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CONTRIBUTORS

"It expects more from us while giving us the safe space to grow."

TM Atul Sankar

Division Director (D114)

Atul is an entrepreneur in real estate, construction, and trading across Tanzania and India. As the Division Director of District 114, he leads with a focus on ethical leadership and public speaking. An environmentalist at heart, he has participated in over 30 beach clean-ups and serves as a Director for Sustainable World Initiatives.

TM Samantha Ndekana

Writer & Leader

Samantha is a Toastmasters member with a keen interest in leadership, communication, and personal growth. She is passionate about exploring womanhood, culture, and intentional leadership. She enjoys using

reflective writing to spark meaningful conversations.

Contribution: "In The Middle: The Quiet Burden"

TM Dagmawi Bedilu

Game Thinker & Entrepreneur

A Tech & Innovation Consultant and Serial Entrepreneur, Dagmawi has one vision: to "Sell Joy in Jars." Formerly a Senior Software Architect, he pivoted to the world of Games and Engagement. He has co-founded initiatives including Chewata Awaqi, the Ethiopian Games Association, and Chewatacon.

Contribution: "The Healing Roundabout"

TM Sajida Z. Master

Counsellor & Trainer

Sajida is a career guidance and mental health counsellor who empowers individuals through workshops and coaching. Focusing on mental wellness and youth development, she blends psychological insight with practical skills. A Toast-

master since 2019, she currently serves as the Mentor Development Facilitator.

Contribution: "When a Single Nod Changes Everything"

TM Benedicta Masanja

Medical Doctor & Public Health

Benedicta is a medical doctor and public health professional with extensive experience in development work. She has spent most of her career leading scaling health programs in Tanzania. She currently serves as Director of Programs at Tanzania Health Promotion Support (THPS).

Contribution: Arts and Culture Section

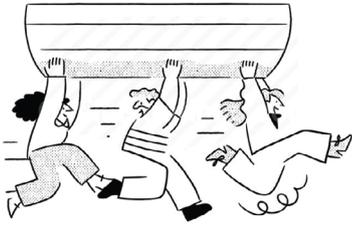
TM Serah Wanjiku

Entrepreneur

Serah is an entrepreneur with ventures in caregiving, supplies, fashion, and hair. A Toastmaster for five years, she serves as Secretary and Treasurer at Watabaruku Advanced Club and has held roles as President and Area Director.

Contribution: "Deep Waters"





TM Ruth Ayalew

Ruth is a dedicated member sharing her journey of growth and discovery within the Toastmasters community. She discusses her experiences "Beyond The Stage" in this issue's interview section.

Contribution: Interview
"Beyond the Stage"

TM Isabella Mandizha-Chihuri

Engineer & Marketer

Isabella heads an engineering projects company and an events & catering firm. An interior designer and marketer by profession, she is a joyful mother of four. She joined Mt Meru Club to refine her leadership skills and believes in doing everything with excellence.

Contribution: Literature Section

TM Rashimi Udeshi

Visual Artist & Finance Manager

Rashimi blends creativity with clarity. She serves as Club President of Dar Toastmasters and as District 114 Finance Manager. A visual artist and entrepreneur, she believes every voice deserves structure and space to shine.

Contribution: "Strategies for Club Growth and Retention"

TM Fatma Amiyo

Communications Specialist & Copyeditor

Fatma Amiyo is a passionate communicator with over 15 years of experience training in the public sector. She is a member of Watabaruku Advanced Toastmasters Club and currently serves as a Club Coach for Speaking Woman Toastmasters Club.

Contribution: Gallery Curation

TM Ashay Bhattbhatt

Civil Engineer

Ashay Bhattbhatt is a civil engineer by training and profession, with experience across engineering and business. A Toastmaster for the past year, he serves on the Treasury and Secretary subcommittee. He enjoys reading and has a fondness for humor in his communication.

Contribution: External Article from HBR selection

TM Teshome Fantahun

Strategic Communicator

Teshome holds a Masters in Strategic Communications and practices for non-government organizations. Passionate about public speaking and storytelling, he joined Toastmasters to hone these skills. He describes his journey so far as an amazing two months of learning.

Contribution: Division News

TM Abinet Kebede

VPPR LIP-H Toastmasters

Abinet is a customer service and operations professional at Jotun

Middle East, India and Africa (MEIA), based in Addis Ababa. As VPPR of LIP-H Toastmasters Club, she is enthusiastic about marketing communications and public relations.

Contribution: Interview

TM Lina Meki

Mental Health Practitioner

Lina is a mental health practitioner with a background in Psychology. A new member of Jupiter Toastmasters, she serves as a Training Supervisor on a project with the University of Bocconi. She is passionate about mental health advocacy, reading, and communication.

Contribution: Interview

TM Nuhamin Abate

Project Officer and Communication Expert

Nuhamin Abate is a project officer and communication specialist at a local NGO, dedicated to bridging the gap between knowledge management and impactful storytelling. An active Toastmaster and former Assistant VP of Public Relations, they combine professional strategic messaging with a deep-seated love for great food and even better conversation

Israel "Lazar" Terefe

Design and Development Director

Lazar is a person of many interests; photography, writing, programming, design and more.

Contribution: Magazine Designer and Visuals Director

Division D // 2025–26

EDITOR'S NOTE

"It expects more from us while giving us the safe space to grow."

The Architect's Blueprint

Despite our name being "Division D", our mission with this magazine is to sow seeds of unity and community. We want to bridge the borders between Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Kenya through the power of shared stories and collective enlightenment.

As you flip through these pages, you will see the contributions of many who worked tirelessly to make this inaugural issue a reality. Our goal is twofold:

First, we want to offer a sneak peek into the heart of Toastmasters—the true community of professionals we represent. We are part of something much bigger than ourselves, our clubs, or even our countries; we are part of a global movement that thrives on growth and the creation of impactful leaders.

Second, we aim to provide peer-driven insights to elevate your leadership journey. We have curated a diverse range of content: experiences from both seasoned and new members, learning articles on the essence of mentorship, opinion pieces on the power of language, and curated excerpts from international perspectives.

While an editor should never have favorites—much like a parent with many children—I must confess I have one. The interview between TM Lina and TM Ruth Ayalew captures the very essence of Toastmasters. It beautifully depicts how this organization builds leaders: by expecting more from us while giving us the safe space to grow, regardless of age or experience level.

I will admit, our journey to this release wasn't exactly as planned. This was originally intended to be a quarterly publication, and by the calendar, we should be on Issue Three. However, the stars have finally aligned. Thanks to our dedicated contributors, we are proudly launching this January. You can expect two more insightful issues before the end of this Toastmasters year.

