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Are you interested in improving your public speaking skills? Do you want to learn how to become a professional keynote speaker? You may have heard the name before and wondered to yourself: What is Toastmasters all about? In this article you will learn: What is Toastmasters? Toastmasters is an international non-profit club run by volunteers to improve our public speaking ability by speaking regularly in a supportive environment with a solid program and helpful feedback. The goal behind the organization is to create a central hub that would establish a core set of values and instructions so that people could form local groups in there area to support each other through their journey of becoming better speakers. There are currently over 14,000 clubs in over 122 countries. Anyone over 18 who is interested in public speaking can join. Clubs have a great mix of experienced and beginning speakers, young and old. The objective of the Toastmasters club is to help you build the confidence you need to give presentations and speak in public so that you can become a better leader. Whether you work in the private or non-profit sector, at a certain point in your career you will need to get up in front of an audience and deliver a speech or presentation. By joining a Toastmasters group, you will be able to practice these skills with others who are on a similar path as you and get the feedback you need to improve. What do people do at a Toastmasters event? Practice their public speaking skills of course! Everyone who attends a Toastmasters meeting will get up in front of the audience and deliver a speech or presentation. The others will be asked to listen and then give feedback to you so that you can improve. Of course, attending also provides a great opportunity for networking with others. There is also the opportunity to join the "Leadership track" where you can also learn leadership skills. 9 Skills You Will Learn By Joining Toastmasters To start out, let's look at some of the growth you will experience with Toastmasters. You will develop. 1. Public speaking skills 2. Presentation skills 3. Communication skills 4. Listening skills 5. Leadership skills 6. Evaluation techniques 7. Vocal variety 8. Effective non-verbal communication (body language) 9. Research techniques Benefits Of Joining Toastmasters If you are in customer service in any capacity, you can benefit from learning to develop your public speaking skills. If you are an employer, you might want to encourage your staff to attend weekly meetings. The Competent Communicator Manual gives you the opportunity to learn and practice some of the following: Organize Your Speech, Get to the Point (what do you want to achieve?), and How to Say It (Be specific, use vivid words, incorporate rhetorical devices, watch for jargon, etc.). Have you ever been called upon at the last minute to give a presentation or a talk on something you've been working on, or something for a new client? Well, Toastmasters can help you think on your feet and be well organized so that this will become easy for you. Whether you want to become a professional speaker or just need to give some presentations at work, joining a group can be very beneficial as you will gain the practice you need to improve your skills. The Importance Of Effective Communication Communication involves more than just talking. It also involves attentive listening. Communication is a two way conversation. Many people say, "I have no problem talking", and those around them are well aware of that. These people may have a problem letting other people talk. How many times have you been at a meeting where the person is supposed to speak only for 5 minutes and 15 minutes later they are still at it? At Toastmasters you learn how to craft a speech to fit within a specified time frame. Listening skills are an important part of communication. It is important to listen well enough so that you really "hear" what the other person is saying. At our weekly meetings the Quizmaster tests the listening skills of the group by asking questions about things that went on during the meeting. Developing Leadership Skills Leadership skills - are developed as members take on roles such as Toastmaster, Table Topics Master, Timer, Quizmaster, General Evaluator and others. Each person takes control of the lectern for their role and you have a chance to earn the Competent Leader award as you work through various roles such as: Speaker, Speech Evaluator, Timer, Grammarian, Ah Counter, Toastmaster, Mentoring a New or Existing Member, etc. Giving Constructive Criticism It is important to learn how to correctly evaluate someone so that they learn about the things they need to improve while being recognized for the things that they already do well. If all they hear is criticism, they don't feel very good