



The Worldwide Pioneer in Communication and Leadership Development

Toastmasters then... and now

Toastmasters International is a nonprofit educational organization that teaches communication and leadership skills through a worldwide network of clubs. The organization currently has more than 260,000 members in over 12,500 clubs in 113 countries. Since its founding in October 1924, by Ralph C. Smedley in Santa Ana, California, the organization has helped more than 4 million men and women lead and communicate with poise and confidence. Today, organizations around the world recognize the value of incorporating Toastmasters training to help employees improve their communication and leadership skills.

Mission

Toastmasters International is the leading movement devoted to making effective oral communication a worldwide reality. Through its member clubs, Toastmasters International helps men and women learn the arts of speaking, listening, and thinking – vital skills that promote self-actualization, enhance leadership potential, foster human understanding, and contribute to the betterment of mankind. It is basic to this mission that Toastmasters International continually expand its worldwide network of member clubs, thereby offering ever-greater numbers of people the opportunity to benefit from its programs.

Vision

Toastmasters International empowers people to achieve their full potential and realize their dreams. Through its member clubs, people throughout the world can improve their communication and leadership skills, and find the courage to change.

Values

Toastmasters International's core values are integrity, dedication to excellence, service to the member and respect for the individual. Our core values provide us with a means of guiding and evaluating our operations, our planning, and our vision for the future.

Toastmasters Then

In 1924, Dr. Ralph C. Smedley held the first official [Toastmasters](#) meeting in a basement of the YMCA, in Santa Ana, California. Smedley began working for the YMCA after he graduated college. Observing that many of its patrons needed public speaking training, he decided to help them with a training format that was similar to a social club. At this first meeting, members practiced speaking skills in a supportive, informal atmosphere. The seedling club blossomed and by the 1930s the organization charted its first international club in Vancouver, Canada. In 1973, Toastmasters met an important milestone by opening membership to women.

Why name it "Toastmasters"? - During the early 1900s, the word "toastmaster" referred to a person who proposed the toasts and introduced speakers at banquets. Ralph C. Smedley coined the first group "The Toastmasters Club" because he thought it suggested a pleasant, social atmosphere.

And Now

Since 1924, Toastmasters International has evolved into a worldwide leader in communication and leadership development for men and women. Toastmasters membership has played a critical role in transforming the world of communication – by helping millions of people improve their personal and professional speaking and leadership skills.

The Toastmasters story is one of dramatic growth and success. And with accomplishments come opportunities:

- **Membership** – Toastmasters membership grew by nearly four percent in 2010.
- **Global Representation and Support** – In 2010 a new initiative was enacted to improve the organizations international structure. Approved by members at the 2009 International Convention, the initiative replaced the U.S.-based Nominating Committee with the International Leadership Committee (ILC) and created 14 regions around the globe.
- **E-learning** – The Toastmasters Web site, which is continually expanding through new product and service offerings, has created its first e-learning tool – Toastmasters Learning Connection (TLC) provides access to Toastmasters club and district leader training in a virtual learning environment. This distance-learning program is an exciting development, blending education with the power of the Internet. While it won't replace face-to-face training, this new feature will complement existing programs.

Visit a local Toastmasters meeting

Each club has a different personality – you may wish to visit more than one. Use the 'Find a Club' tool on the Toastmasters Web site to locate meetings near you: <http://reports.toastmasters.org/findaclub/>. Call or e-mail in advance (if possible) to confirm meeting time and location.