A special thank you to our Division D Director, Atul Sankar, for the push to make this happen, and to our TEACON Co-convener, TM Hanna Welkema, for the opportunity to create a platform that serves the members of our Division and beyond.

Enough from me. It is time for you to explore, learn, and connect.

Enjoy the read!

TM Michael Endalamaw
Editor-in-Chief



Division D // 2025–26

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

"It is not just about public speaking; it is about transformation."

Dear Toastmasters of Division D,

Thank you for being an integral part of this vibrant and purpose-driven division. It is an honour to serve you in the 2025–26 term, and I am deeply grateful for your commitment, energy, and belief in the Toastmasters journey.

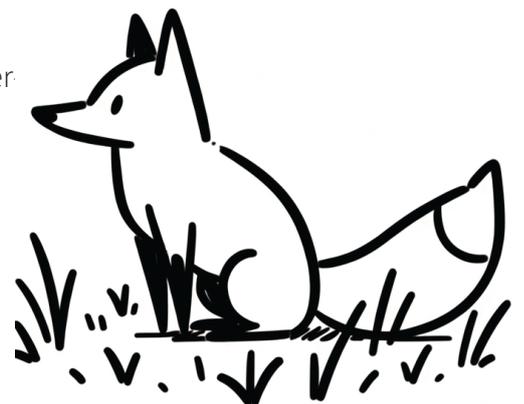
As we begin this year together, I invite each of us to lead with empathy, values, and a strong vision. In life, vision is everything. When we hold a clear vision and believe in it deeply, that vision begins to shape our actions—and actions turn visions into reality.

Toastmasters International is a platform built on skills and growth. Through Toastmasters, we learn 300+ skills—from discipline and confidence to leadership, communication, and emotional intelligence—skills that shape not only better speakers, but better human beings and leaders.

Let us use this year to grow together, support one another, and build clubs that are strong, inclusive, and purpose-driven. When we align our vision with belief and consistent action, excellence becomes inevitable.

Here's to a year of growth, service, and meaningful leadership in Division D.

TM Atul Sankar
Division D Director | District 114



Happenings // Updates

DIVISION BRIEFS

Conference // Kigali

TEACON 2026: Where Gurus Meet

By TM Teshome Fantahun

Kigali is preparing to welcome the most influential voices in East Africa as the 8th annual Toastmasters East Africa Conference (TEACON) 2026 prepares to launch from May 15 to 17, 2026.

Themed "Rise, Shine, Thrive," the conference is designed to promote personal development and leadership excellence, aligning perfectly with District 114's goals. The event is expected to attract about 200 delegates, with the majority hailing from Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda.

"Do everything you can to not miss TEACON 2026, as many majestic things are being prepared for you."

TM Obed Namahoro, the Chief Convenor, emphasized that TEACON is not just a meeting but an avenue to network and make an impact beyond the walls of our clubs.

The Highlights

Attendees will witness the region's finest orators compete in



four categories: Humorous, Evaluation, Table Topics, and the esteemed International Speech Contest. The winner of the latter will proceed to the Quarterfinals of the World Championship of Public Speaking.

Beyond the contests, the daytime schedule is filled with learning opportunities, while the evenings feature a welcome cocktail and gala night for high-level networking. Side activities will also explore the vibrant streets of Kigali and the scenic Rwandan countryside.

Event // Addis Ababa

Division D Conference Hosts Excellence

By TM Teshome Fantahun

Communication and leadership excellence will take center stage as Division D holds its Annual Conference in Addis Ababa in mid-March 2026. (Exact venue and date to be announced shortly).

This half-day event is the crucible where winners from the district and area levels in Ethiopia, Tanzania, and online clubs in Kenya will compete for a coveted spot at TEACON 2026 in Kigali.

TM Tiruneh Alemarye, the chief convenor, stated, "Guests and participants will witness the region's best speakers competing at the highest level while also benefiting from advanced education and networking with like-minded individuals of various backgrounds."

The conference is expected to attract 70 to 100 Toastmasters and guests, featuring advanced educational sessions, recognition awards, and robust networking opportunities.

Heritage // Language

SPEAKING FROM THE HEART

"Language, Identity, and Confident Expression in Tanzania."

Feature article

By **TM Benedicta**

In Tanzania, for as long as I can remember, Swahili language is more than a tool for communication; it is a carrier of identity, culture, and belonging. Spoken all over the country, despite more than 100 other vernacular languages, Swahili embodies unity. From homes to streets, in villages and towns, lively market conversations to formal national addresses, language shapes how we connect, persuade, and lead. At the center of this is Swahili, a language that not only unites Tanzanians but also offers powerful lessons on authentic expression and confident public speaking.

For many of us, our first experiences of speaking were not on a stage or behind a lectern, but at home. Depending on our backgrounds, the language spoken at home introduced us to learn and understand it at the tender age and informed how we communicated. Specifically in Tanzania, listening to “hadithi” Swahili for stories, proverbs (*methali*), riddles (vitendawili) and idioms (nahau) and gentle corrections



from elders broaden imagination, shaped thinking and understanding. These early interactions taught us rhythm, emphasis, respect for silence, and the importance of meaning over perfection. Long before we learned about vocal variety or speech structure, we were already practicing the foundations of effective communication.

Swahili as a Language of Connection

Swahili holds a unique place in Tanzania. It cuts across ethnic, regional, and social boundaries, offering a shared space where everyone can be heard. In public settings, Swahili often creates immediate rapport, people lean in, relax, and listen differently. There is a sense of familiarity and trust that comes from being

addressed in a language that feels like home.

This has important implications for public speaking. When speakers use Swahili, or thoughtfully integrate it into English speeches, they often sound more grounded and sincere. The audience feels included. The message feels closer. Even a single Swahili proverb like “umoja ni nguvu” meaning unity is strength or “haba na haba hujaza kibaba” meaning little by little fills the measure (or the container/jar) can transform a speech from informative to memorable.

For Toastmasters, this is a reminder that effective communication is not about sounding impressive; it is about being understood and felt.

Code-Switching: A Skill, Not a Weakness

Many Tanzanians navigate multiple languages daily, Swahili, English, and often a mother tongue. In professional or international settings, English is frequently seen as the “language of competence,” while Swahili is



reserved for informal moments. Yet this separation can sometimes create distance between the speaker and the audience, or even within the speakers themselves.

Code-switching, when done intentionally, is a powerful communication skill. It reflects cultural intelligence and adaptability. A speaker who can move comfortably between languages demonstrates awareness of context, audience, and purpose. Rather than diluting a message, this flexibility can enhance clarity and impact.

