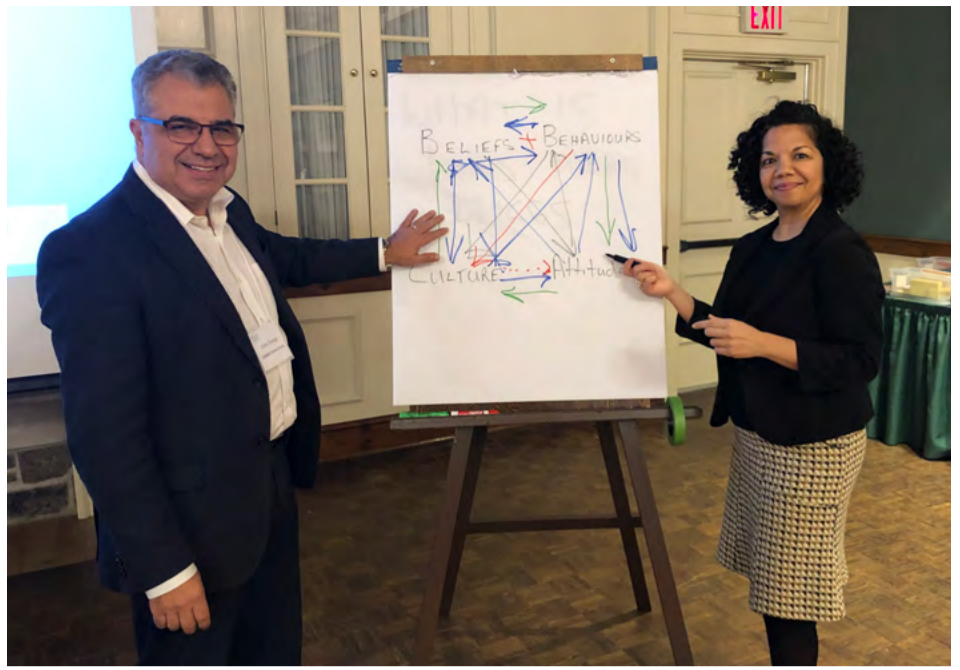


# Finding their voice



COG Information Exchange Director John Sowagi (left) and Administrative Assistant Anjana Mistry believe public speaking and presentation skills support professional development and continuous improvement.

***At in-house CAN-DO Public Speaking sessions, COG employees gain valuable presentation skills that provide staff with personal professional development while at the same time strengthening the company as a whole.***

**L**ike any new learning within the nuclear industry, success in presentation and interpersonal skills is achieved through continuous improvement.

In September, incremental progress was the focus of an interactive public speaking workshop held for employees at the CANDU Owners Group (COG) offices. Each COG attendee at the CAN-DO Public Speaking meeting delivered a short presentation, which was recorded on video and followed by constructive feedback from workshop instructor and COG's Director of Information Exchange, John Sowagi. A long-time presenter himself, Sowagi is mentoring the participants to help them find their voice with benefits that reach beyond personal development.

"Strong presentation skills help our staff to better advance the goals of our members and the industry," says Sowagi. "When they can confidently, clearly and effectively convey how COG collaboration is helping to advance research and drive innovation, our members and partners benefit."

Since the spring, COG's CAN-DO Public Speaking group has met bi-monthly, covering a range of presentation techniques including platform skills, body language, voice control and harnessing nervousness.

The idea to launch the club came from Jullaine Hardinge, an administrative assistant in COG's R&D line of business, who wanted to improve her own presentation skills and support COG colleagues who may also face fears around public speaking.

"COG is a project-driven environment and we all need to be able to facilitate and communicate clearly and effectively," says Hardinge. "At one point or another, we might be hesitant to share ideas because we are too nervous, we fear a negative reaction or don't feel equipped to communicate our thoughts. Having struggled with those feelings myself, I brought this idea to John [Sowagi] so that we could offer these skills to the COG team and strengthen the organization at the same time.

"To learn these valuable skills in an industry-focussed setting has been beneficial and rewarding," she adds.

The CAN-DO Public Speaking group will host their next workshop in November.



Jullaine Hardinge, COG R&D Administrative Assistant had the idea to launch a public speaking club to support her colleagues and boost their skills.

## Tips for public speaking from Toastmasters International

- 1. Know your material.**  
When possible, speak about a topic you're interested in and know a lot about. Reinforce your message with facts and statistics, if possible.
- 2. Make it personal.**  
Use humour, personal anecdotes and conversational language to make your speech engaging.
- 3. Practice makes permanent.**  
Rehearse your speech aloud using any equipment and/or visual aids you'll use during your presentation. Rehearse as often as you can.
- 4. Time yourself.**  
Time your speech every time you rehearse it to ensure you don't go over the time limit.
- 5. Pace yourself.**  
People tend to rush when they're nervous, so practice keeping your speech at a calm, steady pace.