**Principles of Toastmasters**



Despite knowing the importance of public speaking I was quite ignorant of the extent of its impact until I became a Toastmaster. I have often thought of this as a desirable skill in the past but several 'not so amazing' instances(to put it mildly) of public speaking later, I have come to categorise it as ESSENTIAL.

To be successful in any field or to even enjoy social situations better, effective public speaking as a skill is truly a **MUST**for all of us!

It's not that I haven't spoken in public in the past or haven't had to address crowds. I have been an HR professional and while I may not have trained people, but speaking in meetings or to groups of people is something that's required of me very often. However, I have to admit - I haven't always enjoyed it or been consistently great at it. There were times when I was asked to speak impromptu and they weren't the most pleasant moments either.

Joining Toastmasters was a part of fighting this fear. I asked myself - 'I am thirty-seven years of age with lots of greys already. Do I really want to be doing something I don't enjoy? I'd much rather avoid being in any situation which causes discomfort to me now' and I heard a voice inside calling me a - LOSER! So there I was attending Toastmasters as a guest in the first two meetings and was so charged after these that I soon became a member.

Unlike any other group I have ever been a part of before, Toastmasters is unique in its positivity and focus on getting better at public speaking and becoming a better Leader. Everyone is in it for the same reason. There is unity in a common goal and somehow everyone is appreciative of everyone else. You only hear words of encouragement and no one is bothered about your age, background or professional accomplishments. No one questions anyone about 'Why Now?' ..something I was petrified of being asked all along.

Toastmasters is a classic example of an organisation that has managed to retain the essence that it's founder possibly envisioned. How has an organisation so large in size and magnitude, managed to create this environment uniformly across all its clubs? I wish there was a case study done to identify how such an amazingly supportive and convivial attitude has successfully been percolated down to each level and member of the organisation.

I am fairly new here and yet somehow social and professional situations have a different appeal for me already. Parties where I am the host seem less daunting all of a sudden, weddings where I could be asked to speak on stage look more welcoming and I no longer try my best to avoid situations at work which involve addressing a group or a crowd.

Other than this, I am thoroughly enjoying being an integral part of this group. I think I can honestly admit that I don't ever remember being part of a group or an organisation in the past that has no pretense or negativity whatsoever. At Toastmasters, there is only effort, there is only hope, there is only encouragement and there is only the will to get better. At the same time, improvement areas are not ignored - they are duly notified to respective individuals but never in a way to make anyone feel small or lowly of themselves.

I wish every organisation and group in the world could run on the same principles. I am lucky I got the opportunity to join here and I will strive to spread this positivity to all organisations where I work in future and in social groups I am a part of.

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