In Toastmasters meetings, members can experiment with this skill in a safe environment, testing how language choices affect confidence, delivery, and audience engagement.

Language and Confidence

Confidence in public speaking is often closely tied to language. Many speakers feel less confident when using a second language, worrying about accents, grammar, or fluency. This can lead to hesitation, reduced expressiveness, or over-reliance on scripts.

However, confidence does not come from perfect language, it comes from ownership of one's

message. Swahili teaches us this naturally. When we speak in a language that feels familiar, our gestures are freer, our voice more expressive, and our connection stronger.

The lesson here is not to abandon English or other languages, but to bring the same sense of ownership and ease into every language we use. Toastmasters provides a space to practice this, to focus on clarity, presence, and intention rather than perfection.

Proverbs, Poetry, and Power

Tanzanian culture is rich in proverbs and poetic expression. *Methali* distill complex ideas into a few powerful words. Poetry uses rhythm and imagery to move emotions and provoke thought. These forms remind us that brevity, imagery, and rhythm are essential elements of impactful communication.

Incorporating these elements into speeches, whether formally or subtly can elevate delivery. A well-placed proverb can anchor a message. A rhythmic phrase can linger in the listener's mind long after the speech ends.

For Toastmasters working on storytelling, persuasive speaking, or leadership communication, these cultural tools are invaluable.

Language as Leadership

Leaders are remembered not only for what they say, but for how they make people feel. In Tanzania, leaders who communicate effectively often do so by choosing language that resonates culturally and emotionally. They balance authority with accessibility, clarity with warmth.

As Toastmasters develop leadership skills, paying attention to language choices becomes essential. Which language best serves the message? How can inclusion be fostered through expression? How can speakers remain authentic while addressing diverse audiences?

These questions are not theoretical, they are lived experiences in our multilingual, multicultural societies.

Conclusion: Speaking Authentically

Language is deeply personal. It carries our history, our confidence, and our worldview. In Tanzania, Swahili reminds us that powerful communication does not require complexity, it requires authenticity.

As Toastmasters, when we embrace our linguistic identities rather than hide them, we become more compelling speakers and more effective leaders. Whether speaking in Swahili, English, or both, the goal remains the same: to speak from the heart, connect with the audience, and leave a lasting impression.

In doing so, we honour our culture and we strengthen our voice.



Perspectives // Thought Leadership

MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS

"Insights, reflections, and wisdom shared by members of our District."

Community Voices // Leadership

In The Middle: The Quiet Burden

By TM Samantha Ndekana

I learned early that leadership does not always arrive with permission. Sometimes it arrives as expectation. Sometimes as silence in a room where someone must speak. Sometimes as responsibility handed to you long before you feel ready to carry it.

Growing up, I often found myself in positions of leadership I did not campaign for. I was the firstborn daughter. The first grandchild. The one expected to know better, do better, hold things together. In school, teachers chose me not because I demanded authority, but because I was proactive, well-mannered, reliable. I followed rules. I noticed what needed to be done. I stepped in.

Looking back, I realize I was often placed in the middle — between chaos and calm, between instruction and execution, between adults who led loudly and children who



were expected to comply.

At the time, I thought this was simply what leadership looked like. But as I grew older, I began to see the pattern more clearly.

In many of our cultural spaces, leadership is portrayed as dominance — the one with the final say, the unchallenged voice, the person who gives orders and sets rules they themselves sometimes struggle to follow. Leadership is loud. Unyielding. It demands obedience more than it models integrity.

And yet, what we are often starving

for is not direction. It is example. We do not need more commands. We need more integrity. More kindness. More respect practiced consistently, not preached occasionally.

For young African women, this absence is especially painful. Our voices are powerful — and that power is complicated. Sometimes our voices become weapons we must use to defend ourselves. Other times, they are thrown back at us, sharp and unrecognizable. We are taught early that speaking comes at a cost.

When a woman speaks up, she

must calculate the consequences first:

- Watch her tone.
- Soften her words.
- Smile while asserting herself.

So we learn to live in tension. To exist in the middle of knowing what must be said and deciding whether it is safe to say it. In the middle of respect and responsibility. In the middle of tradition and transformation.

Being in the middle is exhausting. It means being the driving force of change without applause. It means modeling what you have never seen so that the women after you might have a blueprint. It means being firm enough to say no, to hold your ground — but gentle enough not to lose yourself in the process.

Many of our mothers carried their leadership with pain. They endured. They swallowed. They survived. And for that, we honor them deeply. But some of us are choosing something different. We are choosing to lead with warmth.

To correct and still comfort. To reprimand and still give hugs. To be firm without becoming hard. This choice is not accidental. It is intentional. And it is costly.

Systems that reward volume over values will always resist women who lead quietly but consistently. Kindness is still mistaken for weakness. Silence is still safer than honesty in many rooms. And yet, growth has never been comfortable for those brave enough to stand in the middle.

This is why spaces like Toast-

masters surprised me. Unlike many traditional environments, Toastmasters is a levelled plain — a practice ground for the kind of leadership I was still learning to claim. Here, voice is not inherited; it is practiced. Authority is not assumed; it is earned through preparation, listening, and growth. Feedback is not an attack; it is an offering.

In this space, I am allowed to speak without shrinking. I have learned to stand and share my thoughts knowing that I will not be interrupted, dismissed, or rushed — that my voice will be received with attention, even when it is still finding its strength.

I am allowed to lead without shouting. Through meeting roles and leadership opportunities, I have seen that authority here comes not from volume, but from preparation, consistency, and service. I have learned that it is possible to

guide a room firmly while remaining calm, respectful, and composed.

And I am allowed to grow without being hardened. Feedback is offered with care, evaluations are balanced with encouragement, and mistakes are treated as part of the process rather than personal failures. In this environment, growth does not require armor — only willingness.

Breaking cycles does not require grand speeches or dramatic rebellion. It requires small, repeated choices — to respond instead of react, to lead by example, to speak with courage and care even when it would be easier to stay quiet.

Being in the middle is not weakness. It is responsibility. And for women willing to stand there — especially African women — it is a quiet, radical act of leadership.

Mentorship // Growth

When a Single Nod Changes Everything

By **TM Sajida Z. Master**

I still remember my Ice Breaker speech.

I had prepared. I had practiced. And yet, midway through the speech, my mind went completely blank. I stood there, stuck, unsure of the next word, the next thought, or the next step. In that moment, the room felt very quiet.

