



Sample Retirement Speeches

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Introduction – “Tongue-Tied - Jim’s challenge”

When Jim came to see me for retirement coaching, he looked worried. “When is the big night I asked,” referring to his retirement party. “Don’t remind me,” he replied, “I wish it was over.”

To say Jim wasn’t looking forward to his retirement speech was an understatement.

“I was never comfortable giving presentations and avoided speaking to groups whenever possible, even at management meetings.”

“Do you know that the Book of Lists ranks fear of public speaking higher than death,” he questioned.

“That’s because on any given day you are more likely to be called upon to speak, than to die,” I quipped!

When he told me how he sometimes felt prior to a presentation, I thought-well bless my soul; he sounded All Shook Up, like the King (of Rock and Roll).

*“My hands are shaky and my knees are weak
I can’t seem to stand on my own two feet...”*

*“My tongue gets tied when I try to speak
My insides shake like a leaf on a tree”*

I reminded him that his retirement function was an occasion to be cherished and enjoyed.

“You are not going to be mugged, as your fight or flight symptoms suggest! You are among friends, and you will rarely have a more supportive audience. They want you to succeed. You are an expert on the topic and the star of the show! This is your fifteen minutes of fame...go for it!”

“I can’t make a Toastmaster of you overnight Jim, but I guarantee that if you follow some of the simple tips on this eBook you’ll enjoy your retirement dinner.”

We talked a little bit about the origin of his fear of public speaking and he found it helpful to remind himself that his concerns could be focused and contextualised-that he was not nervous in all situations. For example, he loved ‘presenting’ the day he won the captain’s prize at the golf club! I asked him what he was afraid of (Being the centre of attention), why he was afraid (It might go wrong, they will be bored), and then allayed or disputed his concerns.

At the end of the coaching session he said, “I really love your positive approach - it reminded me to focus on my strengths as the keys to success versus worrying about areas where I’m not particularly proficient. It was a breath of fresh air and I found it quite empowering to remember what I do well.”

(I was using some of the techniques from my training in Neuro-Linguistic Programming and Hypnosis. If the fear is chronic and severe clients will benefit from this approach, as well as the practical tips and techniques, to combat what is after all an irrational fear.)

I met Jim the week after his retirement dinner. The speech went well. "Thanks Greg, I think I might even join Toastmasters, as one of my retirement hobbies!"

It's a wonderful feeling for the speaker, and the audience, when a talk goes well!

Writing Your Retirement Speech.

When I work with clients on their retirement speeches in my coaching practice, we usually work with the following guidelines. They are based upon my learning as an "Accomplished Toastmaster" within Toastmasters International, my personal experience of listening to sample retirement speeches, and of writing and delivering my own retirement speech.

Your retirement function is an occasion to be cherished and enjoyed. It's helpful to remember that you are among friends, and that rarely will you have a more supportive audience. They want you to succeed. You are the star of the show!

The content and your delivery should reflect your personality. Humour can give your speech new interest and sparkle, but you should feel under no compulsion to use focus on purely humorous retirement speeches. It is not essential to an entertaining speech. Don't try it if you are not confident of your ability to use it well.

Know your audience. Are you speaking to close work colleagues or to a more general company wide audience?

What tone is appropriate to the occasion, formal or informal?

Be sincere, avoid exaggerated sentiment.

Have a central theme or message - I will miss you, but I'm positive about my future.

Be brief, 5-7 minutes maximum, 2-3 might be sufficient.

The content of your speech should include the following:

- Thank your colleagues for their support in your career and personal life - have a look at my "too-long" draft 1 retirement speech in the next section.
- Refer to some career highlights
- Tell them about your future plans in a positive and upbeat tone.
- Wish them and the company well.

Here are some additional tips for successful public speaking:

- Know the room.
- Know the audience.
- Know your material-practice and revise.
- Relax.
- Visualise yourself giving the speech.
- Realise that people want you to succeed.
- Don't apologise.
- Concentrate on the message-focus your attention outwards.
- Turn nervousness into positive energy.
- Gain experience.

