



THE



DYNAMO

A quarterly publication by and for the members of Dynamic Speakers, Club 457
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Hot Potato For Table Topics?

By Mark Kramer

I often think that we think that Table Topics has a set methodology: The Table Topics Master stands up, asks a question, and someone answers it. It's this back and forth question and answer process that can result in some fascinating exchanges. But it's also routine. *Wouldn't it be fun to do something different for Table Topics?*

Surprise: You can!

At its very core, the purpose of Table Topics is to help members speak when they are unprepared. Answering an unanticipated question is certainly the most common way to practice it at a Toastmasters meeting. But other ways exist as well. Let's look at a few examples from some past meetings at Dynamic Speakers.

In a twist to the Q&A methodology, I filled a bag with crayons and asked Toastmasters, one at a time, to select a crayon from the bag at

random. I then asked each to describe the color and then explain why that color would be the best choice for: the official color of San Diego; for repainting their house; for their repainting their car; and so on. I made sure to rig the crayons so that only the most obscure colors (ex. cornflower) were in the bag. While I had prepared questions to ask, it was the colors that added an extra element of fun to the round.

Think; is there anything creative I can do to make Table Topics fun?

In the game "Clue," the object is to discover who murdered Mr. Body, in what room of a mansion it occurred, and with what weapon. Cards exist for each murder suspect, each room, and each potential murder weapon. Members selected one of each card and then provided a motive ...*(Continued on page 3)*

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Dynamic Speakers meets at **BAE SYSTEMS**,
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California every Wednesday from 11:30 AM
through 12:30 PM.

Meetings are open to non-BAE SYSTEMS
employees and visitors from the general
public are welcome. Please contact the
district five "talk" line at 619-233-talk for
more information, or try our web page at
<http://www.geocities.com/ATHENS/AEGEAN/4220/index.htm>

Club officers are:

Bob Pickett	- District Governor
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Leslie Osterman	- CoVP Education
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Sylvia Salomon	- VP Membership
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Thank you to All members of the
US Armed Forces for keeping our
freedoms alive while sacrificing
Your freedoms and Your very
lives!

It's more – An Editorial By Marc Weyl

First of I'd like to apologize for spelling Wayne Andersen's name wrong in the last Dynamo. That should never happen ... sorry!

As you read this Dynamo please note: both articles are by the SAME PERSON – Mark Kramer! Mark is the best member a club could have in that he is always there to fill the void ... again winning the most roles fulfilled in the last term even though he did not attend the most meetings!

We as a club are not doing so well ... most meetings the same few members show up. I can't remember the last meeting when even 3/4th of the entire membership list was at a meeting. The Toastmasters program only as good as what we as a club put into it.

TMI is more than just giving speeches! Part of the program is support and feedback from other members ... but where is that feedback if you are not there to listen to the other members? What if YOU gave a speech and nobody listened?

In the last election ... everyone ran unopposed! Even me – which is surprising after so many people wanted to quit (or me to quit) after reading my last editorial - but did I even get one letter to be published here? NO!

OK back to elections as I was typing before I interrupted myself – everyone ran unopposed – which is better than roles being unfulfilled. But where is the choice!?

I have challenges to the club – First I would like each of the new officers to write an article for the Dynamo – think of it as part of your leadership role. Second lets try to have a minimum of 80% attendance (only a low "B") at each meeting! Third – Everyone run for an office – serving will surprise you with additional rewards!

("Hot Potato" continued from page 1) as to why the selected person murdered Mr. Body in the selected room with the selected weapon. The stories told were fascinating.

Speaking of stories, telling a tandem story can sometimes be fun. We've seen a couple of examples where the Table Topics Master tells the first part of a story ... and then calls on a member to continue the story. That member continues the story and then calls on someone else to continue the story. This continues until the Table Topics Master tells someone to wrap-up the story.

How about the game Pictionary where the clue is to get your team to guess the meaning of a drawn object by another team member? How can it be used for Table Topics? I turned this into a Table Topics game by having a member choose one of the items on a card and draw it on the white board. All the other members had to guess what it was. The first to guess it correctly won the right to draw the next object. It didn't matter that the members weren't speaking for 30 seconds. What mattered was that they were speaking.

How about music? I once took instrumental TV themes and played them for members. Then I would ask a member to tell me what show the song came from and to tell us what the show was about. I included some obscure themes to ensure we heard about some great TV shows that never existed.

So if we can do music, how about movies? I once brought in a silent Bugs Bunny movie and chose one person to play Bugs, another to play Elmer Fudd, and a third to make sound effects. After about one minute, I chose three new members to take on the roles. I kept switching roles every minute or so throughout the film. This was truly a "cwack" up!

Okay, so I think you've got the picture here that Table Topics can be more than just questions and answers. So you're probably wondering

where "Hot Potato" comes in. There's a game called "Catch Phrase" where the object is to not be holding the "potato" when a buzzer goes off. The "potato" shows a word and you have to give clues to others to get them to say the word. As soon as someone says the word, you pass the "potato" to the next person, who pushes a button on the potato to get the next word. This is a fast paced game and hysterically funny at times.

So the next time you're the Table Topics Master, don't just think Q&A. Think: is there anything creative I can do to make Table Topics fun.

[Ed: And he does-Mark's TTs are always great!]

Table Topics Tips by Mark Kramer

At the November 14 Dynamic Speakers meeting, we discussed, as a group, tips to improve our responses during a question and answers Table Topics. Here are the tips that we came up with:

- Open up by saying "Thank you Table Topics Master" or "Thank you Table Topics Madam". This gives you a few more moments to come up with a reply.
- Write down the question to help you think about it more. Timing does not begin until you actually start speaking.
- Write down questions from previous meetings. They may arise again.
- Pause and collect your thoughts before answering. You won't be timed until you utter your first word.
- Give your answer as though it is a mini-speech. Include an opening, body, and conclusion.
- Ask for the question to be repeated. This will give you extra time to think about an answer and to make certain you understand the question.
- Repeat the question as part of your response to the question.
- Use the Word of the Day early in your response. (Continued on page 4)

(Tips continued from page 3)

- Try to be creative and answer "outside the box" with a silly or humorous response.
- Have fun with it!
- Be comfortable to laugh at yourself.
- Read more books and papers. Use this information in your responses.
- Prepare prior to the meeting. Questions usually revolve around the meeting theme. Before the meeting, consider what questions might be asked. What would you ask if you were the Table Topics Master?
- Improve your listening skills. Listen to how others respond to a question.
- Address the audience, not just the Table Topics Master during your reply.
- You don't have to be truthful in your reply. Make something up.
- Use facial expressions, body language, vocal variety, hand gestures, etc.
- You can always end your response with a question.
- Use humor.
- Listen carefully to the whole question.
- Breathe deeply and relax.
- Speak from experience rather than winging it, if possible.
- Enjoy your time in the limelight. No one else knows the response better than you.
- Look at it as a fun opportunity; not as a difficult challenge.
- There is no right or wrong answer.
- Don't answer the question! In Table Topics it is acceptable to say, "Yes, that's an important question, however, I think it is more important if I comment on..." and then talk about something else. [Ed: *I don't agree with this last point!*]