



# When You Promote It They Will Come!

How Vice Presidents of Public Relations Promote Clubs Worldwide

By Craig Harrison, DTM

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Imagine a role in Toastmasters that let you speak to inform, tell stories, communicate on television, lead programs and campaigns, speak to your club and also tell the world about the wonders of your club? That, in a nutshell, is a description of the role of Vice President, Public Relations. Best yet, each club member is your assistant. And together you spread the Gospel of Toastmasters!

## **What Is Public Relations for a Toastmasters Club?**

*Club public relations* involves the generating of publicity about your club for the purpose of helping it grow. As VP-PR you and your committee spread the word to non-members, aligned organizations and the media about your club's existence, activities and successes. The goal: build membership, thus allowing more people to benefit from the advantages that result from membership. And you do this through promotion and publicity.

## **Share the Secret of Toastmasters...with the World!**

You know of the benefits that members receive from your club. Among them:

- Increased self-confidence
- Powerful speechmaking skills
- Skill at speaking extemporaneously
- Leadership development
- Career advancement through skill development

Your challenge: to tell the outside world what awaits them when they join your club. And there are more ways than ever to get the word out. As VP-PR you get to utilize many of them.

### **The Club Website**

These days many people will find your club through your website. Does your club have one yet? Club websites tell browsers when and where you meet, how to get there, and answer frequently asked questions of guests: What does it cost? Is there pressure to speak? How do I dress? Make your site as inviting as possible. Photos can help. If you don't already have a club website you can obtain one from [www.FreeToastHost.org](http://www.FreeToastHost.org) Several tips for designing yours:

1. Make sure your club website is linked to your district's site
2. Make sure WHQ includes your website's URL in their "Find A Club" list on their site
3. Make sure your website has a Title, Description and Keywords, meta-tags that reference "toastmasters" "public speaking" your location and related terms in its header information (ask your webmaster how to do this).

### **Club Flyer or Brochure**

A club flyer or brochure helps you tell your club's story in writing. It can be handed out, posted on bulletin and notice boards, left in stacks at your local libraries and community centers, your company lunchrooms and break rooms, or even brought to fairs, community events and town hall meetings. Your flyer should have the usual who-what-where-when-why and how information. Include phone, e-mail and website for more information. Make a smaller electronic version of your flyer (using the PDF file format) which can be e-mailed as an attachment or downloaded from your club's website.

Your club may wish to purchase TI materials and add your club's meeting specifics to their materials. Check your supply catalog for available materials you can customize for your own club's use.

### **Give Your flyer wings!**

Send your flyer throughout the host meeting site, throughout the company, building or community where you meet. Get this flyer to local newsletters, as appropriate, put it on windshields of cars in the parking lot, and post it in local businesses nearby to your meeting place. Each club member should be given a stack of flyers or brochures to disseminate using their own promotional channels.

### **The Business Card**

Many clubs create their own business cards to personally hand prospects of all kinds — colleagues, friends and strangers — to invite them to their club. Business cards are a form of currency in the business world. Yours can have the usual info: time, place, location of meeting, and you might use the back of the card for an explanatory paragraph about Toastmasters, a map or other verbiage. Some clubs print a coupon on the back: "Good for one free visit to our club!" You and I know it's always free to attend as a guest, yet people cherish the "coupon" and regard visiting as more valuable with this free "Get Into Toastmasters Meeting" card!

## The Vital Role of VP-PR



Give business cards to all your club members. Hold a contest to see who can generate the most guests from handing out business cards.

### Club Newsletters

In a world full of ads and promotional copy, newsletters provide readers with substance. A club newsletter, whether monthly or quarterly, gives you a great printed piece to help non-Toastmasters understand the magic of Toastmasters. Your newsletter's articles and images convey the power in ways brochures and flyers sometimes can't. Whether you print and pass out, mail or convert to a PDF to e-mail or download from your club's website, newsletters reinforce the successes that occur each meeting. They also bring pride to members as it strengthens your club's community.



