



# **Pathways**

The Way Forward...

District 41

Toastmasters International



In 2010, the Toastmasters Board of Directors crafted a five-year strategic plan that laid out the goals and objectives for the organization over the next five years. The plan's centerpiece? A call to revitalize the Toastmasters education program.

Much of the communication track hadn't been updated since the 1970s, and leadership became a separate track in 2005. The Board stressed the need to modernize the communication track and to renew the focus on leadership learning in the leadership track.

That original vision marked the beginning of a hugely ambitious effort to enhance the education program. The program aimed to offer members more opportunities to learn and grow, highlighted by greater access to educational materials, expanded tools and resources, and a customized learning experience designed to help individuals meet personal and professional goals. This new program was christened Pathways.

Pathways is *not* a departure from the current education program. It maintains Toastmasters' guiding principles and educational concepts. Club meetings will still be at the heart of the Toastmasters experience. The new program builds on the best of what we have now. It takes the education program to the next level, but at its foundation, Pathways is anchored in the vision of Toastmasters' founder Ralph C. Smedley. The educational content has been built and developed meticulously, grounded in the most current, effective principles of instructional design. In addition, the content has been thoroughly vetted by members, who have praised it as innovative, engaging and relevant to members' needs today.

Pathways was developed keeping in mind the following benefits:

- **Recognition** that comes earlier and more often in the educational journey
- **New technological resources** to improve speeches and support meeting roles
- **Mobile access** to educational materials (tablets)
- **Expanded video and digital content** to facilitate learning among our global community of members
- **Stronger evaluation and mentoring components**

Pathways team identified the five core competencies members can learn by participating in the new program:

- **Public Speaking**
- **Interpersonal Communication**
- **Leading and Managing**
- **Leading Strategically**
- **Building Confidence**

The Pathways team took *foundational competencies in the Competent Communication and Competent Leader manuals* (like learning basic speech structure, effective delivery and how to communicate well within a team) and built upon them. *The traditional* education program focused on 68 competencies; Pathways adds more than 250 competencies that members can learn.

Some of the new competencies are: understanding short- and long-term goals, speaking about personal strengths and weaknesses, answering questions effectively, leading with resourcefulness and flexibility, and demonstrating the value of volunteering.

Members advance through the paths in five levels of progressing complexity. The levels are defined this way:

- **Mastering Fundamentals**
- **Learning Your Style**
- **Increasing Knowledge**
- **Building Skills**
- **Demonstrating Expertise**

The idea of Pathways is to build on what you learnt in the previous level. The goal throughout the Pathways program is to not just learn, but to apply what you learn.

We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things. We cannot discover new oceans unless we lose sight of the shore. Pathways is the way forward. And we implore you to take the leap of faith and rekindle your Toastmasters journey with this new education program. It is bound to add new hues to your learning experience and existing skill sets.