Toastmasters tips for mastering party talk

How to approach holiday functions with confidence

RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA, Calif., Dec. 5, 2012 /PRNewswire/ -- With the holidays come parties, and with parties come opportunities to create good—or bad—impressions. The annual office party in particular presents a chance for employees to enhance their professional image by socializing with people they don't typically work with. Toastmasters International, a global organization devoted to communication and leadership skills development, offers strategies that can help anyone build relationships by turning small talk into smart talk at holiday functions.

"Preparation is the key to making a good impression," says Toastmasters International President John Lau, an entrepreneur and business owner from Malaysia. "Identify ways you can connect with others in a meaningful, honest exchange. Take into account your actions, tone and style, which play a role in how your message is perceived."

Follow these techniques to make a good impression at office parties or any social function.

- **Plan your topics.** Think of two to three topics you can discuss with anyone.
- **Keep it lighthearted.** Avoid office gossip and controversial topics. Stay clear of topics related to sex, religion and politics.
- **Meet someone new.** Take the initiative to introduce yourself to the CEO. Or talk to someone new while waiting in the food line.
- **Spark a conversation.** Ask open-ended questions about the person you're getting to know.
- **Listen attentively.** Ask follow-up questions about the person or group you're conversing with. Listen more than you talk.
- **Be gracious.** If you're recognized for your accomplishments, gracefully accept the praise, thank the host and acknowledge your manager and your team.
- **Introduce others.** Be sure to introduce a newcomer to those you're conversing with.
- **Consider cultural differences.** Take into account figures of speech, how you present humor and personal space.
- **Limit alcohol consumption.** Know your drink limit or avoid alcohol altogether to keep your composure.

Through its proven education program and supportive club atmosphere, Toastmasters can help people sharpen their communication skills and make a great impression in the office. To learn more, visit www.toastmasters.org.

About Toastmasters International
Toastmasters International is a nonprofit educational organization that teaches public speaking and leadership skills through a worldwide network of clubs. Founded in October 1924, the organization currently has more than 280,000 members in 13,500-plus clubs in 116 countries. Each week, Toastmasters helps more than a quarter million people of every ethnicity, education level and profession build their competence in communication so they can gain the confidence to lead others. For information about local Toastmasters clubs, please visit www.toastmasters.org. Follow @Toastmasters International on Twitter.

SOURCE Toastmasters International

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