### The Open House

Open Houses are wonderful events that showcase your club, its meetings and what Toastmasters is all about for the general public. Attending a meeting may be scary to a non-member, but attending an open house is often more inviting. Include food and beverages, a Q&A session, a sampling of what occurs at a meeting (a speech, some table topics and an evaluation), and informal time too for small group discussions. Keep it fun and festive. Table Topics can address member successes. Applause and laughter loosen everyone up. Ideally your open house can be in the same location as the actual meetings.

Promote your Open House with the district, your division and area, and through any local channels available to you. Many business parks have newsletters or e-blasts, and an open house flyer can be posted on bulletin boards, included in community calendars in print and online. You can also write a press release about your open house. One key to the success of any open house: start early and promote far in advance so people will save the date and the media has lead time to promote the event in print and over the airwaves. (Contact DTM Lindy Sinclair of Watergate Toastmasters [#1239-57] to receive an Excel spreadsheet that walks you through a step-by-step process for staging your open house: [lindy@lindysinclair.com](mailto:lindy@lindysinclair.com).)

### The Press Release

A press release is the standard way in which an event or campaign is announced to the media. Radio, TV and Newspapers (print media) all prefer to receive information about your newsworthy event through a press release: a short, typed announcement containing the vital information about your event, along with contact information. Use the accepted format for yours and avoid jargon and marketing copy. The emphasis is on newsworthiness for the listeners or readers. Write it in terms of the benefits to the audience. Press Release samples can be found in the back of the VP-PR training manual.

Public relations expert Mitchell Friedman APR, Director of MBA Career Services, School of Business and Management, University of San Francisco offers the following tips for your release:

1. Keep it to one page (or two at most)
2. Always list contact information for further inquiries: name, phone, e-mail, website
3. Topic should be timely and newsworthy in nature
4. Catchy title and explanatory subtitle always helps
5. Should address the who, what, where, when, why and how
6. Avoid sales speak. This is not a marketing piece. Emphasis is on news for reader.
7. Use the standard symbols # # # to end your press release.

Save your last several lines to explain that Toastmasters International is the world's foremost communication and leadership development non-profit since 1924, or something to that effect.

### Release and Catch!

Press Releases can promote open houses, contests, accomplishments of its members, noteworthy guest speakers and club activities like Speechcrafts, Youth Leadership Programs, contests, trainings or roles in community affairs. Emphasize the noteworthiness of your event or program and people will come. Send yours to all the local media: radio stations, TV and local newspapers. Include local business and community publications.

These days press releases can be e-mailed as text or sent as small PDF attachments. Now don't forget to use your verbal skills to follow up with a phone call. Media receive hundreds of press releases and public service announcements a day. Make yours stand out through its writing and your ability to follow up by phone.

### Calendars, Chambers, Cable and Craigslist!

Most newspapers have a community calendar where clubs can list their regular meeting time and place for free. As a non-profit we should avail ourselves of all discounts and free opportunities to spread word of our meetings.

Your local Chamber of Commerce should be informed about your club. Get flyers and brochures to them for dissemination. Get your flyers added to the packets provided newcomers upon arrival in your city, town or community. Don't forget the local Small Business Administration office. They too need to know about your club. As do local colleges, universities and adult education programs. Most business professors recommend Toastmasters to their students. Reach out to them to help you spread the word.

Most communities these days have local cable access TV stations. Take your place alongside Garth and Wayne of Wayne's World and promote your club through free cable access. Whether it's you or a club member working the Communicating on Television advanced manual who appears on TV, use the power of cable to generate buzz for your club.

The Internet can also be a great source of new club members. Use free Internet calendars to list your meetings. Many communities worldwide have a Craigslist ([www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org)) where they can list their meetings for free. Conduct an Internet search for community calendars you can post to so that browsers can easily find information about your club.

### **Doctor, Doctor**

Many clubs drop off past editions of *Toastmaster* magazine, with a club business card stapled to it, to their dentist's or doctor's office, to leave in their waiting room. Many a member has joined after reading about Toastmasters while waiting for their check-up. Four out of five doctors recommend Toastmasters to ail poor communicators.

