

From time to time, after I do an evaluation, I'm approached by a newer toastmaster and asked "How do You Do That?"

Now let me hasten to add, while it may look like John Gergye, sound like John Gergye, and seem like John Gergye standing at the podium and giving an evaluation -- really it's DADOS.

No, that isn't some strange Tibetan deity.

DADOS stands for Durkee, Arter, Dickey, Orlemann, and Stasiak.

See, they were the people who, when I was a new Toastmaster, I was in awe of. They were in my opinion, the best evaluators in the club at that time.

Now one of my strong suits is the ability to benchmark. That's a 90's buzz word which means modeling, emulating, or just a nice way of saying downright stealing what works for others and incorporating it as your own.

So I freely confess that I've borrowed heavily from DADOS. But so can you.

The purpose of this presentation, then, is to perpetuate the skills I learned from DADOS. I hope to give you an evaluation model and some building blocks that can be incorporated into your evaluation style.

But listen: What I'm about to present is NOT THE ONLY WAY to do evaluations. There is nothing mystical or magical about what I'm about to share. It's just what I've used successfully. And I'd simply encourage you to pick and choose from the ideas I present - what you think will work for you.

So, how are we going to perpetuate these skills?

Well, in a general sense I'm going to talk about what's involved in an evaluation. Along the way I hope to impart some 'How To' tips. As well as give you some techniques you can use to quickly and easily structure this mini-speech we in TOASTMASTERS call an evaluation.

So fasten your seat belts, we've got a lot of material to cover in a short amount of time.

Now we can all agree that we're in TOASTMASTERS to learn.

And as evaluators you need to learn how to listen, observe, digest, and rapidly select the most notable points of a speech. And then to report your findings with a minimal amount of rehearsal.

What's more, you want to do so in a caring, supportive, and constructive fashion. Keeping in mind that your goal is to uplift and encourage the speaker. Not embarrass them.

Pre-Speech Phone Call

So when I know I'm on the schedule as an evaluator, the first thing I do is make, what I call, my pre-speech phone call. I learned this technique from Glenn Dickey, as well, as the analytical approach he takes to doing evaluations.

During this call I want to find out which speech is going to be given. What's the topic. What will they be talking about. What personal goals or objectives does the speaker have in addition to those in the manual. And I listen carefully for anecdotes, comments or anything that I might be able to interweave into my evaluation so I can personalize it just a little more. You can't always do that, but it's nice when you can.

After I've touched base with the speaker, I then re-read the manual to get up to speed on the manual objectives. See, I want these in the back of my mind. Percolating around at a subconscious level. Ready for Thursday morning.

Careful and Copious Notes

Now when Jim Orlemann would give an evaluation, I thought they were very powerful. Very potent. And what made them that way was the fact that he backed up his observations with exact phrases, words, and quoted specific statements that the speaker used.

So one time, after one of these high power evaluations, I approached Jim and asked "How do you do that."

He told me that Fran Durkee had taught him to take careful notes.

And that's what I'd recommend to you.

Tailored notes

Now it's important to recognize that I tailor my note taking as well as the evaluation to the skill level of the speaker. In other words, I'll hold an icebreaker to a different standard than an ATM level speech.

In addition, I'll tailor my note taking to emphasize the speech objectives.

So if it's a *Work With Words* speech, I'll listen for interesting words, phrases, and what is said to enhance the speech. If it's *Show What You Mean* I'll keep an eye out for gestures and body language. If it's the vocal variety speech, I'll listen for that.

Or if it's a more advanced speech, I'll note all this and more.

Flaws and strengths

Next, I'm looking out for flaws and strengths. And by flaws I mean repetitive or blatant items. Things the speaker does that don't meet up with ToastMaster standards. Significant problems the speaker is going to want to correct or work on in future speeches.

So if the speaker puts his hand in his pocket but catches himself, and corrects on the fly, so to speak, I probably won't bring that point up. Because he recognized it and corrected it himself.

I'm looking for the big things that need to be improved upon.

Delivery

Next I'll pay attention to delivery. That means eye contact, voice variation, gestures, and interjections of humor which help move the speech along. Always on the lookout for things to comment on during my evaluation.

Organization

Finally and to me most importantly, I'm looking for organization.

I pay close attention to this because in my opinion, if a speech is going to come up short, it will be in large part due to poor organization.

So I'll listen carefully to the opening. Watching to see if it was a grabber. If it pulled the audience in.

Then I'll look for the three or four points that the speaker makes to support the premise of their speech.

Finally, does the speaker tie everything together with a strong conclusion, like putting a ribbon on a package?

In essence, like Giselle likes to say...*"did they tell you what they were going to tell you, did they tell you, and then did they tell you what they told you?"*

So if they have an obtuse opening, a muddled middle, or confused close, I have something to suggest as an improvement.