Then I saw my mentor. They did

not interrupt. They did not mouth words or rush to help. They simply gave me a small, calm nod, one that said, “Take your time. You can do this.”

That nod grounded me. I paused, took a breath, and continued. I finished my speech. More importantly, I walked away believing I belonged on that stage. That moment taught me something lasting.



Toastmasters places strong importance on mentorship because growth is personal. Resources and evaluations help build skills, but mentorship supports the emotional journey, especially in the early stages.

At the district level, strong mentorship translates into stronger clubs, better leaders, and higher member engagement. Members who feel supported are more likely to stay, serve, and step into leadership roles.

Many clubs assign mentors, and that is a good start. But real mentorship does not end with a name on a form. True mentorship is intentional. It is checking in, asking questions, listening, and encouraging growth beyond just completing projects. It is about being present, especially during moments of uncertainty or self-doubt.

"Mentorship does not always need words. Sometimes, belief is enough."

So, How can we Implement Better Mentorship in Our Clubs?

1. Make expectations clear

A mentor does not need to do everything. However, both mentor and mentee should understand what support looks like. A short conversation about goals, availability, and focus areas can make a meaningful difference.

2. Encourage conversations, not just corrections

Mentorship is not only about fixing speeches or pointing out areas of improvement. It is about helping members find their voice, set personal goals, and stay inspired throughout their journey.

3. Create better matches

When possible, mentors and mentees should be matched based on shared goals, interests, or communication styles. A good connection builds trust and makes the relationship more effective.

4. Recognize mentors openly

A simple thank-you during a meeting or a mention in a newsletter goes a long way. Recognition reinforces the value of mentorship and encourages more members to step forward.

5. Build a culture of support

The strongest clubs are those where mentorship happens naturally. Peer to peer support, member to member encouragement, and consistent positive feedback help mentorship become a habit rather than a program.

You do not have to be an expert to be a mentor. You simply need to notice someone who might need encouragement.

Let us build clubs where no one feels stranded on the stage, where every member knows someone is silently cheering them on. Because sometimes, the smallest gesture becomes the moment someone discovers their confidence.

Personal Growth // Resilience

The Healing Roundabout & The Outloving Expressway

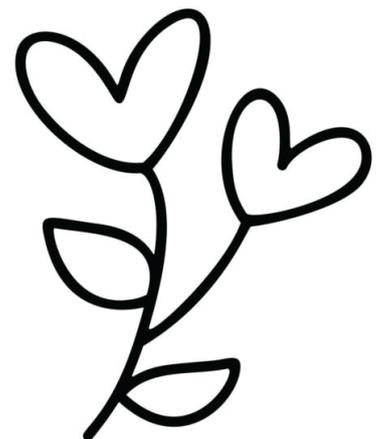
By **TM Dagmawi Bedilu**

After a rejection, you'll find yourself at a Y junction (a three-way road). One road leads to obsession, addiction, and infatuation of the one/thing that was lost and the other leads to hate, anger and resentment towards the one/thing that was lost.

But if you take the time and look closely and analyze the Y junction you are standing on, you'll

soon figure out that you are in fact not standing on a Y junction but at a crossroad (a + junction) and there are not three but four pathways from where you are standing (the 4th one being the one you came from which has little to none chance of being an option).

The two directions, the one that leads to the right and the one



that leads to the left both go sideways and never ahead. Neither one leads to progress only stagnation on the spot.

But the blurry one that's ahead, now that's the road to progress,

the road of moving on. So what does this road offer? I call this road the OutLoving Expressway. It has its procedure:

1. Diagnosis

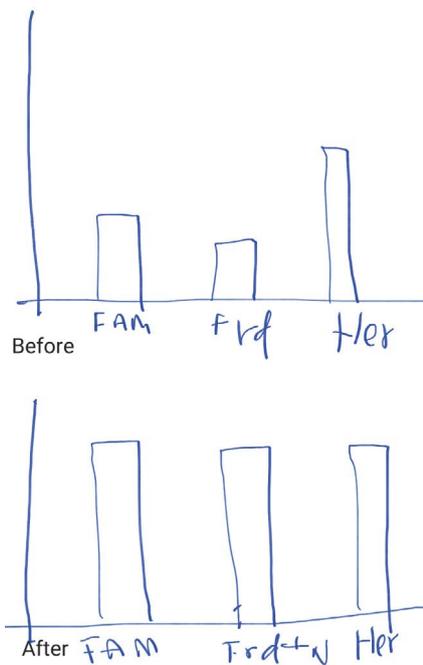
The first step is understanding rejection is not an emotion but a mixture of various emotions, to be specific. One is the sense of Unreciprocated Love due to the fact the person/thing you hoped to make your own either doesn't feel the same way, or even if they did feel the same way it they're impossible to get due to the circumstances, timing and other factors leaving you holding love that no-one is willing to take.

And the second emotion is the sense of Unworthiness. You feel you don't deserve love or that you are unwanted, you are a lesser being. You are not worthy of anything that is good and the world has rejected you completely and that the only thing that's left for you in the future is pain and suffering.

Understanding this — that you're working with not one but two emotions — is like a doctor realizing for the first time from his/her patient's symptoms that the patient has two diseases and not one. This enables him to diagnose both rather than trying to come up with one diagnosis for both assuming the patient has only one disease. This leads the doctor treating the wrong disease or even making it worse by the medication he is prescribing. And the same goes for rejections; once you know you are working with two emotions you can manage them separately without one remedy affecting the other.

2. Dealing with Unreciprocated Love

For the Unreciprocated Love, you will go to a place where you're



sure they will receive your love; to friends and to family, to the helpless. You'll up the game. You start showing affection to those who do love you. That by itself might not be sufficient, you might need to go out and start meeting new people while strengthening the already existing bonds (friends and family). The best way to do this is to join clubs (volunteer) or start fun classes (cooking, dancing...).

And immediately you start to notice the love that seemed so big for that particular person/thing who've rejected you being equated in magnitude. Now you need to remember one thing, your aim is healing and not getting cured which is much better in the sense you'll be stronger and more immune to your previous self.

3. Dealing with Self-Worth

For the decline in self-worth, you need to start working on your hobbies, dreams and that personal projects you were putting off for later. The best remedy for regaining self-worth is to find one's purpose in life, to be of importance, to serve those

who need it. And in this, one can regain self-worth. One needs to do this not for the sake getting over a crush but to even get through life in the most graceful way.

Some say heartbreaks are the best time to do life transformation in all aspects (lifestyle, fashion, eating habits, sports, occupation) because as the great wisdom quote goes:

“For a tree’s branches to stretch into the heavens, its roots must reach into hell.”