My Own Retirement Speech Draft 1.

The following is a sample of the Retirement Speech I wrote when I started [retirement coaching](#). The purpose was to visualise that day 2 years into the future and to put some thought around how I wish to be remembered.

Friends, colleagues...and that's what you've been friends and colleagues. When I joined this company, over 25 years ago, to be honest I didn't think I'd ever get to make this speech!

I had a varied career before I joined, including working in Africa and working for a US Multi-National. I was 34 and very ambitious. I liked the Multi National environment and was open to the possibility of working abroad again. KPMG recommended me for the new role of Finance Director. At the same time I was on the final interview for a prestigious Multi National subsidiary. I consulted with some friends, and to my surprise they urged me take the job in what was then a small family business. Well that turned out to be the best career advice I ever got!

Why do I say that? Because working here fulfilled as many of my career and life ambitions as any other job I could imagine. Sure I had options and could have taken a very different path, but I have no regrets whatever about the choice I made, and in consequence "the life I didn't live".

Nothing succeeds like success, and this company has been a wonderful success story. I'm privileged to have been part of that success, along with the people in this room and other people no longer with us.

I was given the opportunity to use many of my talents. I was always interested in learning and personal development. My parents and mentors fostered this in me. Within two years of joining this company I was supported in my desire to do an MBA. My Thesis was a case study on the company and I paid particular attention to Marketing and Business Policy. This became a roadmap for my role in the company's development.

By the time I graduated in 1986 the company was changing and the need for Marketing in a more formal way was becoming apparent. This fitted my ambitions perfectly. The MBA gave me the tools and the academic framework, I knew the jargon! I volunteered to manage the marketing function. So you see I was able to change and expand my career without changing companies.

I said I was interested in learning and apart from the MBA, which was a major commitment; I was also supported in many shorter courses at the Irish Management Institute. In fact I attended some form of training every two years. I know the company also benefited from this, but I never took it for granted and I'm grateful for the support.

Another reason why I'm grateful for my career here is because the company values of quality, integrity, honesty and fair play were so aligned with mine. I never had to do anything that even remotely compromised my values. Indeed I hope I supported and strengthened the company values.

During my time here I enjoyed excellent Work/Life balance as my family can attest. I always did my best and the demands of the job were always reasonable. I didn't

have to work long hours but I worked all the time I was at work. It's no coincidence that a man of my potential still plays off a 20 handicap! I was president of Rotary and was active in Toastmasters. I was always grateful and respectful for that work/life balance and made sure I gave back what I received.

I want to acknowledge all the people I worked with over the last 26 years. Wonderful colleagues who gave me great personal and career support. We had lots of fun and conversations, and you listened patiently to my stories!

Thank you for sharing this celebration dinner with me and thank you for the support and friendship over 26 years.

I believe that this great company will continue to grow and prosper and I trust that each one of you will be happy and fulfilled here. Keep up the good work; you've been a wonderful team to work with.

Thanks for everything, I shall miss you.

And now you may be interested in seeing how my actual retirement speech went!

My Own Retirement Speech – Final Version.

The following sample retirement speech is own Retirement Speech:

There hasn't been a day in 26 years that I didn't want to come to work here, because I loved my job and I enjoyed working with you. What a blessing to be able to say that!

You have been my second family and you have supported me in my career and in my personal life. You listened to my stories about the birth of my children and you cared when my mother entered the nursing home.

I'm going to miss you all ... the fun and arguments we had at the tea break, listening to the "hurler on the ditch" on Monday morning telling us how the match should have gone.

My career was challenging and rewarding. I did my best and I was well rewarded in kind and in friendship. I was privileged to be part of a team which achieved success that we can all be proud of.

I'm looking forward to my new career as a Business and Personal Coach, with a particular emphasis on [retirement coaching](#).

I'm also looking forward to having the time and the freedom to pursue my hobbies and interests including writing, travel, golf and hanging out with family and friends.

