



# Happy 90th Anniversary, Toasters International!

**This October marks the 90th anniversary of Toastmasters International.** Since 1924, Toastmasters has helped millions of members empower themselves by gaining communication and leadership skills, enabling them to lead richer lives.

Over nine decades, Toastmasters has evolved from a small network of clubs in Southern California to more than 14,650 clubs in 126 countries, with membership

***“My amazement at our educational achievement is equaled by my gratified surprise at the results we have produced.”***

**— Ralph C. Smedley**

exceeding 313,000. Members of the first group of clubs pioneered the same basic principles we still recognize today: Practice how to speak, keep meetings well-organized and on time, welcome new members enthusiastically and provide constructive feedback.

Dr. Ralph C. Smedley, the founder of Toastmasters, noted that people “learn in moments of enjoyment.” Although 90 years have passed, members around the globe still have fun while learning and building their skills. From Stockholm to Singapore, and Cleveland to Shanghai, members continue to learn from each other, while forging friendships in the process.

As we reflect on the history and development of Toastmasters International, especially given its dramatic growth, we must recognize the principles and milestones that have contributed to the organization’s enduring impact.

## **DIVERSITY**

Toastmasters became international in 1935 when it chartered its first club in Canada. Over the next 40 years, the organization grew and expanded geographically in English-speaking countries such as the United States and Canada, as well as in South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Clubs were also introduced in Japan, Taiwan and multiple European countries during this time, mostly by Toastmasters who served overseas in the United States military.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the network of clubs spread throughout various Southeast Asian countries, while in Europe, Taiwan and Japan, territorial councils grew rapidly into provisional districts, and eventually into full-fledged districts. Clubs formed in countries around the Persian Gulf in the Middle East, and later districts formed in India, Sri Lanka and China.

As of the end of the 2013-2014 Toastmasters year, more than 45 percent of members live outside the United States. In addition, nearly 30 percent of members speak more than one language proficiently.

### OPENING TOASTMASTERS TO WOMEN

In 1973, the Board of Directors made a decision that profoundly impacted the growth and development of Toastmasters: Membership was opened to women.

Before this decision, women attended meetings as guests of friends or spouses, but could not participate as members. Instead, they could join the International Toastmistress organization, chartered in 1938, or seek training in college speech courses and seminars.

Since 1973, five women have served in the role of Toastmasters International President, and countless women have served as mentors, club officers and district leaders, and have participated in speech contests. The decision to open membership to women was perhaps the most important and valuable one ever made by the organization.

### LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

From the start, cultivating leadership skills has been an integral part of the Toastmasters education program. Initially, Dr. Smedley envisioned the development of communication skills and self-confidence. To him, a

process of personal empowerment produced effective leaders committed to service and community.

This emphasis on leadership was reinvigorated in the mid-1990s. In 2011, as part of a brand update, the Board of Directors introduced a new tagline for the organization: "Toastmasters: Where Leaders Are Made."

### CORE VALUES

Dr. Smedley was fond of proclaiming that "Toastmasters

is the only organization built on respect for the individual." Respect has defined the organization since its inception and has remained a core value through the decades, along with integrity, excellence and service.

These foundational core values will continue to foster growth and the well-being of members and clubs around the globe. Dr. Smedley envisioned Toastmasters as an organization devoted to building members' skills to better contribute to greater peace and mutual understanding among people everywhere.

In this 90th year of service to members, we proudly proclaim: "Toastmasters: Where Leaders Are Made."



*"We learn in moments of enjoyment."*

— Ralph C. Smedley

For free resources to help you celebrate the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary in your club, visit [toastmasters.org/90thAnniversary](https://toastmasters.org/90thAnniversary)