about themselves. One of the biggest challenges of a leader is to be able to give feedback to others on their performance. Feedback involves praising others to reinforce their outstanding performance and criticizing others to improve their performance. Often leaders are uncomfortable giving feedback. If team members are to perform to their potential, they need to know what they are doing well, what they are not doing well, and how they can improve. If you want to improve your team's performance, you must be able to comfortably offer feedback to team members. Toastmasters teaches the "sandwich technique" for evaluations. Start with something positive, insert the message about things that could be improved and end with a positive comment. Be An Interesting Speaker Keep your conversations lively and worth listening to. Have you ever listened to a boring lecture where the person just drones on and on with no variety or depth to their voice? It's enough to put you to sleep. Speech #6 will help you learn how to effectively use your voice for the highs and lows to keep people's attention, (be expressive, use pauses for effectiveness, control your volume, pitch, rate and quality). Your body often speaks louder than your actual words and people "read" what you are saying by the way you say it. Learn how to use gestures and eye contact to keep the audience watching and listening. Speech #5 - Your Body Speaks gives tips on how to use stance and movement, gestures, facial expression and eye contact naturally to enhance your communication. How To Research Research techniques are developed as you prepare for your roles. If you are providing the word of the week, you will research the word to find out where it came from and what it means. If you are giving the Toast, you may want to look up more information on the weekly theme. If you are giving an Educational Tip, you will want to research your topic and prepare. Speech #7 from the Competent Communicator Manual gives you tips and ideas on how to research your topic to get the facts you need to support your message. Conclusion As you can see, Toastmasters groups and meetings provide a great environment for you to improve your public speaking skills while building confidence and learning how to be a powerful presenter. To find a group in your area, click here. See also: Resources Select Radius: Select Radius: 2 miles (3 km) Radius 5 miles (8 km) Radius 10 miles (16 km) Radius 25 miles (40 km) Radius 50 miles (80 km) Radius 100 miles (161 km) Radius 150 miles (241 km) Radius Online Attendance accepted Advanced Toastmasters club Restricted; eligibility criteria exist Club Events: Types of events may include: Speak-a-thons, Speech Contests, or Open Houses Can't find it? Start a Club If you're an aspiring professional public speaker, chances are you've heard of Toastmasters. With chapters across the United States and the world, it is one of the most ubiquitous public speaking organizations out there. But what exactly is Toastmasters? Who is Toastmasters for? Is it open to just anyone, regardless of experience? How much does Toastmasters cost? For answers to these questions and more, read on. What is Toastmasters? Founded in California in 1924, Toastmasters originated as a program for young men to practice public speaking at their local YMCA. Over the last hundred years, Toastmasters has grown to be one of the largest public speaking-focused organizations in the world. According to the Toastmasters International website, Toastmasters is a nonprofit teaching public speaking and leadership skills through a worldwide network of clubs; the organization's membership exceeds 300,000 in more than 15,800 clubs in 149 countries. Toastmasters has a local chapter-based structure, and weekly hour-long meetings are the norm for most clubs. The average club has about twenty members. Members can take on specific roles within their clubs, such as Ah-Counter (responsible for noting any words or filler sounds), Timer, Grammarian, and more. Members give a series of both organized and impromptu speeches and receive feedback on their speeches from other members. Toastmasters also hosts the World Championship of Public Speaking, one of the largest speech contests in the world. According to the Toastmasters website, thousands of Toastmasters, representing over 100 countries, battle annually for the title of World Champion of Public Speaking. This months-long competition culminates at the Toastmasters International Convention with 28 semifinalists competing for the award. 