then we receive feedback in the form of evaluation, then we speak and receive feedback. All the time improving, just as we would with any skill. You can’t learn public speaking over the internet.

Self-esteem plays a vital role in our growth. It fuels our growth. Feedback reinforces personal growth. Personal growth nourishes self-esteem. And in turn, more self-esteem generates more growth.

It is very important that we nourish the self-esteem of the speaker. But how do we do that in our evaluation?
There are several things I’ve noticed in the few months since I’ve become a Toastmasters. I want my evaluator to be

1. **Genuine**

Mary, thank you for the wonderful speech about planning your summer camping trip. You had some great ideas that I know I could use the next time I go camping. I especially liked the idea about laying things out on the floor and going over the list.

2. **Recognize My Strengths**

The way you organized the speech was effective. You took us very quickly to the theme of your speech and we knew exactly where you were going. Your organizational skills show up both in the planning for your trip and in the speech. Because the speech was well organized, it gave you additional authority and let us know we should pay attention.

3. **Recognize My Improvement**

I noticed you looked around the room and made good eye contact. You had spoken to me earlier about this and I watched for improvement. You made sure all of your audience was included in a glance. Eye contact builds trust. And when you make eye contact, the audience is more willing to listen to what you say. You probably noticed everyone was paying attention.

4. **Create a climate for motivation**

Previous speeches were designed to help you conquer nervousness, organization, and body language. In the same way, the goal of this speech was to encourage you to use vocal variety. You met this goal. You easily moved from being excited to being sincere and then pleading not to forget this item to encouraging people to try camping as a way of building memories. It worked well and kept the audience’s attention.
5. Avoid Value Judgments

I think you could use even more vocal variety. My experience has been that speakers will hold themselves back. I would suggest if you were to let yourself go and be more expressive, you would be even more effective. A perfect example of someone to watch is Kathryn. Notice how in her speech, she really is expressive and that adds to her point.

6. Provide Positive Direction

Mary, you have made great strides and today’s speech was very effective. Continue expanding your presence on the stage. You are well on your way to being a great speaker. It’s going to be exciting to see your progress on this route.
TEN BEHAVIOURS OF AN EFFECTIVE EVALUATOR

There are several things that an evaluator can do to be more effective.

1. Show That You Care

*I like it that Richard pays attention when I’m talking. He made eye contact with me all the time except when he was making notes. I could tell he really paid attention to what I was saying and how I was saying it. And it showed in the comments he made.*

*He also smiled at me during the presentation and nodded approval at what I said. That helped be less scared because I knew he wanted me to do well.*

2. Suit the Evaluation to the Speaker

*Richard knew this was my fourth speech and dealt simply with the objectives up to that speech. He wasn’t demanding more of me than what was expected.*

*Someone told me once that a person got a really hard evaluation on their icebreaker. Instead of giving them an icebreaker evaluation, they gave them an Advanced Manual evaluation. I’m surprised this person continued on with the program. I wouldn’t have. And I’m sure glad Richard didn’t do that.*

3. Learn the Speaker’s Objectives

*Richard knew that on my last two speeches the evaluators mentioned I wasn’t making good eye contact, so we talked about it before the speech and Richard made some suggestions.*
Listen Actively

I’ve seen some evaluators not get the names right or miss the point of the whole speech. It’s nice to have the evaluator listen and show that they care about what you are saying, that they understand your point. After all, it took a lot of time for me to write the speech and practice it. I want the evaluator at least to try and understand what it was all about.

4. Personalize Your Language

I noticed Richard kept saying what he thought or felt. He didn’t make judgments. Last week one of the evaluators said, “Good speakers don’t use notes.” I’ve used notes with every speech I’ve made. Does that mean that those speeches weren’t good and I’m not a good speaker?

It’s nice to know that what the evaluator is saying is just their opinion. That it isn’t a judgment of me. Richard always suggests something or says he thinks one way could be more effective than another. Not that I must or I should. That makes me feel that we’re pulling together in evaluating the speech, not evaluating me.

I cringed in one evaluation when the evaluator said that it was the worst speech that the speaker had ever given. That didn’t help the speaker. Instead, the evaluator might have said, “I didn’t find that speech as motivating as your last speech. I think it was because it concentrated on facts and figures. I would have included a story to make your point.”

5. Give Positive Reinforcement

Richard let me know what I’m doing well. I need to know my strengths, as well as what I need to work on, what I can improve. Hearing the positives makes me realize I am improving and it makes me want to come to the next meeting. When I hear positives, I want to start on my next speech as soon as I get home! And sometimes I do!
What I don’t want is something like what happened last week. The evaluator was smirking and it sounded like he was more interested in making himself look clever than in helping the speaker grow. He said one put down after another. The speaker looked devastated. And I wondered whether he would be back next week.

