Guest Column: Toastmasters is More Than a Public Speaking Club

Facilities Management Toastmasters
November 2016

Do you have fear of public speaking? Do you feel uneasy speaking in front of your team or presenting information to a group? Do you want to be a better leader? Do you want more career advancement opportunities? Then Toastmasters is for you.

Toastmasters is a low-cost, international, nonprofit organization with more than 345,000 members in 15,900 clubs worldwide. Toastmasters' focus is on building better leaders through a supportive environment where you can practice, receive feedback and repeat.

I joined Facilities Management Toastmasters three years ago with pure disdain for public speaking. With respect to speaking in groups, I trusted the old saying "it's better for people to think you are a fool than open your mouth and prove you are." I would attend meetings, like a frightened kid in school, hoping I would not get called on. The support, experience and skills I learned in Toastmasters changed my perspective and my life. I am no longer afraid of public speaking or of being called on in meetings. I have grown much more confident.

Toastmasters is much more than a public speaking club? Toastmasters is a leadership club. The Toastmasters' tagline is "Where leaders are made" and it is very accurate. About one-third of Fortune 500 companies sponsor their own clubs, and it is no coincidence considering the leadership training that club members are afforded.

My manager recognized my newfound confidence and improved communication and leadership skills, which earned me new opportunities in my career. I learned quickly how much I benefited from Toastmasters and the importance of sharing my experience with others. I encourage anyone and everyone to join.

In Toastmasters, you learn by doing and are constantly challenged to achieve high levels of performance. Recently, I was given the opportunity and happily volunteered to present a 90-minute training course to 50 people. Before Toastmasters, I would never have even considered it. After being an active club member for two years, I volunteered to be the area director for one of the nine Toastmasters' areas in Tucson. Participating as an area director pushes me even further outside my comfort zone and sharpens my leadership skills.

What does all this mean to you? There are more than 45 Toastmasters clubs in Southern Arizona, six of which meet at the University. Each UA club is focused on a different aspect of the UA, so you can find the club that fits you best. You can find the clubs here [1].

Biosciences Toastmasters Club
Focus: Current and future scientists and anybody interested in science
Meets: Mondays noon-1 p.m. at Drachman Hall, Room A118
Catmasters Toastmasters Club
Focus: UA students, nonstudents are welcome
Meets: Tuesdays 6:30-7:30 p.m. at Student Union Memorial Center, Presidio Room

Cosmopolitan Toastmasters Club
Focus: Non-native English speakers (international students and international professionals)
Meets: Wednesdays 6:30-7:45 p.m. at Center for English as a Second Language, Room 213

ITCats Toastmasters Club
Focus: UA IT professionals only
Meets: Fridays 8:45-10 a.m. at Computer Center, Room 303 (Innovation Station)

UA Facilities Management Toastmasters Club
Focus: Facilities Management employees
Meets: Wednesdays 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m. at the FM administration building

UA Toastmasters Club
Focus: UA staff and faculty, students are welcome
Meets: Friday 12:noon-1 p.m. at Education, Room 316

For more information about Toastmasters International, visit the Toastmasters [2] website.

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Source URL: https://uaatwork.arizona.edu/lqp/guest-column-toastmasters-more-public-speaking-club

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