And guess what? You're already in hell and there is only one way to go, which is up.

This is the best time to start a new business or a new endeavor. If you don't believe me look at all the great thinkers, builders of the world. All the greatest inventions came after a great personal grief. The place you are at, gives you the perfect mix of senses of hopelessness and faithfulness which is the best time for taking that leap of faith. You should say to yourself:

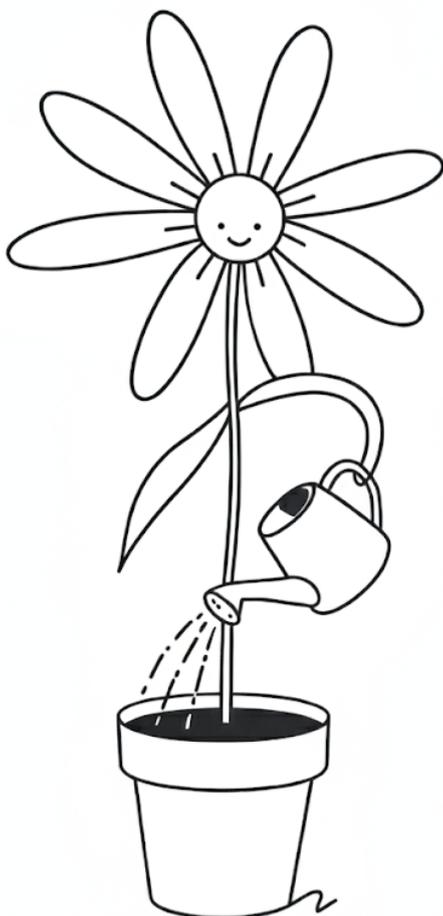
“If I’m bound to fail shooting for the roof; might as well shoot for the stars... at least I’ll enjoy the ride.”



You'll develop a somewhat crazy confidence in the fact that if realistic goal like a sensible relationship or securing a good job takes all your energy without return, why not completely reverse it and make it enormously big.

Instead of investing all your energy into a single relationship... start a community. Instead of trying to secure a job build one, instead of grieving over the loss of a loved one, celebrate their life by hosting a party.

For there is no problem in life, only challenges. Everything is going to come to an end. We are all going to die, it's never the question of who gets to live the most nor evading death, the question is making the time between two non-existences, two singularities (pre-birth and death) worth the while.



Strategies for Club Growth and Retention

By **TM Rashmi Udeshi**

Excellence is never accidental—it is built with intent. In the Toastmasters ecosystem, achieving the Smedley Award and going on to accomplish 10 out of 10 Distinguished Club Program (DCP) goals represents the pinnacle of club excellence.

Rooted in focused leadership, intentional service, and a culture of empathy and commitment, Dar Toastmasters' journey reflects sustainable growth, strong member retention, and consistently rising standards. Our achievement was the result of deliberate strategy and disciplined execution, with member experience placed firmly at the centre of every decision.

Early Momentum with Strategic Clarity

The early achievement of the Smedley Award provided strong momentum. Membership growth was approached with intent—ensuring that the club was not only attracting new members but was equally prepared to engage, integrate, and support them effectively. This foundation created confidence and continuity that carried through the Toastmasters year.

Focused Leadership That Walked the Talk

Leadership focus was a defining factor. DCP goals were treated as indicators of member development rather than administrative targets. Roles were clearly defined, progress was monitored consistently, and accountability was embedded in day-to-day operations.

"Leaders who walk the talk inspire others to follow."

By modelling consistency, participation, and completion of educational goals, the leadership team set a standard that members naturally aligned with.

Service-Oriented Leadership

Guided by the principle that "Leadership is not about being in charge, but about taking care of those in your charge," the club cultivated trust, engagement, and long-term commitment. Meetings were thoughtfully structured, and evaluations were designed to encourage growth.

Empathy as a Retention Strategy

Empathy played a critical role. Leaders recognised that each member's journey was unique. New members were welcomed with care, while experienced members were challenged and acknowledged. This empathetic culture fostered belonging and psychological safety—key drivers of retention.

Raising the Excellence Barometer

Excellence became habitual. From meeting quality and role preparedness to speech delivery and evaluations, standards were consciously elevated. Each meeting was viewed as an opportunity to refine processes and enhance member experience.

By consistently raising the bar and aligning purpose with people, Dar Toastmasters has set a compelling benchmark—illustrating what it truly means to operate at the pinnacle of club excellence.

Division-D Photos

GALLERY

"The Shared Moments"



Habesha Brewery Toastmasters during local language session



Fasha Bilingual Club Members



Toastmasters on the Wave



DTM Awards



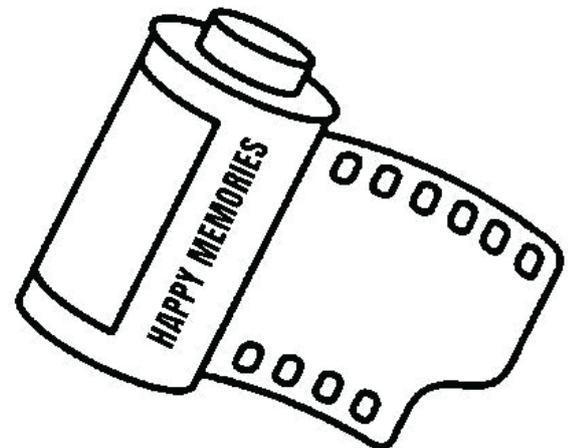
DAR Toastmasters Awards



ECA Toastmasters Members



DAR Toastmasters Members



Features // Community Stories

VOICES OF EXPERIENCE

"Personal stories of growth, leadership, and belonging from across the District."

Watabaruku // Growth

Deep Waters & Discoveries

By **TM Serah Wanjiku**

My Toastmasters journey has been a life-changing one, to say the least. Those 4 years have had their highlights which I will always hold dear to my heart.

I joined TM to expand my social circle through networking. Also, I had a few coins lying around and I needed to use them on something else other than clothes and handbags. I joined an organization that I had never heard of before; I actually Googled TM after I joined.

Deep Waters

I came to learn that I was actually good at public speaking and leadership—qualities I never considered myself to have, though my fellow Toastmasters picked them up immediately.

With motivation and encouragement, I embraced my newfound superpower. I was unstoppable. I took part in the Table Topics speech contest and, at only 6 months old in the club, I represent-



ed my club at the division level.