Why didn’t the evaluator realize that he didn’t make himself look clever with all those remarks! Instead, he just proved he was a jerk.

6. Build a Motivational Climate

It really is nice to know I’m improving. Or that I’ve stopped doing something that wasn’t working. I knew my eye contact had not been strong, but Richard coached me on how to improve it and he looked for it while I spoke. I know I can trust Richard because I sense he wants me to do well, and because he doesn’t just white-wash the evaluation. I really hate it when the evaluator only says good things when it is so obvious that certain things needed to be worked on. When it happens, I think to myself, “Is that evaluation really going to be helpful? Is the speaker going to learn anything?” I’m sure glad Richard didn’t do that.

8. Evaluate Behaviour, Not People

It is so important for the evaluator to stick with just the behaviour and not criticize the speaker. I am trying to learn a new skill. And I want to improve that skill. A few weeks ago, one of the evaluators said the speaker was too conservative instead of saying that the speaker needed to expand her gestures. I know the speaker was hurt and the evaluation didn’t help her to improve because she didn’t know what being conservative meant.

9. Nourish Self-Esteem

It’s nice to know that I’m improving. And it is nice to get feedback on how I can continue to improve. Developing my skills makes me feel a lot more confident and self-assured. And when the evaluator shows that he is
considering my feelings and my concerns in the evaluation, I feel accepted and appreciated as part of the group.

10. Show the Speaker How to Improve

Even before the speech, Richard talked to me and coached me on my eye contact. Now I know I have to expand my voice as well. He told me to listen to Kathryn. I know I can do it because I was able to improve my eye contact. Knowing what I need to work on will help me a lot with my next speech. I’m glad he didn’t just white-wash my evaluation because I joined to improve my presentation skills. Because he’s honest about what I need to improve, I trust Richard when he says I’ve done something well. If he just white-washed, I couldn’t trust what he was saying as being the truth.
RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SPEAKER

However, I’ve been a member of Toastmasters long enough to realize that it isn’t just the evaluator who has responsibilities. The speaker also has responsibilities.

1. Communicate Your Goals

Mary came to me and let me know what concerns she had. Only she knows what her goals are. Our hope is that knowing her goals combined with my experience as a Toastmaster, will help her achieve those goals more quickly.

2. Help the Evaluator Prepare

The speaker should meet with the evaluator before the speech and discuss what the speaker needs to work on. Also, the evaluator should make sure the speaker is on track with the objectives of the speech. I’ve found that many speakers are focused on their weaknesses or trying to give the perfect speech. Instead they should be focusing on the objectives of that specific speech. They need to be reminded that with this speech, they are working towards improving narrow area. You can’t do it all at once.

3. Prepare Diligently

If you are expecting the evaluator to help you grow and improve your skills then it is incumbent on you to prepare well. You should look at notes from previous speeches and see what the suggestions for improvement were. If there are things you should be working on, you should let your evaluator know.

Of course, it goes without saying that the speaker should double check that you make sure you have met all the speech objectives.
4. *Empathize With the Evaluator*

This is VERY important. Understand that the evaluator is just another Toastmaster. He or she may not always be right, and the evaluator is learning - just like you. Opinions are simply opinions. And sometimes evaluators just have an off day – no one is perfect and evaluation is a process of learning, just as speaking is. Let inappropriate evaluations go. Don’t take them to heart. Afterwards, seek out a Toastmaster you trust and get a second opinion.

5. *Help the Evaluator Improve*

After the meeting, talk to the evaluator. If there were suggestions, ask what she meant and discuss the suggestions to improve. If you had questions that weren’t answered in the evaluation, ask them now. It will help him or her to mention them to others the next time.

6. *The final responsibility the speaker has is: Prepare to Change*

Remember, you are going to Toastmasters to improve. This requires change. Both you and the evaluator have to be prepared to change. As the old saying goes, “if you do what you always did, you will get what you always got.”
HOW TO CHANGE YOUR EVALUATION BEHAVIOUR

Richard introduces Mary as Jean.

Toastmasters International gives 5 rules for changing your behaviour.

1. Decide what you want to change.
2. Recognize the benefits of change.
3. Put the change into action.
4. Make it a habit.
5. Never stop improving.

DECIDE WHAT YOU WANT TO CHANGE

Dr. Phil’s Life Law: You either get it, or you don't. Become one of those who gets it.