Imagine the joy of travelling without an agenda, followed by a trip report, leisurely lunches without worrying you might be sleepy in the afternoon and no more anxious phone calls from our customers. Yes, there are compensations in life's transitions!

Thank you for sharing this celebration dinner with me and thank you for the support and friendship over 26 years.

I believe that this great company will continue to grow and prosper and I trust that each one of you will be happy and fulfilled here. Keep up the good work; you've been a wonderful team to work with.

Thanks for everything, I shall miss you.

A Humorous Retirement Speech – “Retirement, Never!”

This funny retirement speech, entitled Retirement? Never! by Roy Fenstermaker, DTM, was the winner of the 1983 Toastmaster International Speech Contest. Roy was 77 at the time he made the speech. I have found his poignant and funny retirement advice to be very useful to myself. I hope you enjoy it! This sample Retirement speech is reprinted here with the permission of Toastmaster International Magazine.

There is a commercial on Television these days which shows a gentleman, apparently just returned from his office retirement party, walking through the front door and saying to his wife: “Honey, I’m home ... forever!”

Imagine the look on his wife’s face. And what does he have to look forward to? Happiness? Joy? Relief? The end of a working life! Perpetual unemployment! Deterioration! Stagnation! Decay!

Luckily, most of you people - especially homemakers-don’t have that problem. You never retire. But for all career men and women, my advice is: Avoid retirement as you would poison ivy in a nudist camp.

By “retirement” I mean the sudden stoppage of work, going from the dynamic career to the doldrums, from vigour to vegetation.

If you are seriously thinking about quitting your job, and have no ready replacement for it, permit me to offer you several practical suggestions: One, don’t quit! Two, keep busy! And three, don’t look back!

First of all, don’t quit! Maggie Kuhn, the founder of the Grey Panthers organisation, once said: “Ours is a throwaway society, and we do it with people as well as machines.”

Unfortunately, sometimes we do it ourselves, when we quit work prematurely. How often have you heard about men and women having heart attacks, shortly after retiring? Why? Because not infrequently, the retirement itself is more distressful than the work it was supposed to replace.

If I had my say, every pension check would carry a warning: “This retirement may be hazardous to your health.”

My second point is a corollary to the first: keep busy! You’ve got to keep working, one way or another. You’ve got to have a goal in life in order to survive.

There are a number of options available: employment, leisure, volunteerism...take your pick.

If you choose employment, why not become a management consultant-like everyone else. All it takes is a title, a phone number and 500 business cards.

If you need a title, be imaginative. I know an auto mechanic who is now a "vehicle maintenance engineer." He repairs my Toyota-and drives a Mercedes.

If you need a degree, that's simple for you Toastmasters. All you have to do is complete the Basic Communication and Leadership Manual, and put CTM (Competent Toastmaster) behind your name. For all anyone knows, CTM means "Master of Computer Technology," and that's pretty important these days.

Another way to keep busy is by what I call "purposeful leisure." Too often people think of leisure as the absence of work. Nonsense! It's productive labour. Do you realise how much green fees and golf cart fees, for example, contribute to the gross national product? Billions! You golfers out there, men and women, tell your spouses that when you get up at four o'clock in the morning.

The best way to keep busy, of course, is by volunteer service. There must be a hundred thousand organisations out there that could use your help right now. They won't discriminate against you because of your grey hair-or the lack of it, you grey panthers and bald eagles.

If you run out of ideas, try coordinating Speechcraft and Youth Leadership, the finest programs ever invented, for the training of the young-of all ages, and I might add, for the rejuvenation of jaded Toastmasters.

Which brings me to my third point: don't look back! James M. Barrie, the author of Peter Pan, once wrote: "God gave us memories, so that we could have roses in December." Roses, not regrets. Nursing homes are filled with people who cling to their regrets like security blankets.

Don't look back and look down. Life isn't a vicious circle. It's a rising spiral, a cornucopia of opportunities. (Grandma Moses, Buckminster Fuller, Col. Sanders, Pablo Casals and our own Cavett Robert and Roy Graham are models of geriatric initiative.)