Renewing the Purpose

3 years later, after serving as Area Director, I took a break from TM. I had expanded my 1st "why" and I needed another one because being a Toastmaster is a lifestyle. I couldn't imagine myself not being a Toastmaster: the network, the learning, the feedback, the platform, the environment for growth.

The confidence gained in Toastmasters (and Watabaruku to be precise) has helped how I run my business, handle my clients, and

even trickled down to quality personal relationships.

About Watabaruku Advanced Club: 'Watabaruku' means people who meet for social purposes. Though rooted in District 114, our club is fully virtual and global—welcoming dual members from any District who meet our criteria.

Every speaker receives evaluations from three seasoned Toastmasters—each focusing on either content, delivery, or language. You'll also get written feedback from the audience, giving you well-rounded insights. We use the Watabaruku super evaluation form, adapted from Toastmasters' Accredited Speaker program, Judge's Guide, and Ballot, for deeper, more targeted feedback.

Our meeting themes draw from the Advanced Communication manuals of the Toastmasters Legacy Program. We also run periodic workshops, including intensive evaluation training sessions.

Our Vice President Education facilitates pre- and post-meeting connections between speakers and evaluators via WhatsApp, ensuring

that objectives are clear at the beginning and that feedback is received afterward.

It's more than just the applause. My goals are well aligned with the vision of the club, as one who is struggling to finish my 2nd path and working towards my DTM title.

Addis Ababa Toastmasters Club // Leadership

Beyond The Stage

By **TM Ruth AyaLew**

Q. When you first joined Toastmasters, what did you expect it to be about and what was your reason to join?

The reason I joined Toastmasters was primarily because of my mom. I had known about Toastmasters since I was 12 years old, and from that time, I wanted to become a member. So by the time I reached that age and was a Grade 12 student, I decided to join. The primary reason was my mom.

Initially, since I already knew the overall idea behind Toastmasters, being public speaking and leadership, I didn't have very high expectations because I felt I already understood what it entailed. However, once I joined, I realized it was far beyond just earning more skills or developing yourself. "It felt more like creating a family, people you can rely on whenever there's something you want or need to share with them."

Q. Once you become a member, what were you hoping to get out of it?

I can answer this in two ways.

Personally, I hoped to see myself as a better speaker, and my main focus was actually more on the leadership side. I already used to practice public speaking in my school scenarios, so it was not hard for me to delve into that as much as I wanted. But in terms of leadership, I expected myself to become better at leading people, managing how things are supposed to be done, and getting the outcomes as needed.

The other way involves something beyond my personal life, which includes other people, and that is where the family part comes in. I have a few friends from Toastmasters, and I have also encouraged some of my own friends to join. You create a family, you create a bond, and you create a network as well.

Q. When did you first take on a meeting role or club officer role? How was that experience?

Okay. The first role I took was Word of the Day. I do not remember what word I presented, honestly, but at that time we did not have a grammarian role per se.

My very first speech was an Icebreaker speech, but the difference back then was that we decided to move to a different venue for our session, and everything was not quite the usual scene that I expected when I stepped into the meeting hall. I was kind of nervous because it was my first time presenting a speech, and finding myself in a setting I had never seen was one of the most confusing parts for me. But I managed to deliver my speech, which was actually very successful in my opinion.

I remember that my evaluator was DTM Ethopis. She gave me one of the best evaluations, honestly, and since then I realized that I needed to improve more. That feeling is something I still remember.



Regarding my first club officer role: It is a very unorthodox way of going at it. I became the division's public relations manager prior to being in any club officer role, and then I became a president. When I took the role of the division's public relations manager, I had initially auditioned to be the vice president of public relations of our own club. I did not get that role. However, the division director at the time, DTM Eminent, heard my speech and invited me to take on the division PR role, which I did. It was one of the most thrilling experiences I have had because, honestly, I never realized how vast the entire district was. That is where I truly learned how impressive the structure is. After that experience, I became a president.

Q. How would you describe the experience of serving at the division level?

It was challenging, but the best thing about it was that the challenge made me think of ways and ideas to improve myself, with the support of people who would help me achieve the goals of the group I was leading. I even managed to create the current Telegram group, 'Toastmasters clubs in Ethiopia' which was an initiative that started back when I became the division's public relations manager. Seeing that clubs are growing within the country makes you happy.



Q. Can you share a moment when you realized you were learning leadership skills through these roles?

I would say the best time I recognized that I had been learning more about leadership was when I became a president. In the case of public relations, the learning aspect was there, but right after I took on my presidency, I was challenged to lead people. Since I was the youngest president back then, I was probably 19 or 20. It was really challenging to lead people who were older than me. On top of that, challenges arose within my own team. My VPE and my VPM had to step down, and I had to find other members to take on those roles while still managing to finish as a distinguished president by the end of the year.

Through all these experiences, I realized that if you are with the right people, have the right team, and be the right leader to guide them, then things will work out fine.

Q. How would you explain your growth in your leadership capacity?

I'd say the main thing is the project management side. Especially with specific goals in Toastmasters, I realized that each goal needs its own way of being implemented. During my time as president, I had to make sure our club success plan was filled out and followed, ensuring members were taking roles, and managing club contests. Overall, project management was one of the biggest things I both implemented and learned from as a leader.



Q. What part of your Toastmasters journey was hardest for you?

Right now is probably one of the most challenging parts because I'm working on my DTM project, which has been going on for more than a year. I'm trying to form a club where Rotaractors from different clubs can join Toastmasters, create their own club, and still be supported by Rotarians ready to help and mentor them. The idea goes beyond personal growth and focuses on helping people overcome their own challenges and change their own stories.

Q. Were there moments when you doubted yourself and held yourself back?

Yes, quite a few actually. There was a time when I was not active as a member because COVID hit. Being offline,

disconnected from the entire world and reality, and trying to find where I fit in roles I was confused about was challenging. I asked myself, "Why am I still a member? Do I really need this?" But coming back as a member and understanding the online context helped me rejoin and eventually become a president leading online sessions.

Q. Can you give an example of a failure or mistake that ended up teaching you something important?

During my second speech, I prepared a speech where I rehearsed every single word and then went on to deliver it. That turned out to be one of the worst mistakes I ever made, because I forgot my speech in the middle of the presentation. I was quite bewildered about what I was supposed to do, but I had to compose myself, return to my notes, and finish. It taught me an important lesson: rehearsals are helpful, but over-rehearsing can make your delivery feel forced. After that, I focused on making my speeches sound natural.