7 things to know about Toastmasters 1. Who joins Toastmasters As Grant Baldwin discusses in his podcast on Toastmasters, the clientele of a typical Toastmasters chapter meeting may be very diverse. It could include a real estate agent wanting to improve her public speaking skills. Or you might see a businessman wanting to practice his upcoming presentation for a boardroom. It doesn't have to be for a job, either. You might see a stay-at-home mom who just wants to become more confident in her public speaking skills. Ryan Avery was the 2012 Toastmasters World Championship winner. In an interview with Grant Baldwin, Avery described the dedication that Toastmasters members have to their chapters. "They'll wake up at 6:00 AM to drive two hours to record you," he said. "That's a pretty crazy thing, right? Being able to know nothing about speaking and jumping in and finding people willing to help you, that is without a doubt, a major, major pro to it." 2. You can develop your talk There are a number of upsidse to trying Toastmasters. Here are a few: If you're just starting out as a paid public speaker, you're probably trying to find what material works. (For more on developing your talk, check out this episode of The Speaker Lab podcast.) The stories, jokes, content, openings, closings, and transitions may be easier to practice in a Toastmasters setting. Maybe you're a naturally nervous speaker. There's nothing wrong with feeling some nerves before you go speak. Having some of that excitement or nervous energy before you speak reminds you that what you're doing matters. It forces you to focus your attention and be fully present. One of the best ways to minimize those nerves is to practice so you know exactly where you're going with your talk. And to practice, you need to get chances to speak. It's the same as if you want to become a better writer; you have to practice writing. To become a better runner, you have to run. If you want to become better at riding a bike, you have to ride a bike. The same thing is true with speaking! If you wanna become a better speaker, you have to actually speak. And the nature of speaking means that you generally need an audience. Toastmasters gives an opportunity for you to be a speaker, and for you as a speaker to have that audience. 3. Toastmasters is not necessarily for professional speakers Toastmasters has a broad audience, many of which are not trying to build a public speaking business. Rory Vaden was a Toastmasters member who made it all the way to their competitive World Championship of Public Speaking event. As he said in The Speaker Lab's podcast episode #404, Toastmasters "is not really for professional speakers. It's just for people who want to be better at speaking. It's the easiest, fastest, most encouraging place that you can go to immediately get stage time for free and get quality people and real coaching, instruction, feedback, and practice." Notably, Toastmasters is not an organization oriented towards getting professional speakers booked and paid to speak at gigs. According to Vaden, "my advice to people is to stay in Toastmasters as long as you can until you're speaking so much that you're getting that stage time weekly from other paying gigs and engagements." (interested in hearing what Vaden did after Toastmasters? Check out the podcast audio here.) 4. How much a Toastmasters membership costs How much does Toastmasters cost? According to the Toastmasters website, Members pay international dues of \$45 USD every six months, plus a new member fee of \$20 USD. However, attending club meetings as a guest is free! 5. What a Toastmasters meeting looks like Although Toastmasters meeting structures vary somewhat by chapter, many meetings last about an hour or so and include three major parts: impromptu speaking (aka Table Topics), prepared speeches, and formal evaluations. During the improvisation part, a member who has prepared the topics, called the Table Topics Speaker, states a topic and calls someone to the desk. The speaker then has a short period (e.g. one to two minutes) to respond. For prepared speeches, a few members (generally 2-4) present a prepared speech in front of the other club members for a set amount of time (normally between 5 and 15 minutes long). Participants can present on any topic of their choice, but speeches usually follow the Toastmasters guidelines. After delivering their speech, the speaker is evaluated by another member. An evaluator typically congratulates the speaker on a job well done, provides positive feedback, and offers areas of improvement. This immediate feedback allows the speaker to know his recognized strengths and gives him ideas on how to improve his presentation techniques for his next speech. After the evaluation of the speeches, three members each present a report on a technical point. The grammarian identifies grammatical errors and repetitions. The Ah-Counter keeps track of the number of "uhs" "ums" and related pauses in the speech. At the conclusion of the evaluation session, the general evaluator makes a general comment on the whole evening and gives advice for future meetings. At the end of the meeting, attendees may vote for the speaker they believe spoke best at presenting their Table Topic, prepared speech, or formal evaluation. 