



The Virtues of Evaluations

As you start the new calendar year, hopefully full of enthusiasm and eager to maximize the benefits of your Toastmasters journey, I ask you to think about the fourth commitment in the Toastmaster's Promise and the vital issue it addresses: *"to provide fellow members with helpful, constructive evaluations."* This is the cornerstone of our Toastmasters program—the major difference between Toastmasters and other like-minded organizations. Yet, unfortunately, it is a skill that many of us lack. So often effective evaluations are missing in our clubs, family lives, businesses and communities.

In our clubs, we often hear the term "whitewash," which refers to glossing over any problems. When we do this in an evaluation, we don't give the presenter any points for improvement. It could lead the presenter to think he gave a perfect presentation when nothing could be further from the truth. On the other end of the spectrum is the severe criticism that masquerades as an evaluation, which can result in the presenter feeling so discouraged that he leaves the club, never to return. Both of these evaluation styles are equally unacceptable and have no place in our club meetings. The responsibility of every member is to provide a helpful and constructive evaluation that will enhance the speaker's ability and encourage them to return and speak again.

**If you truly want to become a better speaker,
become a good evaluator.**

I well remember my club mentor admonishing me for avoiding the opportunity to evaluate whenever possible. "Until you learn to evaluate, you will never become a better speaker, and without being able to give meaningful and constructive evaluations, you will find being an effective leader a difficult task." How right she was.

So what are the major benefits of a good evaluation for you, the evaluator? First, if you truly want to become a better speaker, become a good evaluator. By observing other speakers' habits, both good and bad, you will often identify similar habits in your own presentations. But the greatest benefits by far are found outside the club. The ability to constructively analyze and give positive feedback to your family or in your business or community is a skill that is greatly needed. The ability to give praise in recognition of a job well done and to provide useful advice where help is needed is an all-too-rare commodity. Conflict resolution is fast becoming a catch phrase in modern society and much of the blame for this is the inability of individuals to productively evaluate themselves and others.

I urge you to practice constructive evaluation in your club at every opportunity and reap the rewards this skill can provide. Become a helpful and effective evaluator, and remember to *"Remember the Member."* 📌

MIKE STORKEY, DTM
International President