Q. Following that experience, what helped you deliver your speeches in a more natural way?

First, if you have a personal story, go for it. Speak about something you know well. Second, it's better to work with bullet points instead of writing every single word of your speech. Personal stories matter the most, and using bullet points helps make your speech feel natural

Chasing Words, Finding Home

By **TM Nuhamin Abate**

There are three things I deeply adore: Words. Stories. And people who carry good stories—or at least know how to tell them well. That's what first pulled me toward Toastmasters.

I started attending meetings in February 2024, and officially became a member in October 2024. Interestingly, I only found out I was a formal member two months later—arguably my biggest surprise of the Toastmasters year. Since October, I've been fully immersed. Taking roles. Showing up consistently. Learning by doing. Not because I had to—but because I genuinely love Toastmasters.

In just a few months:

- I delivered my Icebreaker speech in November
- Competed and won 3rd place in Table Topics
- Competed and won 3rd place in the Humorous Speech Contest
- Became Assistant VPPR (which, if you know, means learning how to gracefully coexist with very... confident personalities 😊)
- Interviewed a renowned DTM for Lead Magazine—after persistently chasing their time and mildly intimidating them into availability



But achievements aside, what truly stayed with me wasn't the certificates or placements. It was:

- The unsolicited support after my Icebreaker
- The kind words from a very critical evaluator that made me feel seen
- People coming up to me wondering why I didn't place higher
- Hugs after I shared personal stories
- Encouragement on nights I genuinely felt I embarrassed myself
- New friendships, new connections, shared laughter, warm applause
- Beautiful stories I got to witness
- Icebreaker gifts, promised cakes, and small acts of genuine kindness

If I ever had to choose one room to be stuck in, I know exactly where I'd choose. Toastmasters.

Grateful for the journey so far—and excited for what's ahead.

"I walked into Toastmasters chasing words, stories, and speeches. But I stayed—for the people."

POTENTIAL TO PURPOSE

"The power to fulfil your purpose is within your reach."

Unleashing The Hidden Power

Feature article

**By TM Isabella
Mandizha-Chihuri**

As we embark on yet another year loaded with endless possibilities, my wish for everyone is that we find the grace to live out to our potential. Potential can be defined as dormant ability; unexplored ability and latent power; unused success; reserved power.

When you live out your potential, you fulfil your purpose. Potential must be turned to purpose so that we can live fulfilled lives. Ask yourself, 'Why am I here? What is the purpose of my life?'

In his book, 'Understanding Your Potential', Dr. Myles Munroe challenges the reader to discover their hidden potential and to be bold enough to actualise it. A lot of ideas and gifts have remained as potential and were never lived out, thereby robbing humanity of great discoveries, inventions, and innovations.

Excerpt: Dr. Myles Munroe

"The wealthiest spot on this planet is not the oil fields of Kuwait, Iraq, or Saudi Arabia. Neither is it the gold and diamond fields of South Africa... Though it may surprise you, the richest deposits on our planet lie just a few blocks from your house. They rest in the local cemetery or graveyard."

This book has helped me to introspect the reason for my existence and provoked me to take action on ideas which I had but had not dared to explore. Dr. Munroe raised very strong thought-provoking points which challenged me to become uncomfortable with my current state of achievements.

I was motivated to learn to rise above the opinion of others; to rise beyond the expectations of others, and to explore the hidden abilities within me. We were never created to exist in isolation but in communities with every

person bringing to the table their God-given talents to uplift each other.

lasting impression.

In doing so, we honour our culture and we strengthen our voice.

Other philosophers have said this about potential and purpose. Sadly, a minute percentage of the world's population will experience a portion of their true potential. I want to be one of those who do.

Curated Reads // Global Minds

LEADERSHIP HORIZONS

"Insights from Forbes and Harvard Business Review to shape your 2026 journey."

Personal Growth // Forbes

7 Winning Leadership Habits For 2026

By William Arruda
(Forbes)

A new year presents an opportunity to adopt habits that enhance your personal brand and increase your success in 2026 and beyond. While goals often get most of the attention at the start of the year, habits are what shape outcomes.

The habits outlined here focus on the human side of leadership. They're based in neuroscience and have a positive impact on individuals, teams, and organizations. They are core to those who understand

the importance of being human in an age when technology is embedded in virtually every element of business.

Integrate These Essential Authentic Leadership Behaviors

1. Acknowledging Others

91% of employees say that receiving recognition for their work motivates them to put in more effort. Authentic leaders know this, commit to expressing gratitude, and understand that thanking their people publicly is even more meaningful. Honest, thoughtful praise is among the most impactful actions leaders can take.

2. Coaching

Authentic leaders understand that their people are talented and resilient. They know how to use coaching techniques like asking powerful questions (instead of providing answers), listening with the intent to understand, and driving toward progress.

3. Inspiring Fun at Work

Work is the play of adulthood. Authentic leaders believe that fun is not frivolous. They know that when work is entertaining and enjoyable, it increases engagement, retention, and progress.

4. Communicating Regularly

A lack of information is often more

"Authentic leaders create human connections with their people by exhibiting skills, behaviors, and mindsets that increase engagement, inspire creativity, and create connection."



frustrating than bad news. Authentic leaders commit to regular, honest communication to keep their people grounded and positive. Small check-ins, regular updates, and open-door policies are ways effective leaders encourage consistent, open, and honest communication.