6. Public speaking career resources from Toastmasters Interested in learning how to become a certified public speaker? Toastmasters offers an accreditation through their Accredited Speaker Program. For members of Toastmasters, the Accredited Speaker program is designed to give professional speakers an edge through certification by Toastmasters International. If you are a current member, have earned a qualifying education award, and have given a minimum of 25 non-Toastmasters speaking engagements within the past three years, you may be eligible to apply. (want to learn more about professional speaker certifications? check out this podcast with Grant Baldwin.) According to their site, Toastmasters seeking a professional-level speaker are directed to the Accredited Speaker profiles, where they can view all Accredited Speakers who have chosen to have a profile and contact you for their speaking engagement. After you have received the designation, Toastmasters International will work with you to gather information. They will also write you a professional profile that highlights your expertise and skill as a speaker. Once you have approved your profile, it will be posted on the website along with your contact information. 7. Toastmasters hosts the World Championship of Public Speaking As mentioned above, Toastmasters hosts the annual World Championship of Public Speaking, one of the largest speech contests in the world. What does it take to win the Toastmasters World Championship? Well, in addition to commitment through hours spent practicing in meetings, some aspects of the process involve learning the right formulas. Want to learn more about those formulas? The Speaker Lab podcast recently recorded an episode breaking down a speech from 2018 Toastmasters Champion Ramona J. Smith. Conclusion So you've gotten a sense of what Toastmasters is (and isn't). You've learned about the World Championship and other certification opportunities Toastmasters offers. But perhaps you'd still like to learn more about how to get started with your public speaker business. Is that you? Satiating your desire to learn more about public speaking by checking out The Speaker Lab blog here. Happy speaking! Learn more about milestone memorabilia and resources. Since 1924, Toastmasters has been inspiring people to confidently communicate through regular practice and evaluation in fun and supportive clubs around the globe. Join the worldwide community! Present well Mentor others Advance your career Consider In-Person, Online, and/or Hybrid clubs that will welcome you as a guest, free of charge. Visit and observe clubs based on community, professionalism, and/or social interests. There is no pressure to join or join in. In-person/hybrid clubs Online attendance clubs \$60 USD\* semiannually \*plus any potential club dues and a one-time \$20 USD new-member fee Where will Toastmasters ultimately take you? To a career advancement, a personal achievement, and/or mentorship? Your newfound confidence and communication excellence offers limitless potential. Find/visit a club Article Category: Resources for Speakers by Andrew Dilugan Published: Feb 11th, 2009 I occasionally preach the benefits of Toastmasters. In response to questions from Six Minutes readers, I thought I would answer some of the most common questions that are asked about Toastmasters. What is Toastmasters? Who joins Toastmasters? When did Toastmasters start? Where do Toastmasters meet? Why Should You Join Toastmasters? How to Join Toastmasters? Interested in Toastmasters? Read on ... Are you a member? Please share your story! What is Toastmasters? Toastmasters International is a nonprofit organization, comprised of over 250,000 members in over 106 countries, represented by over 12,500 clubs, and dedicated to excellence in communication and leadership. Most Toastmasters clubs meet weekly for 1-2 hours, and follow a pretty basic agenda: Prepared speeches - Members are given opportunities to prepare, rehearse, and then deliver presentations in front of their fellow members. Speech evaluations - Whenever you speak in Toastmasters, you receive helpful and supportive evaluations from your peers. Impromptu speaking - Members practice speaking "off the cuff" for one or two minutes by responding to general topics of interest (table topics). Who Joins Toastmasters? Anyone over the age of 18 can join Toastmasters, provided they have the desire to improve their communication and leadership skills. Beyond that, Toastmasters members are a diverse group, spanning countries and cultures, and all socio-economic backgrounds. The Toastmasters International website tells us that: 52% of members are female and 48% are male. Average annual household income: \$85,000-\$99,000. 30% earn \$100,000+ annually. 