

# Interview with Rodney Denno

(Conducted a few days after the October 26, 2013  
'How to Become an Evaluation Maven' workshop)

I don't know about you, but I'm just jazzed on evaluations now! Thank you Rodney and everyone else involved in putting on the amazing Division E Speech Evaluation Workshop. Thirty two (32) people attended the event – held at the Richmond Baptist Church – some from as far away as Surrey!

After the event Rodney Denno, the gracious workshop leader and author of the Evaluation Maven Manifesto (EMM), took time to answer some of my questions. Take it away, Rodney!

**Interviewer:** *What is your favorite part of leading an Evaluation Workshop?*

**RD:** Seeing the workshop participants enjoy the experience of learning how to develop and deliver better evaluations. I do these workshops because I believe that just as great coaches help develop great athletes, great evaluators help develop great speakers.

**Interviewer:** *Any specific memories from this past workshop you would like to share?*

**RD:** Working with all the people it took to make this workshop happen. Our energetic coordinator, the various Club, Area, Division and District leaders who helped promote the workshop, the evaluation technique facilitators, the test speakers and everyone who helped make it a great success. They inspired me to step up my game as the workshop leader.

**Interviewer:** *If you had to summarize the Evaluation Maven Manifesto in one word, what word would you choose?*

**RD:** Revealing (making interesting or significant information known, especially of a personal nature.) The EMM reveals to the reader a much larger context in which to see, hear, feel and understand what is being conveyed by the speaker. As the person uses the EMM to enrich their evaluations they reveal so much more to those hearing the evaluation. Most importantly - as they develop their evaluation skills they reveal to themselves more of who they are and what they are capable of accomplishing.

**Interviewer:** *What's the most valuable piece of advice you have ever received in an evaluation?*

**RD:** So much good advice has come my way that it's hard to pick. One piece of advice does stand out though. In early 2011 as I was fine-tuning my speech for the 'Toastmasters

International Speech Contest' – at the Area level - I received an email from a female Chinese friend. She pointed out that some of my content was specific to North America and western culture in general and may not have much meaning or relevance to people raised in other parts of the world.

This really got me thinking a lot more about how to factor in the needs and background of the audience -- and reach a larger portion of the audience. I went on to win the Area and Division contests and competed at the District level.

Being a member of a club that specializes in speech evaluations - Advanced Aurators <http://advancedaurators.toastmastersclubs.org/> - has helped me to understand how to create effective evaluations and continues to provide me with valuable insights into me as a speaker and how to improve my speech writing and delivery skills.

**Interviewer: *What advice do you have for Toastmasters who were unable to attend the workshop but still want to improve their evaluation skills?***

**RD:** Every day many opportunities (TV commercials, YouTube videos, radio and TV news, work talks/speeches, etc) come our way that are perfect for further developing our evaluation skills. I suggest reading the Evaluation Maven Manifesto and then practice applying the different techniques to some of those daily opportunities.

Also, over the next couple months we will be creating about two hours of video (a series of short 10 minute videos) based on the content in the Evaluation Maven Manifesto. Anyone who wishes to delve deeper and improve their evaluation skills can do so in a self-paced online course. The videos will be available in February 2014 at - <http://www.ewoliving.com/toastmastersEMM.html>