5. Encouraging Development

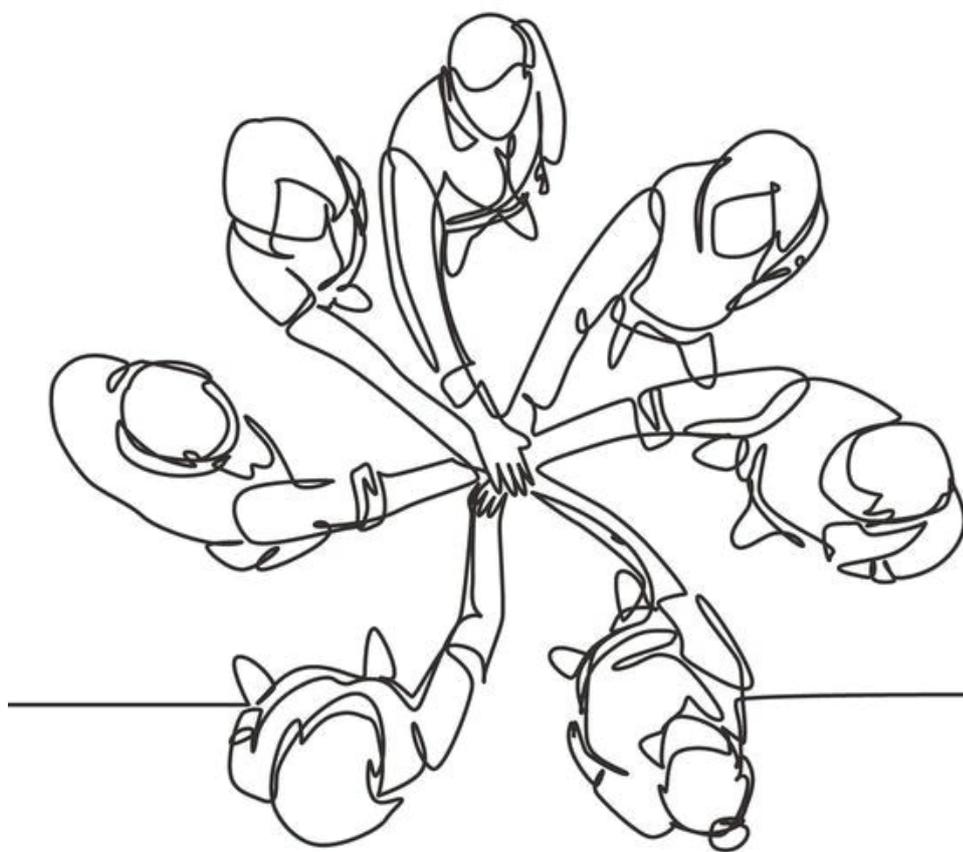
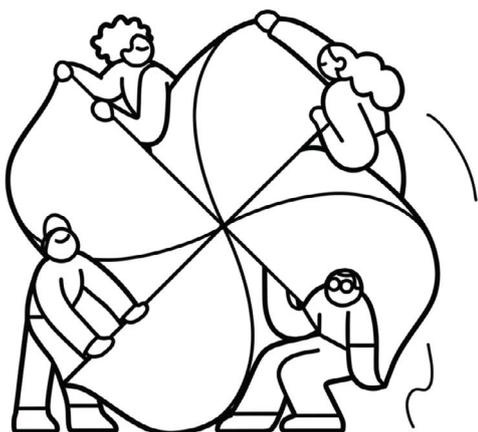
Authentic leaders are lifelong learners, and they demonstrate it visibly. They make time to help their team identify and pursue impactful learning opportunities. They understand that the only way to stay ahead of change is to keep learning.

6. Celebrating Progress

Authentic leaders know that every small win deserves recognition. They understand that acknowledging progress is just as powerful as celebrating outcomes. They see these moments as fuel for moving forward.

7. Asking For Feedback

Feedback is among the most valuable gifts you can give and receive. Authentic leaders see the value of seeking feedback from their manager, peers, and team. By doing so, they create environments where learning and improvement are expected, supported, and safe.



Strategy // HBR

The Success of Hands-On Leaders

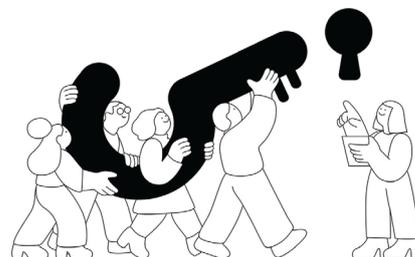
By Scott Cook and Nitin Nohria

With all the tasks you could prioritize and the limited hours available each day, how do you choose what to work on?

Among most CEOs, there's broad consensus: Senior leaders should focus on the "what"—purpose, vision, strategy—and delegate the "how." Peter Drucker wrote, "The executive is not supposed to be a handyman. He is supposed to be a builder."

Yet when we study some of the world's top-performing firms, we

see a contradictory set of behaviors. Leaders at Amazon, DanaHER, RELX, and Toyota care deeply about the "how." They act as teachers and system builders. They don't meddle—they coach. They don't override—they elevate.



Leadership theory suggests CEOs should focus on high-level strategy. The authors challenge this, spotlighting CEOs from Amazon, Danaher, RELX, and Toyota who dive deep into execution. Their approach isn't micromanagement; it's a disciplined, system-building style that fosters autonomy. The article distills five principles that define this leadership: obsessing over metrics, designing work processes, experimenting, teaching tool kits, and embedding relentless improvement.

The 5 Principles

1. They Obsess Over the Metrics That Customers Value

Erik Engstrom transformed RELX by coaching every employee to obsess over “customer value.” He asked: How does using this product improve the customer's economics? Unlike companies that focus on metrics benefiting the firm (like retention or transaction size), hands-on CEOs focus on metrics that reflect how the company benefits the customer.

At Amazon, Bezos didn't just ask for low prices; he built a bot to track 1,000 items against competitors. This detail orientation creates mission clarity. When leaders show how much they care, attending to details becomes a shared norm.

2. They Architect the Way Work Gets Done

It's not about changing org charts. It's about shifting decision rights closer to the front lines. Bezos redesigned work to

create independent teams guided by the “two-pizza rule” and the famous “six-page memo” requirement. PowerPoint was forbidden to encourage deeper thinking.

Leaders in these firms recognize that frontline teams are key to creating value. They make it their personal mission to design processes so employees are empowered with the tools they need.

3. They Use Experiments to Make Decisions

Toyota may be best understood as a system of nested experiments. Decisions are not made by rank or hunch—they are tested. This commits leaders to humble learning.

When CEOs join in testing an idea—demanding that data, not hierarchy, decides—they elevate teams rather than override them. Authority comes not from opinion but from evidence.

4. They Lead by Teaching the Tool Kit

At Danaher, 100 executives are flown in annually not for a secret project, but to solve a real business problem using the kaizen method. They are there to learn and teach the system.

Larry Culp (Danaher/GE) puts it this way: “We force division presidents to develop a command of the how so that they can teach the how. They shouldn't say, ‘Go do that’ but instead, ‘Come do it with me.’”

5. They Strive to Be Better, Faster, Cheaper—Every Year, Forever

These leaders reject the logic of transformation—the idea that performance improves through heroic, one-shot interventions. Instead, they build systems where improvement is the standard business.

If you don't commit to continuous improvement, you eventually set yourself up to need transformation. You get out of shape. These companies work the improvement muscle every day.

Why is this approach so hard to copy?

Moving from the conventional model to one where the CEO is the chief architect requires a redefinition of leadership itself. It requires the ability to move fluidly between altitude and detail. It is not a leadership style defined by isolated behaviors; it is a system of mutually reinforcing habits.

The superior performance that has resulted from this way of leading is lasting proof of its power.

until next time

Keep Speaking Keep Leading

Thank you for reading till the end
Next Issue Arrives in March, Connect with us
to stay Tuned



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