### **Word of Mouth: Elevator Speeches and Success Stories**

Don't underestimate the one-on-one approach to membership growth. As VP-PR you can teach your club members to deliver an *elevator speech* — that sixteen-second sound bite — on behalf of your club, to entice visitors.

A more persuasive tool for selling the benefits of Toastmasters conversationally to strangers, is to deliver 30- or 60-second "*success stories*" that share the *setting* by which you joined your club, the *situation* you sought help with, and the solution Toastmasters provided you. Your personal story is a compelling testimonial to the power of the Toastmasters experience. Use Table Topics to help members hone their success story before unleashing them on the world at large.

### **Pin to Win!**

Remember to wear your Toastmasters pin wherever you go and be prepared to share your elevator speech or success story in response to inquiries about the pin and Toastmasters. As VP-PR you should be collecting testimonials from members about the benefits they've received from joining. No more powerful endorsement exists! A

**Tell the World!**

As you can see, there is no shortage of avenues to promote your club to the world. The fun is in exposing others to the magic of your club. Tell your story or those success stories of others in your club. And most importantly, tell the world!

Craig Harrison DTM, co-founder of LaughLovers (596430-57) of Oakland, CA, is a professional keynote speaker, trainer and principal of Expressions Of Excellence!™ a sales and service training firm. For more resources visit his website: [www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com](http://www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com) or e-mail [Craig@ExpressionsOfExcellence.com](mailto:Craig@ExpressionsOfExcellence.com). Call (510) 547-0664 to book Craig for your next keynote address, training or special event!





# TELL THE WORLD!

*Leveraging Your Toastmasters Experience To Make A Difference*

CRAIG HARRISON DTM, PDG



## TOASTMASTERS HELPS US FIND OUR VOICE.

It also helps us find our confidence. But a bigger challenge looms. How do we find our calling? Each of us has a purpose, a message, a gift and a raison d'être. Have you found yours yet? Toastmasters is just the beginning. With increased communication and leadership skills you have tools to transform your world. Are you ready to apply these powerful skills? Are you ready to expand your sphere of influence? It's your move!

Learn how to leverage the Toastmasters program and its Communication and Leadership tracks to make a difference in the lives of others.

Through your Toastmasters experience you have been taught skills to help you enlist others in your success, use newfound self-confidence to transcend your own barriers. It's time to set your sights on making a difference: in your company, community and even within your family.

## Craig's Story

Craig Harrison knows the Toastmasters experience! He joined a club in 1992 after a humiliating public experience. The pre-Toastmasters Craig was shy, self-conscious and suffered from low self-esteem. By his own mother's account Craig "mumbled, stumbled, fumbled and stooped."

After four months of Toastmasters Craig began to stand taller. After four speeches he began to speak louder. After a few more months he was elected President, by default. Was he ready? Not at all! Did he get help? Yes he did! Success begot success. Milestones became stepping stones in the Toastmaster program. He won contests, elections and the support of his District, serving as District Governor.

Craig's world opened up.. Hasn't yours opened up through Toastmasters? Craig shows us how to pursue both the communication and leadership tracks. He demonstrates how Mentors accelerate our growth. He also shows how Speakers are Leaders, and how Toastmasters skills directly translate into external success. He also models the power of recognition, showing how appreciation and encouragement can move mountains as well as members. Then he shows us how to apply these skills in the world at large.

## His Story is Your Story Too

Craig transformed a fear of public speaking into a professional speaking career helping others overcome their fears. He owes it all to Toastmasters. Whatever your goals, Craig shows you how Toastmasters can support your ambitions.

## About Your Presenter

CRAIG HARRISON is a Distinguished Toastmaster, Advanced Leader, a past District Governor, contributor of three dozen articles to *The Toastmaster*, and now a professional speaker and corporate trainer. He is author of *Cultivating the Leader in You*, and the 2004-05 president of the NATIONAL SPEAKERS ASSOCIATION for Northern California.



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