"The difference between the two is that those that get it are willing to change. And they decide to change. You have to make a decision for change."

RECOGNIZE THE BENEFITS OF CHANGE

Dr. Phil’s Life Law: People do what works.

Identify the payoffs that drive your behavior and that of others.

PUT THE CHANGE IN ACTION

Dr. Phil’s Life Law: Life rewards action.

Make careful decisions and then pull the trigger. Learn that the world couldn't care less about thoughts without actions.
MAKE IT A HABIT
Dr. Phil’s Life Law 7: Life is managed; it is not cured.

Strategy: Learn to take charge of your life and hold on. This is a long ride, and you are the driver every single day.

NEVER STOP IMPROVING
Dr. Phil’s Life Law: You create your own experience.

Acknowledge and accept accountability for your life. Understand your role in creating results.

Improving means being honest with ourselves and realizing that if we want to make things better, then we have to do it.
Then, there are **DIFFICULT SITUATIONS** that we all stumble over at one time or another.

*Sometimes the speaker doesn’t fulfill the requirements of the speech. That has happened in our club and others. Richard has dealt with this situation in a way that made the speaker know he didn’t fulfill the objectives of the speech but didn’t demotivate him or making him feel stupid.*

How to evaluate someone who doesn’t meet the goals.

- Note their strengths
- Note their improvements
- Do they understand how to read the manual?
- Do they understand how their goals aren’t being met when the speech objectives are missed.
- Nothing wrong with asking them to redo the speech – but do we do that during the evaluation or afterwards? Perhaps it might be more appropriate after the meeting to suggest this so that the speaker doesn’t lose face. However, some other members won’t improve or stop doing something unless it is pointed out in front of other members.
- Remember, the evaluator is to remain supportive in helping person to meet the goals and if it is whitewashed, then the person isn’t learning.

*I overheard another Toastmaster ask someone how you evaluate a person who isn’t improving, who seems more interested in getting through the program than in learning from it. Richard, that’s a toughie so I’ll ask you.*

- Mentor should go over what the person wants from the program.
- Mentor should make sure that person is reading the manual and understanding what is required.
- Perhaps the mentor should work with the individual on developing the speech to make sure it meets the objectives.
Then, as we mentioned before, Richard, there’s the whitewash.

- The whitewash is probably one of the most common evaluation problems.
- Strive for suggestions for improvements. If you are thinking of these suggestions as criticisms you need to realize you have to change your thinking. You’re trying to create a climate of growth and people can’t improve if they don’t know what they have to improve. So these are helpful tips, not criticisms. It’s important to reword this in our minds so that we practice the right words. It’s much the same as saying ‘anticipation’ instead of ‘fear.’

That’s right. We have to realize that if you can’t say anything nice, then don’t say anything at all. That’s a bad saying. It should be if you can’t say something in a NICE WAY, then don’t say anything at all.

Another problem that may tie to the problem of whitewashing is that an evaluator can feel he or she isn’t qualified to give an evaluation.

- This brings us back to what an evaluation is.
- It is NOT a criticism
- It helps in creating an atmosphere for growth.
- Can’t improve and learn if you don’t get up and practice those evaluations.
- Remember, Toastmasters isn’t just about giving speeches, it’s also about growing and providing support. Support is helping someone grow. And you can’t do that without evaluation. So by not giving evaluations, you aren’t helping others achieve all they can be.

Then an evaluator can be very negative and inappropriate in a speech. If so, the general evaluator should give an evaluation of the evaluation. And care should be taken when asking people to evaluate. One way to improve is to have a person ‘practice’ an evaluation by writing it down (but not giving it) and then having a more experienced Toastmaster go over the evaluation after the meeting, suggesting what is helpful in the evaluation and what could be improved.
IN CONCLUSION, EFFECTIVE EVALUATION BENEFITS EVERYONE

It benefits the speaker. Growth fuels self-esteem. Knowing you are growing and strengthening your skills helps your self image. The better you feel about your skills, the better your self-confidence. And that’s what you go to Toastmasters for.

*Effective evaluations benefits the evaluator. Sometimes we forget that communication also includes listening. As an evaluator, you are also improving your skills - it isn’t just the speaker. Listening and being able to provide effective feedback are sought after skills in the workplace. Listening also comes in handy in social and family situations. Improving these skills only improves all areas of your life.*

Imagine for a moment going into a club that has effective evaluations. What they are going to see is people growing, people being supported, people motivated to achieve.

*Now, that’s a club I would want to join and be part of.*