Pablo Casals at 90, for example, when asked why he practiced eight hours a day, replied: "I think I'm improving."

Just last week I heard of a Toastmaster who spent his first Social Security check on

lessons in hang gliding. That's the spirit!

What it all adds up to is this: we can't quit. We can't retire from life. It's too precious. We've got to keep working, whether for money, fun or glory. And above all we mustn't look back.

Retirement? Never!

It's never too late to learn-to grow-to create, to do all the wonderful things we had no time for in our youth. This is what the last third of life is about.

It's a time of discovery, when we really begin to see, perhaps for the first time, the providence of God, the love of family, friends and neighbours-even Toastmasters-and sometimes we even catch a glimpse of our own potential...still...to do great deeds.

Life, my friends, is not a candle flickering in the breeze. It's a torch to light new flames.

Retirement Quotations.

You might want to include some of the following in your Retirement Speech - or combine with some Retirement Jokes. Enjoy!

There's one thing I always wanted to do before I quit ... retire!

Groucho Marx

Few men of action have been able to make a graceful exit at the appropriate time.

Malcolm Muggeridge

Half our life is spent trying to find something to do with the time we have rushed through life trying to save.

Will Rogers

Forever, and forever, farewell, Cassius! If we do meet again we shall smile, if not, then this parting was well made

William Shakespeare.

When one door closes, another one opens, but we often look so long and regretfully at the closed door that we fail to see the one that has opened for us.

Alexander Graham Bell.

There are an enormous number of managers who have retired on the job.

Peter F. Drucker

When a man retires and time is no longer a matter of urgent importance, his colleagues generally present him with a watch. R C Sherriff.

The best time to start thinking about your retirement is before the boss does.

Anonymous

The question isn't at what age I want to retire, it's at what income. George Foreman

Today we would like to thank Albert for his service to our company. Albert is someone who does not know the meaning of impossible task, who does not know the meaning of lunch break, who does not understand the meaning of the word no. So we have clubbed together and bought Albert a dictionary.

Golfers never retire, they just lose their drive Accountants don't retire, they just lose their balance Bank managers don't retire, they just lose interest

Three elderly gentlemen were talking about what their grandchildren would be saying about them fifty years from now.

"I would like my grandchildren to say- he was successful in business", declared the first man.

"Fifty years from now", said the second, "I want them to say, he was a loyal family man."

Turning to the third gent, the first gent asked, "so what do you want them to say about you in fifty years?"

The third man replied. "I want them all to say, he certainly looks good for his age!"

Retirement Speech – To a Retiree 1.

A retirement speech is different from a retirement toast. A retirement toast may be quite brief, less than a minute, incorporating one or two sentences. It is usually delivered at the retirement party and involves raising a glass to honour the retiree.

A retirement speech is much longer and may be delivered at the retirement party, or elsewhere, by the retiree's boss or co-worker.

Because of my experience as a Toastmaster I am often asked to deliver a speech on special occasions. I have presented the Key Note address at conferences, spoken at the hundredth anniversary of my former company's founding, presented awards for long service and accepted awards for golfing success!

I was privileged to deliver a retirement speech honouring the managing director of the ACME Company. Yes, that American Company that Makes Everything, including Widgets! In this example, imagine the speech is being delivered at the annual sales and marketing conference, attended by the retiree's co-workers.

Allow me to point out certain features regarding the construction of the speech:

- I refer to his place in the company history
- I mention some of his achievements
- I acknowledge some personal qualities
- I note some lessons I learned from him
- I express appreciation for our association
- I refer to the future
- I wish him well
- I conclude in a positive and optimistic manner, with a humorous quote
- The tone and language suits the occasion
- It is sincere
- Time- five to seven minutes
- (I avoid references to age, conflict, ill health or finances)

Poking fun at the retiree in a good natured way -The Roast - may be appropriate in some settings and with some audiences. However this requires great skill with humour and satire, if offence or embarrassment is to be avoided.