As I've passed 40, I've noticed I've developed an arthritic brain. It's also very porous. So I've noticed that I can get so engaged observing what's going on that if I don't make notes immediately, the words are lost - forever. Some of you may identify with this. Which I why I furiously take copious notes - trying to capture exact phrases, statements and words used - for future reference.

Track to Run On

I like to have a track to run on, and I credit Chris Arter with giving me one. Which I in turn enhanced for my own use.

Remember, you only have a thimble of time, meaning 10 to 18 minutes to put together your thoughts. To formulate the remarks you are going to make.

And I've found that if I have to create a masterpiece on the run, I'd rather be able to paint by the numbers, or at the least, connect the dots to get a picture

of what happened when the speaker was speaking. I'd rather have this track to run on as opposed to winging it each time.

And it's true. Some members of this club can stand at the podium, crumble up their notes, throw them into the corner, and still give a credible evaluation. But not me.

I find using an outline helps me to quickly organize and then deliver my evaluation.

The 4 C's

Which brings me to the delivery. It's helpful to remember that an evaluation is nothing more than a three minute speech. And like any speech, it should have a beginning, middle and an end.

I term these the 4 C's. And they are: Commence, Compliment, Challenge, and Conclude.

Commence

The first phase of Commence is the standard introduction you've heard a thousand times... "Madam Toastmaster, Fellow Toastmasters, Guests and especially (name of the speaker)."

Then I'd suggest you do a little housekeeping. Because believe it or not, everyone doesn't have all the CTM manual objectives memorized. What's more, they weren't privy to your phone conversation when you discovered the personal goals, if any, that the speaker had.

I like to repeat these goals as well as giving the speech number, topic, and the title. This way, I safely feel that everyone in the room is on the same song sheet, so to speak.

Compliment

Having accomplished that, next comes the COMPLIMENT section. Because you only have three minutes, I'd suggest you choose precise, well-edited words that give you a laser like focus when pointing out three strengths or things you feel the speaker did well.

I'd also encourage you to make specific rather than general comments.

As evaluator, you are giving feedback to the speaker. You represent the eyes and ears of the members in attendance. You want to be sure you are communicating.

So you probably want to avoid saying things like, "Willie, you had good organization."

Willie already knows that. Or he wouldn't have decided to give his speech the way he did.

To me, it's much more effective to say,
"Willie you had very good organization. This was the outline that I saw...
You had a strong opening which was....
You supported your premise with point A (give that),
and point B where you said...,
and point C which was ...
And you tied everything together nicely with your conclusion which
reinforced that feeling in all of us I'm sure."

See, that to me communicates. And tells Willie what you heard. And if those weren't the points he thought he was making, then he knows he needs to take corrective action to improve next time.

The same can be said for saying such general statements like "interesting word selection, or nice use of humor."

If you've taken careful notes, you can select exact examples. Which can only add power to your comments, credentialize what you're saying, and back up your observations, in what I feel is a potent fashion.

Careful note taking allows you to communicate powerfully. And give specific feedback to the speaker about how they did.

Challenge

So after you have COMMENCED, and COMPLIMENTED, you move into the CHALLENGE phase of your evaluation. And it's probably best to limit this to two so called "points to grow on".

The master of challenging in our club, in my opinion, is Susan Stasiak. If you want to learn how to do this, just listen carefully to her evaluations.

Bear in mind, you want to be constructive, supportive, and caring.

So the trick here is to avoid the "YOU MODE". And by that I mean where you put the speaker on the defensive by saying things like "YOU did..., YOU failed to..., YOU must..., YOU should...."

After a barrage like that, any speaker would be on the defensive. Diving for cover. Because in the 'you mode', words take on an attack or accusatory tone.

Instead I'd like to see you soften the edges of your suggested improvements by putting them into the subjective realm. Where they are your opinion, rather than absolutes. Or the last word on what can be improved on.

Using such phrases as..."I felt....It seemed to me...My reaction was...my impression was...I'd suggest or recommend next time you try..." accomplishes this. These phrases make the suggestions much more palatable to the speaker.

In addition, and I feel strongly about this, don't nitpick or force recommendations. Sometimes people give outstanding speeches where there is very little room for improvement. If that's the case say so. There's nothing wrong with that.

Again, we can look to Susan for an example of this when she recently evaluated Jim Murphy's icebreaker. So she simply said, he gave a good speech. Plus added that the only thing she could say in the way of improvement would be that over time he would get even better.

Conclude

Finally you want to CONCLUDE warmly. This is where what's called the sandwich technique comes into play. You have complimented things that went well. Offered some ideas for growth. And now, bring up one more strength. Ending your evaluation, as you started, on a positive note.

Well, that's DADOS as I know it. The process is built on the prespeech phone call, careful notetaking, and then reporting the 4 Cs.

If you incorporate any or all of these ideas into your evaluation style, you too, at some future date, may have a budding toastmaster come up to you after you've done a whiz-bang evaluation and ask you "How Do You Do That?"

Madam Toastmaster...