

TOASTMASTER

February 2008

**The
Splendid
Gesture**

**Gesturing
then and now.**

Speaking in Business

Five lessons in corporate communication.

**An Interview with
Hardball TV Host
Chris Matthews**

How a resourceful group of company clubs avoided foreclosure.

AT&T Makes the Right Choice

By Craig Harrison, DTM

Homeless! We associate the word with individuals and societies. Yet for 24 corporate Toastmasters clubs scattered across North America, “homeless” described their potential reality when host AT&T informed them they would no longer be allowed to meet on corporate premises as a result of a change of policy. Welcome to the realities of club management. And there but by the grace of all host organizations goes your club, be it of the corporate or community variety.

What would you do if you learned your club would lose its meeting space imminently? This is the story of how club leaders, their districts and World Headquarters staff used their communication and leadership skills to solve a problem and convince their host’s leadership team to let them meet happily ever after.

It Could Happen To You...

Toastmasters currently has 11,300 clubs meeting regularly across the globe. And 60 percent of these clubs are considered corporate clubs, meeting in host companies, in skyscrapers, training rooms, classrooms, factories and various other types of structures. Corporate clubs

traditionally meet on company premises. Yet as space becomes scarce – with security and confidentiality concerns rising and company policies changing – meeting space may not be as stable as previously thought. Consider the recent case of AT&T’s 24 Toastmasters clubs:

The AT&T Network

Toastmasters have met in AT&T offices for almost half a century. The first club began meeting in Columbus, Ohio, in 1961. Currently AT&T has clubs in 11 U.S. states as well as in Toronto, Canada. Some are open to the general public while others are for employees only. Over the years, AT&T talent has won contests, served on the





◀ Home arranged, at last. Left to right: Afternoon Teletalkers leaders Ying Sang Man, ACS/CL, Mariza Seril, JoAnna Bradley, ACB, Andy Stone, CTM, Rebecca Wong, Jim Breedlove, Nicole duPuis, ATMB/AL, pose in front of a model of the AT&T campus in San Ramon, California.

in AT&T facilities that weren't strictly for conducting AT&T business. Suddenly, Toastmasters clubs were no longer eligible to meet on company premises.

All Circuits Are Busy

All across North America club officers were suddenly scurrying to find alternate locations, considering holding joint meetings with other clubs or even pondering disbanding. Some wrote letters to their local managers at AT&T sites, extolling the virtues of their corporate clubs to the executives of each corporate campus. Other club officers engaged their district

“Actually, it’s been a good experience overall. Now we have a centralized list, centralized contacts, and have in writing that AT&T supports what Toastmasters can do.”

– Nicole duPuis, ATMB

Toastmasters Board of Directors and contributed greatly to the Distinguished Club program. The relationship has benefited both parties.

A Change of Plans

This past fall, AT&T implemented a new real estate policy requiring an approval process for all meetings

leaders to intercede on their behalf and state the case for the value of allowing clubs to meet onsite without complication. Still other club officers filled out forms asking for exceptions to the corporate real estate policy. Meanwhile, employees were still encouraged to keep developing their communication and leadership skills through participation in Toastmasters!

Tipping Points:

How corporate clubs can foster stronger relationships with their host corporations.

By Craig Harrison, DTM

- Become familiar with your company's policies regarding outside groups, its meeting protocols, etc. Does your club qualify? Use corporate language to describe your club to ensure it's regarded as the resource it is.
- Meet regularly with your Human Resources management to keep them apprised of your club, its members' progress and contributions to your organization's well being.
- Invite upper management to visit your club for special occasions, such as officer installations, awards events and anniversary functions, (and don't forget about demo meetings and chartering functions for new clubs).
- Encourage your company's leaders to periodically present to your club. They can use your club for dry runs of their own presentations, help communicate company initiatives, or inspire members with their own communication and leadership successes.
- Use your company's internal communications (such as e-zines and newsletters), intranet and other resources to celebrate successes and promote your club and its value to your organization's operations.
- Elicit quotes from your training and HR directors about the value the club provides for communication and leadership development. Use these quotes on fliers, brochures and on the club's Web site.
- Periodically host an open house for your club to recruit new members and allow management to share in the success of the club. (Remember, success has many parents!)
- Keep your club in the mind's eye of your organization through "desk drops" of fliers, posters on breakroom and cafeteria bulletin boards and elsewhere throughout your organization's campus and its facilities.
- Offer training for non-members, through Speechcraft or Success-Communication modules that contribute to your organization's well-being.
- Offer to place fliers and brochures into the new-employee orientation materials given to new hires.
- Cultivate advocates at every level of your organization to champion your club. Recognize them with ribbons, certificates and public praise.
- In your own annual reviews, cite the difference Toastmasters is making in your success as an employee.