And the person giving the speech must be comfortable with this approach - I would not be. You could ask someone close to the retiree to review your material to ensure that it is acceptable.

Retirement Speech to a Retiree - 2

THE BEST IS YET TO COME

When John Smith joined the ACME Company, black and white television had just arrived in Ireland and a new Liverpool pop group, called the Beatles, were top of the charts with a song called "Hard Days Night." Place in ACME Company History.

When we look back on the history of the ACME Company, we find that different people featured in prominent ways at various times. JJ Doe, the founder, Jane Doe the award winning inventor and Philip Doe who saw the commercial potential for wholesaling Widgets. But the 1980s belonged to John Smith and it is my pleasure and privilege to pay tribute to this era. Everyone in this room, from our longest serving employee to our newest recruit has contributed to Acme's success, but this talk is dedicated to John.

Achievements:

John has steered the company through times of great change from the early days of helping out in the factory or assisting with sales and distribution. He was appointed General Manager in 1980, and over the following 20 years he would oversee many defining moments and major developments.

(Here I gave a few examples of the metamorphosis in manufacturing, distribution and trading style, and the conviction and consistency with which the Brand Strategy was followed.)

Personal qualities:

John was firm, fair, and consistent-you knew where you stood with him and if you got a telling off, you most likely deserved it, and once said it was over and done with. He was very good at encouraging initiative and cultivating team work and the company displayed tremendous entrepreneurial flair during the 1980s and 1990s. He was a good listener and delegator, it was as if he followed the maxim "The best way to keep power is to share it, and the best way to influence is to listen."

Lessons for us:

John didn't have any great business philosophy that I could discern-he just seemed to concentrate on getting the basics right.

I guess that using your talents and leaving a legacy is something we all desire to do and John has succeeded in doing this.

And yet he was almost self-effacing in seeking recognition for his achievements. One of the nice things I have heard said about John is that he is essentially the same person who joined The ACME Company all those years ago.

ACME Company is a better place to be because of John's efforts. Let's hope we can all say that when our time comes.

The future:

My final tribute is to say that such is the strength of the foundation that he has lain that I believe we can all face the future with confidence under Kevin's leadership. (His successor)

John, I have called my toast "The best is yet to come" and I hope that sentiment holds good for you personally and for the company that bears your influence. Enjoy your retirement hobbies-golf, hill walking, travel and whatever new activities you turn to.

John is retiring from ACME Company, but there is a new world of business, leisure, and voluntary opportunities waiting. There are dozens of organisations who would value his talents and skills.

I know he is well prepared for this transition, having worked with a retirement coach over the last year.

John, I'm reminded of the words of Horace the Roman poet...

"You have played enough, you have eaten and drunk enough, now is the time to depart"

Congratulations on a wonderful career, and best wishes for the next phase-it has been our pleasure to know you and to work with you.

To yourself and Jane, I wish you long life, health, and happiness together.

The wheel has come full circle and it's time to begin again. I said at the outset that "Hard Days Night" was top of the charts when you joined ACME, it's been "A Long and Winding Road" and now you've got a "Ticket To ride!"

Retirement Jokes.

You might want to include some of the following in your Retirement Speech - or combine with some Retirement Quotations. Enjoy!

Question: When is a retiree's bedtime?

Answer: Three hours after he falls asleep on the couch.

Question: How many retirees does it take to change a light bulb?

Answer: Only one, but it might take all day.

Question: What's the biggest gripe of retirees?

Answer: There is not enough time to get everything done.

Question: Why don't retirees mind being called Seniors?

Answer: The term comes with a 10% percent discount.

Question: Among retirees what is considered formal attire?

Answer: Tied shoes.

Question: Why do retirees count pennies?

Answer: They are the only ones who have the time.

Question: What is the common term for someone who enjoys work and refuses to retire?

Answer: NUTS!

Question: Why are retirees so slow to clean out the basement, attic or garage?

