

Evaluation Coaching

Regardless of how many evaluations your protégé has received or observed, the first time they get up to evaluate another person's speech will likely be a very intimidating time for them. Help prepare your protégé for this challenging experience by sharing what you know about evaluating.

Below are some specific topics and ideas for you to mention to your protégé.

Questions to Consider

- What suggestion did you receive in an evaluation was the most helpful and why?
- What techniques do you use in preparing to give an evaluation?
- What techniques do you use in presenting your evaluation?
- What feedback have you received from speakers that you evaluated helped you improve as an evaluator?
- What was your first experience as an evaluator like?
- As you progressed through your first speech manual, how did your needs and preferences for the type of evaluation you received as a speaker change?

Common Evaluation Mistakes, by John Spaith

'Common Mistake: No Suggestions for Improvement

"John, your speech was so good, Cicero would bow down before you. Perfection! There was nothing wrong with it!"

"A wise Toastmaster once said that if you give a speech without getting an evaluation, you might as well have given it to your car. Getting a bad evaluation can be even worse.

"[G]etting an evaluation with no ways to improve is worse than giving a speech to your car. Your car won't tell you that you're Cicero, will it? Someone once told me when you see a speech you think was perfect, imagine you just paid \$10,000 to hear it. I guarantee you'll find something to improve.

“Common Mistake: Regurgitation Evaluation

“John, in your speech today you had three points which I’m going to repeat. Then you told a joke that I’m going to repeat and a story I’m going to repeat. I’m not going to do anything more than repeat what you’ve said. Thank you.

“How many times do you get an evaluator who really does no analysis of a speech, but gives it back in book-report form? Unless the speaker got hit in the head during the break and is suffering amnesia, they don’t need this. Say why and how a speech was and wasn’t effective.

“In particular, new evaluators tend to regurgitate. I’m guessing because they’re not confident yet. Just because you’re new doesn’t mean you can’t have an opinion. I’ve given the speech that inspired this article six times to five different clubs. The best feedback I received was from someone who was at his second meeting and wasn’t a member yet.

“Less Common Mistake: Brady Bunch Evaluation

“John, your speech about your trip to Hawaii reminded me of the Brady Bunch episode where they went to Hawaii. Remember how Peter found the haunted Tiki and Alice hurt her back on the surfboard and... Three minutes pass. Anyway that was a great episode, wasn’t it?

“Making this mistake means you are not evaluating the speech at all, but instead talking about yourself or the Brady Bunch or anything but the speaker. I’ve never seen a full three-minute digression, but I have seen it take half an evaluation.

“While this is a less common mistake, it’s more obnoxious than the two above. Being too nice and the regurgitation mistakes are motivated by the understandable fear of hurting the speaker’s feelings. The Brady Bunch Evaluation is motivated by wanting to talk about yourself. Your job is to help the speaker. If you have an ego to satisfy, give a speech of your own. If your ego is boundless, name an evaluation scheme after yourself and publish it in the Toastmaster magazine.

“Worst Mistake: Too Harsh

“Though it may not be as common, the worst mistake by far is being too harsh in an evaluation.

“As the saying goes: When in doubt, omit. Avoid mentioning anything outside the speaker’s control. When evaluating newer speakers, don’t forget the sheer terror you probably felt when you were in their shoes.” ²⁷

Learning How to Evaluate

Encourage your protégé to:

Listen to every speech as if you were going to give the oral evaluation

Get yourself a cheap notebook to work in. When you arrive at a meeting, write each of the speech objectives from the agenda into your notebook. Leave yourself space to make notes. Add a section for suggestions you would offer.

During the speech, write out what you observed on each of the objectives. Then, during the oral evaluation, compare your notes to what the evaluator says. What did you miss? This provides you with feedback on things you need to observe more carefully. Did you catch something the evaluator missed? Good for you!

Observe the structure used by good evaluators

Did the evaluator follow any kind of basic outline? Was the structure effective? Why or why not?

Discuss your evaluation notes with your mentor

The best time to do this is immediately after the meeting. Make arrangements before the night of the meeting to go out for coffee with your mentor after the meeting.

Note-Taking Techniques

There are several methods your protégé can utilize for note-taking as they listen to a speech and prepare for their evaluation. Below are a few suggestions. Your protégé should absolutely experiment and develop their own style.