69% of members are between the ages of 35 and 49. 82% have a college degree. 3% have an advanced degree. What industries employ Toastmasters? 20% Sales, Consulting, Self Employed 18% Management 15% Finance & Insurance 15% Government 12% Education 20% Other When Did Toastmasters Start? The first Toastmasters club was started by Ralph Smedley in Santa Ana, California in 1924 at a local YMCA to meet the need for speech and leadership training for young men. His initial "Ten Lessons in Public Speaking" still forms the core of the Toastmasters educational program as the 10 projects of the Competent Communicator manual. ( It has, of course, been updated and revised many times.) The single club turned into a network of affiliated Toastmasters Clubs as the idea spread throughout southern California. When an affiliated club formed in British Columbia, Toastmasters International was born. Where Do Toastmasters Meet? Everywhere! Well, not quite, but the network of clubs is growing: 11,000 Toastmasters clubs meet in over 90 countries. Clubs meet within corporations, in community centers, on university and college campuses, in churches and temples, in restaurants, in libraries, in prisons, and many other places. The majority of clubs are still in North America, but the organization is growing fastest outside of North America, particularly in Asia. Most clubs meet weekly for 1-2 hours. Why Should You Join Toastmasters? Everyone has their own personal reasons for joining Toastmasters, but here are a few of the most common: Become a Better Public Speaker Members work through a series of educational programs (at their own pace) designed to improve their ability to write speeches, design presentations, and deliver them. Overcome Public Speaking Fears The most positive and supportive audience in the world is a Toastmasters club audience. Speaking regularly in front of a group helps you calm your nerves and communicate effectively. "Practice" Presentations for Other Audiences Everyone has different motivations for wanting to speak better. Maybe you want to hone your presentation skills for your career. Perhaps you want to be able to speak out in your volunteer organization. Maybe you want to complement your portfolio as an author, manager, or other professional with speaking gigs? Whatever the case, Toastmasters is a wonderful laboratory for you to practice your presentations and gain valuable feedback. Gain the Confidence and Courage to Lead Leadership and communication skills are intimately bound. Some might argue that leadership is nothing more than the ability to effectively communicate a vision. As your communication skills improve, your ability to lead will improve as well. ??? Many Six Minutes readers are Toastmasters, so I'll pass this question to you. Why did you join? What advice would you pass to someone considering joining?Let us know in the comments. How to Join Toastmasters? Search the Toastmasters club database to find clubs where you live. If you live in an urban area, you may have many options. Narrow the list down based on the time of day (morning, mid-day, evening) or day of the week (most clubs meet Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday) that works best for you. Visit several clubs (if the options exist). Don't settle for the first club you find. Every club has a unique club culture. Find the one that suits you the best. Sign up. Toastmasters dues are inexpensive, particularly compared to other training options. Commit yourself to excellence. Toastmasters is a program where you only get out in proportion to what you put in. Any Other Questions? If you are considering joining Toastmasters and have questions, drop a question into the comments, or contact me directly. This is one of a number of articles related to Toastmasters featured on Six Minutes. Subscribe to Six Minutes for free to receive future articles. Note: Six Minutes is not affiliated with or endorsed by Toastmasters International. Click here for more information about the relationship between the two. Nonprofit organization promoting communication, public speaking and leadership "Toastmasters" redirects here. For the general term, see Toastmaster. Toastmasters InternationalAbbreviationTI, TMFormationOctober 22, 1924; 100 years ago (1924-10-22)TypeINGOTax ID no. 95-1300076[1]Legal statusNon-profit organizationPurposeEducationalHeadquarters9127 South Jamaica Street, Meridian, Colorado, USRegion WorldwideMembership364,000[2] (2020)International PresidentRadhi SpearRevenue\$34,255,739[3] (2016)Staff198[3] (2016)Volunteers117,789[3] (2016)Websitetoastmasters.org Toastmasters International (TI) is a US-headquartered nonprofit educational organization that operates clubs worldwide for the purpose of helping people develop communication, public speaking, and leadership skills. On 24 March 1905, Dr. Ralph C. Smedley, a 1903 