

Attention: Toastmasters Programs can effect the weather

Toastmasters can help an individual in many ways but I never knew it could affect the weather! Allow me to explain.

I joined the Bloomington, IN based Good Evening Toastmasters Club in December 2004. Like many who join Toastmasters, I wanted to be more comfortable communicating in front of a group. Being in sales, an improvement in presentation skills could easily translate into greater success at work and additional monetary gain.

After completing my CTM in about six months, I started on advanced manuals and noticed I was becoming more comfortable in my communication style. Shortly after the New Year this year, my employer announced a competition called "Solutions Challenge". Each of the 100+ sales people in the state would be participating, including me. The assignment was to do a forty-five minute presentation on a particular product that we offer based around one of our actual customers.

I created the presentation and practiced it, treating it like any other Toastmasters speech exercise. The first round of competition was against the seven teammates that make up my sales team. I won! For the state level competition, two specialists joined my presentation team and we competed with the winning teams from each of the other eight sales teams across the state. We won again!

We went on to win at the Area Level, which covers three states. This was very exciting for me for two reasons: first the sheer accomplishment of performing well in a competitive situation. Second, I was a bit surprised at how clearly my Toastmasters training were influencing our success. Our three-person team, along with 11 other area winners, advanced to Phoenix, Arizona for the final round of competition on March 16th, 2006. The winning team would earn a \$5,000 cash prize as well as exposure to the top executives from our \$4+ billion dollar company.

In a whirlwind day, we flew to Phoenix and did our presentation. Throughout my talk, the executives asked many challenging questions but I thought, "No problem, this is just like table topics!" At the end of the day, it was determined that my team was victorious and we earned first place! With over 1600 sales representatives in the entire Western Region this was quite an honor.

A little over a year ago, I never would have dreamed that I would be flown to Arizona based on my ability to speak in front of a group. There is no question that my practice and training within Toastmasters is the reason for this success. Who would have guessed that Toastmasters could change the weather, at least for me, to hot and sunny in March! Thanks Toastmasters.

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