- ***The Blank Sheet:*** Simply watch and listen and write down anything you see, hear, and feel. Make sure you take note of both positive items and points of improvement.
- ***Two Columns:*** Have a note paper with two columns, one with the heading + or positives, the other with the heading – or points of improvement
- ***Quadrants:*** Make a large + on your notepaper. Label the top left quadrant “Excellent,” the top right “Very Good,” the bottom left “Good,” and the bottom right “Improve.”
- ***Graph:*** Make a large + on your notepaper. Label the left column with a +, the right column with a -, the top row with “Delivery,” and the bottom row with “Content.”
- ***3 Points:*** Have 3 sections and comment on the following items: Speech objectives, Suggestions for improvement, Good things (what the speaker did well).

Evaluation Presentation Techniques

Your protégé will probably need to experiment with different presentation techniques to figure out what their style is going to be like throughout their Toastmasters experience. Below are a few popular techniques for you to suggest. You may want to encourage your protégé to strive to have a clear introduction and conclusion to their evaluations.

- ***Sandwich (or Oreo) Technique***

“The basic technique is as follows:

1. Begin the evaluation by highlighting **strengths** demonstrated by the speaker.
2. Then, discuss **areas for improvement** for the speaker.
3. Conclude by highlighting additional **strengths** of the presentation.

“The critical feedback is *sandwiched* between positive comments. The theory is that the speaker will be more receptive to listening to (and acting on) the criticism if positive statements surround it.

“This is a good basic formula for novice speech evaluators. It is the first method recommended in many Toastmasters clubs.”²⁸

- ***G.I.F.T. Technique***

“**G**ood: Mention things the speaker did well. E.g. “Your use of gestures was excellent.

“**I**nform: Inform the speaker about what worked, how it was accomplished and why it worked. Illustrate your point in a straightforward way that will be easily understood by the speaker and the audience. Use this as an opportunity to inform the audience about what the speaker did that really worked.

“**F**ix: Use constructive suggestions to highlight areas for improvement. E.G. “I believe that had you limited your talk to 4 main points... you would not have to rush so much. You could have then slowed right down when touching on the key ideas, to really emphasize them.

“**T**hank: Thank the speaker for the benefits the speech had for the audience. This refers to the audience-related purpose of the speech – such as to persuade, inspire, inform, or entertain. E.g. “Thank you for helping us all better understand the rationale for providing tax breaks to professional hockey teams.”²⁹

- ***Anchor Techniques***

The Metaphor

The District 3 2010 evaluation contest winner utilized this technique very gracefully. A lot of the components that make this an artistic way to present an evaluation may be prepared ahead of time. For example, take a musical theme. You can know ahead of time you will be presenting a musically-themed evaluation and choose the sub-themes ahead of time, such as harmony (possibly how the main ideas flowed together toward a clear speech purpose), tempo (the pace of the speech), dissonant chords (possible areas for improvement), and others.

There are many other metaphors you could use, from painting or sculpting a masterpiece to a bike ride in a park... the key is to be creative, yet with appropriate comparisons and most definitely with concrete positives and points of improvement.

Acrostic

This technique requires creativity and the ability to think reasonably fast and keep comments succinct. In this technique, the evaluator develops an acrostic related to the speech content, then integrates the speech positives and points of improvement into the acrostic.

For example, a member gives a 5-7 minute speech about her honeymoon vacation on an Alaskan cruise. Since the speech was about a honeymoon, a convenient related word could be **LOVE**.

The evaluator could talk about how the speaker used **L**ovely descriptive **L**anguage to tell the audience about the scenery throughout the cruise. The evaluator could go on to site the speaker's **O**utstanding use of gestures at key points in the speech, and superior **O**rganization. However, the evaluator feels the need to challenge the speaker in the area of **V**ocal **V**ariety, and perhaps utilize **V**isual aids that would have added to the descriptive language. The speech was made to be **E**ffective and **E**ntertaining, and simply **E**xcellent by the stories relayed about **E**xploring the state of Alaska.

As part of the conclusion, the evaluator could thank the speaker for sharing the **LOVE** with the audience and wish her decades of marital bliss.

This technique is challenging, but could be a fun stray from the standard sandwich evaluation technique. Be sure to choose a word that is both appropriate for the speech and short enough to fit in the evaluation timing requirements.

