When J-LIVE Talk began in 2015, we wanted to create a "Speech Competition for the 21st Century." We thought that with the exception of top government leaders, formal speeches had become a thing of the past. In the old days, speeches could last for one or even two hours. But in today's world, people can lose attention after 20 minutes. Today listeners want to feel engaged, involved, connected, and even entertained.

For most of us, formal speeches therefore are a thing of the past. But today, no matter where you are or what your job is, everyone makes presentations -- in the classroom, in offices, in conferences, and online. So we wanted to update the skill set that is required for successful communication in the 21st century -- and to add on the Japanese language component. How well can students make an effective and even entertaining presentation in Japanese, and also engage the audience? And then, how well can they communicate and answer questions afterward from a Japanese audience?

We were inspired by the TED Talks and the works of Garr Reynolds, an American professor in Japan who wrote a number of books, including "Zen Presentation." Both the TED talks and Professor Reynolds focus on how to make your presentations concise, entertaining, informative, and to have a clear personal message and point of view. And most important of all, to know how to engage and involve the audience. Today the audience can hardly wait to ask questions and express their own views.

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, this year we cannot have an "in-person" competition. But one thing we have learned during our current situation is that online presentations have become just as important. It is another way to accomplish our goal of effective communication. But it also requires some other skill sets, often technical.

We believe that even after the pandemic has gone, many future interactions will take place online, rather than in-person. And that might prove even truer for communication between the United States and Japan, given the distance between our countries. Through online presentations, Japan's connections to the world can increase. And this year, you can join with us at J-LIVE Talk to show that is possible.

Thanks to the many online meeting technologies that have been developed recently, the possibility for us in the US to strengthen our communication with the Japanese people truly has increased. And we hope that J-LIVE Talk 2020 will demonstrate that. So we plan to stream J-LIVE Talk 2020 live, from Washington DC to Japan, this November!

We look forward to you joining us this November.

Sincerely,

John R. Malott

Ambassador (Ret.) John R. Malott