Each of these tips helps you maintain good relations with your host organization. Help your VPPR implement them all and watch your club's profile soar!

Calling AT&T

Ying Sang Man, ACS/CL, a senior technology consultant with AT&T in San Ramon, California, is both an officer with Afternoon Teletalkers and District 57's Division F Governor. She says, "Officers of our club conferred with two other teams onsite: Ring Masters and Telesarians. A Telesarian member knew someone in Human Resources. I wrote a letter to HR that found its way up the ranks to Halle Holland, AT&T's Executive Director of Change Management." And that's how company leaders in Georgia became aware of the homeless Toastmasters situation across North America.

Halle Holland was a champion for Toastmasters and routed Man's request to another Toastmasters advocate, AT&T President Long Distance Julie Ann Arca. Soon the corporate relations team at Toastmasters World Headquarters and high-ranking AT&T leaders were in discussions to obtain an exception to the real estate rule. Central to the discussions was International Director

Lee Holliday, DTM, who had previously formed three AT&T clubs and remains an active member of Cingular Speaking Sensations of Alpharetta, Georgia.

At AT&T, Holland, Holliday and another AT&T executive, Rick Bradley, all championed Toastmasters for its value to AT&T: "As employees develop their communication and leadership skills through Toastmasters, they become more effective and productive," says Holliday. "Toastmasters is a great value from a cost perspective as well."

Once AT&T recognized that Toastmasters qualified as an "employee resource group," it was easier for AT&T management to endorse the value of allowing all Toastmasters clubs at AT&T locations to continue to meet as before.

Side Benefits

The specter of losing their meeting locations challenged each club's officer team to ponder contingencies. According to area governor and AT&T associate project

manager JoAnna Bradley, ACB, this wasn't necessarily a bad thing. "As a project manager, I am big on contingency plans. Clubs should always have a backup plan!"

Bradley warns that this kind of thing could happen at any company and recommends that club presidents check with Human Resources to "make sure they know you're meeting and confirm your club is in compliance." She also says, "When starting a new club, find out what guidelines and specifications already exist. That way you avoid unwelcome surprises down the road."

Afternoon Teletalkers President Nicole duPuis, ATMB, in San Ramon, California, recognized wonderful side benefits from this situation: "Our club derived a PR advantage. More people in our location are now aware of the club. We were challenged to speak to vice presidents, get sponsors in place and speak to HR. Each helped us promote what we do. Now more people are aware of the value we provide."

She saw benefits within the club as well: "I witnessed an additional layer of commitment to the club. The specter of losing it made our members realize how valuable our club was to them. It added strength and commitment."

As for the AT&T network of Toastmasters clubs, duPuis added: "Actually, it's been a good experience overall, since we didn't know about the other clubs before. Now we have a centralized list, centralized contacts, and have in writing that AT&T supports what Toastmasters can do."

Leadership in Action

In the end, the potential crisis led to a deeper appreciation among AT&T's leaders for the ongoing value of development and skill Toastmasters clubs provide. And club officers were able to bring a real-life problem to a satisfying conclusion. AT&T recognizes Toastmasters as a national treasure and not a club of secrets. Also,

"As employees develop their communication and leadership skills through Toastmasters, they become more effective and productive."

Toastmasters officers reached out and built new relationships with key leaders at many levels of this worldwide corporation, including other clubs. And when AT&T employees hear the word Toastmasters now, you could say it rings a bell! Congratulations to all. 📌

Craig Harrison, DTM, founder of Laugh Lovers of Oakland, California, is a professional speaker and principal of Expressions Of Excellence! For more resources visit www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com.

Editor's Note: *If your club encounters problems with its sponsoring organization that you can't resolve at a local level, please contact the corporate relations team at World Headquarters at bwallace@toastmasters.org.*

Making Your Case for Toastmasters At Work

By Craig Harrison, DTM

To transform non-Toastmasters decision-makers into champions for your club, consider the following tips:

- Use existing Toastmasters materials to help decision-makers understand Toastmasters' powerful communication and leadership programs. Create a kit with protocol brochures and pamphlets and present it to them.
- You can list URLs for Toastmasters Web sites, such as those for clubs, districts and toastmasters.org. Or use quotes and language from these sites to promote your club to management.
- Gather testimonials from existing and previous members. Focus on the benefits they experienced through participation. Make sure to list each person's title with the organization. Put these in your club's materials, and on your club's Web site.
- Hone your own story to tell anecdotally about the difference Toastmasters has made in your professional development. Use Table Topics to practice a two-minute version. Use the setting-situation-solution format to let listeners experience the end result, solution, benefit or outcome of club participation.
- Consider writing and publishing short case studies that showcase how communication and leadership skills make the difference at work: with clients, on projects, in meetings, etc. (Use the setting-situation-solution format.)