graduate from Illinois Wesleyan University, who was also the educational director for Bloomington YMCA in Illinois, started a club in a dinner meeting, to train young boys and men in speech, to face an audience, and to express their thoughts. He envisioned it as a weekly social club, with training programs for short speeches, debates, and work in chairmanship. The members took turn to speak in 5 to 6 minutes while the elder men served as speech evaluators. George Sutton, General Secretary of YMCA, named the club "a Toastmasters Club". Smedley later noticed a significant improvement in his members' speeches and leadership abilities. When YMCA transferred Smedley to another city named Freeport in Illinois, he decided to expand his club to the new city.[4] The organization grew out of a single club founded by Smedley on October 22, 1924, at the YMCA in Santa Ana, California, United States.[5] It originated as a set of classes with the aim of improving the communication skills of the young men under his charge.[6][7] Toastmasters International was incorporated under Californian law on December 19, 1932.[5][8] The first international chapter was established in Vancouver, Canada, in 1932. The organization began admitting women in 1973.[5][9] In 1999, Toastmasters International (TI) had 170,000 members spanning 68 countries.[4] By 2016, TI had 16,000 clubs worldwide.[10] Toastmasters International uses a local club-based structure, with an average club size of around 22 members. Meetings are held every week or every other week and usually in the evening, although some clubs meet in the morning or afternoon.[5][6][8] Each club operates as a separate entity with a set of requirements leading to chartered status for them to be recognised as official Toastmasters clubs. The chartered status allows clubs to use the names, promotional material and program of Toastmasters International.[11] Every meeting is based on a set of organized speeches. Speakers are given feedback, often by a more experienced member, who then gives an impromptu speech with constructive feedback based on their performance.[12] Part of the meetings is devoted to Table Topics, which are impromptu speeches that are assigned on the spot by a Topicmaster. The goal of this is to think on one's feet with minimal preparation. In some clubs, attendees are then asked to vote on who they thought gave the best speech.[5][6][8] Toastmasters International places a large emphasis on building the public speaking and leadership skills of its members.[12] The current education system Pathways consists of eleven differing paths suited to their needs and requirements, based around Public Speaking, Interpersonal Communication, Management, Strategic Leadership, and Confidence. Each path consists of 14 projects.[13] Content consists of online and print materials, it being the first time in the organization's history to provide modern technology in its programme.[13][14] Content is available in English,[15] and as of 2023, translations are available in 10 languages.[16] Speechcraft is a 4- to 8-week program with materials hosted online and is conducted by experienced Toastmasters members for non-members.[17] To develop leadership skills, members lead at the club, area, or district levels, focus on content development, and participate in speech contests.[18] Toastmasters runs an international public speaking championship formally known as the Toastmasters International World Champion of Public Speaking, which is held annually at its International Convention in August.[19][20][21][22] It started in 1938 and involves over 33,000 participants in 141 countries, making it the world's largest oratory contest.[20][23] There is a six-month process of elimination to reach the semifinals; in 2018, there were 106 participants who made it that far. There are ten places in the final, and speeches are judged on content, gestures, organization, and style.[23] Education portal Association of Speakers Clubs Communications training Dale Carnegie Australian Rostrom List of recreational organizations Public speaking Speakers Bureau ^ "Ralph C. Smedley Memorial Fund contribution form" (PDF). Toastmasters International. Retrieved April 9, 2019. ^ "All About Toastmasters". Toastmasters International. Retrieved March 9, 2019. ^ a b c "Form 990 of Toastmasters International, Inc. for Fiscal Year 2016" (PDF). Internal Revenue Service. Retrieved March 9, 2019. ^ a b Levine Bremen, Ellen Beth (January 1, 1999). "Welcome, fellow toastmasters": The history and membership of a public speaking phenomenon (Masters of Arts Degree thesis). University of Nevada, Las Vegas. doi:10.25569/10y4-w1ku. ^ a b c d e Scott, Majorie (November 1990). "Out of the Past: Toasting the Toastmasters" (Digitised magazine). Orange Coast. No. November 1990. pp. 45–46. 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