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Cincinnati real estate broker could be named world's best public speaker

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Chris Nachtrab is going for the championship of public speaking at this week's Toastmasters International convention.

The largest public speaking contest in the world is coming to Cincinnati on Thursday. And that raises the question: Exactly what does it take to be the best public speaker in the world?

Toastmasters International will be bringing in the best of the best from around the world to compete for top honors at its Cincinnati convention. After six months of competition, 88 competitors have won a chance to vie for only nine slots in the final round. The event is expected to bring in more than 1,500 visitors from across the globe.

Contestants will choose their own topics and can speak for five to seven minutes. They will be judged on content, delivery and language; the Toastmasters judges manual advises judges to consider things like the speaker's body language, tone of voice and word choice, as well as the reaction of the audience to the speech.

After reading the entire Toastmasters judges manual, I realized how unnecessary it was to read the entire Toastmasters judges manual. But I still hadn't found the answers to my real questions: What does a winning speech look like? And more importantly, what kind of person can craft one?

Local commercial real estate broker [Chris Nachtrab](#) will be representing the Cincinnati area in the competition, and he agreed to give me some insight into what it takes to become a champion.

Nachtrab, of Everest Group, has been involved with Toastmasters for the last decade. He joined the Kenwood-area Toastmasters club (cleverly named Toast of the Town) when a former boss suggested he work on his communication skills. He never stopped going.

"It's a great way to practice new skills in a safe environment," he said of the club. He didn't say anything about his former boss, but I bet that guy is amazed at just how good Nachtrab's communication skills have become.



According to Nachtrab, Toastmasters attracts all kinds of characters. Some come with a goal, perhaps to deliver the world's best wedding toast. Others are there to stay on top of the newest developments in leadership and communication, and others are simply there for the friendships.

"Each club has its own personality," Nachtrab proudly informed me. I was surprised when he said that some of his former local rivals have now joined his team to help him prepare for the big event this Thursday, but I guess that shows that local Toastmasters members are truly rallying behind their hometown hero.

Each competitor in the upcoming semifinals has already had a taste of victory; he or she won quite a few "speech-offs" in order to make it to this competition. However, for overachievers like Nachtrab, the prep work is far from over. In fact, he'll be preparing his potential speech for the final round right up until he competes in the semifinals. And he'll use the tried and true speech he's been using since he began his journey to speech-giving glory, titled "The Box." This speech, like most other Toastmasters speeches, Nachtrab said, incorporates elements of humor and personal experience, as well as a call to action.

"The Box" is a story about an old, dusty box Nachtrab and his wife once came across in their home. The box's contents reminded the couple of times gone by, and the speech will drive home the message that the most valuable things in life are sometimes all too easy to forget. The tale will undoubtedly tug on some heartstrings; Nachtrab considers it his forte. But while connecting with an audience may be a simple task in a room of 15, he's concerned that a room of 1,500 will be a whole different story.

Speaking of different stories, Nachtrab is still working on the second speech he may have to deliver. The days standing between him and the competition are dwindling, and the second speech is still not quite where he wants it, he said. He lamented that writing and developing a speech is such a challenge for him. (I sighed in sympathy, not mentioning that it's taken me a week to write and develop this particular tale.) The new speech is about his experience volunteering for City Gospel Mission and working with adults who are recovering from substance abuse. As he talked about his struggle to find the perfect hook, the perfect story arc, it was obvious that this is not a guy who leaves any detail unchecked or any passion un conveyed.

When asked how long he has been preparing for this moment, Nachtrab didn't miss a beat. He's been preparing since 1984, when he joined the speech team at Sycamore High School.

Despite the bright lights, the ticking clock and the title at stake, Nachtrab doesn't seem too anxious.

"It's all about the experience of being there," he said, "It's a very subjective contest. It's not a race; I can't outrun anyone."

Maybe I've just been sucked in by Nachtrab's oratory, but after our conversation, I can't help but feel like that's the kind of guy I want representing my city in the world's largest public speaking contest. As corny as it is, the man becomes a winner just by getting on stage and sharing his experiences. And if he ever decides that he really does want to outrun someone, he could always try the Flying Pig Marathon.

The competition will be held at the Duke Energy Convention Center. Semifinals will be held on Thursday, Aug. 22, between 2:30 and 9 p.m., and finals will take place on Saturday, Aug. 24, at 8:30 a.m.