

Getting your competitive edge

When I joined Toastmasters, my mentor, Gary Harper told me about the value of competition. He said, "Hooey, if you want to get good, get into competition."

There are reasons why competition can be a success tool in honing your skills and moving them to another level. One of course, would be that competition itself will pull something *extra* out of you. The stretch of being competitive can be a benefit. The other benefit is the potential of winning and getting the opportunity to hone a speech through 3 levels of competition. Each time it gets tighter, more focused and perhaps even funnier.

I had the privilege coaching Region 4 champion, Rowena Romero for the World Championships in Toronto. She was diligent in working and fine tuning her speech. We went through countless re-writes, phone calls, and two trips to Calgary to see and coach on-site before she was satisfied and ready to take it to Toronto.

I can hardly wait to see the DVD. From all reports, she may not have won the contest, but she won the hearts of the audience. I was so impressed by her commitment to giving her best and to allowing me to work with her.

That brings me to my real point for writing.

When competing, it is important to maintain your focus on giving the audience something of value. Your job as a speaker is to deliver your best possible presentation (that day). Giving a presentation, structured and directed to delivering *definite benefits* to those in the audience.

The judge's job is to listen to each speaker and pick the top three presentations. Competitors will *lose* when they try to do the judges' job.

As I told Rowena (*and myself each time I speak*), trust the process, do your homework and know there is someone in the audience who needs to hear what you have to say. Speak to that person, even though you may never know who they are, or how you helped them. That is the win, and that is what motivates me.

Our real competition is with ourselves. Are you better today than you were the last time you spoke? Did the value you bring to the stage increase? The competitive edge is pushing yourself to be better than you've ever been before.

Enjoy the competitions....But remember the real prize is winning the hearts and minds of your audience.

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Bob ‘Idea Man’ Hooey, DTM, A/S is a former D21 (BC) Governor who became the 48th person in Toastmasters history to earn our coveted professional level Accredited Speaker designation. He has been inducted into TM Hall of Fame on numerous occasions for his leadership and contributions. He is the D42 Executive Leadership Coach. Visit: <http://www.fullofhooey.com> or <http://www.ideaman.net>