Answer: They know that as soon as they do, one of their adult kids will want to store stuff there.

Question: What do retirees call a long lunch?

Answer: Normal.

Question: What is the best way to describe retirement?

Answer: The never ending Tea Break.

Question: What's the biggest advantage of going back to school as a retiree?

Answer: If you cut classes, no one calls your parents.

Question: Why does a retiree often say he doesn't miss work, but misses the people he used to work with?

Answer: He is too polite to tell the whole truth.

Retirement Toasts.

A Retirement Toast is a special kind of speech presented to honour a co-worker. The occasion involves sentiment and ritual.

A retirement toast is different from a retirement speech. A retirement toast may be quite brief, less than a minute, incorporating one or two sentences. It is usually delivered at the retirement party and involves raising a glass to honour the retiree.

A typical toast will bestow best wishes as well as hopes for health, happiness, and good fortune. The words may be serious, witty, or sentimental and should never inadvertently cause embarrassment.

Keep the following tips in mind when preparing a toast:

- A toast should have a beginning, middle and end.#
- It should be personalised through stories, anecdotes or quotes
- The tone and language must fit the occasion
- Be sincere. But don't do a whitewash!
- Don't embarrass anyone
- Time-maximum two to three minutes

Toasting Etiquette:

- Stand and look about the room until you have everyone's attention
- Gently tap a glass to indicate the toast is about to begin
- Say, "I wish to propose a toast to..."
- Give the toast, as everyone lifts their glasses, making eye contact with the guests and finish by looking at the retiree
- The retiree remains seated and does not drink with the others
- After the toast the retiree briefly thanks the attendees in a modest and dignified manner.

(I wish to acknowledge my membership of Toastmasters International, and my participation

in their advanced communications programs as the source of some of the tips and techniques outlined above).

Peak performance when delivering your speech

Sit comfortably, with both feet on the floor, and **relax**

Mentally repeat an affirmation such as-“This is going to be the best speech I have ever given”.

Awareness of self and audience - look, listen, and feel.

Breathe

Pause as you are called to speak

Rise slowly and walk confidently to lectern

Stop, Centre yourself, look around at the audience, and smile!

Memorise opening line

Begin strongly, a lower pitch sounds more relaxed and confident.

You have the right to command attention, everybody has. You are entitled to be heard, seen, noticed, respected and acknowledged.

*When you are claiming that right **Presence** has three phases:*

Establishing-Maintaining-Ending.

Stop-Breathe-Look-Listen-Feel

Stop: Take time to settle down, and also allow the audience to adjust to your arrival.

Breathe: Take a deep breath before you begin

Look: This is an opportunity to make real contact with your audience and vice versa. Notice the way people are sitting, what they are doing. This is an assertive act to which your audience will respond.

Listen: Notice the air conditioning, or people shuffling or coughing. This will tell you when to start.

Feel: Take stock of how you are feeling. Acknowledge some anxiety.

To Finish - Seamus Heaney at 70

Not strictly a retirement speech, but I find that the retirement sentiments are exquisite.

The following is an extract from Seamus Heaney's (Noble Prize-winning Irish Poet) speech on the occasion of his 70th birthday celebration.

"... Much therefore comes full circle this evening. Friends whose work and whose company have helped me across the stepping stones of life. Friends and family are here, all of you are here. All of this is beyond expectation, but I no longer have mixed feelings, this is a totally luminous occasion.

And if the wheel has come full circle, that only means that the wheel is about to turn once more. This birthday, in other words, isn't just about keeping going - it is about getting started again. Tomorrow morning my inner Antaeus have to rise as usual to meet my inner Hercules!

So I'm utterly grateful for the tonic of the tributes and the proceedings. They are not retirement presents, but ratifications and refreshments.

Thanks to them, thanks to you, I will continue to live obligated and elevated, more happily than ever, ever after."

Seamus Heaney.

I trust the you will enjoy your once-in-a-lifetime Retirement Speech – Best of Wishes, Greg.