

Saudi Arabian engineer wins Toastmasters' 2015 World Championship of Public Speaking

Mohammed Qahtani rises above 30,000 participants to win world's largest speech contest

RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA, Calif., Aug. 17, 2015 /PRNewswire/ -- With a humorous speech titled "The Power of Words," Mohammed Qahtani, a security engineer from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, won the Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking on Saturday, Aug. 15. Qahtani, along with nine other final contestants, reached the championship level after several eliminating rounds that began six months ago with 30,000 participants from more than 100 countries. Watch Qahtani compete [here](#).

"It's a dream I never thought would happen in real life," said the [happy winner](#), who said he entered the contest "for practice" but never expected to bring home the World Championship trophy. His speech resonated with the capacity crowd of 2,500 people from around the world who attended the contest at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, Nevada. His winning speech was a personal tale about events in his life where "if words had been said differently, they would have elicited a radically different response."

"Your mouth can spit venom, or it can mend a broken soul," said Qahtani, who grew up being teased for having a severe stuttering speech impediment. He said as a child he was a mute who uttered his first word at age 6. "Words are power," he said in his speech. "Words can be *your* power. You can change a life, inspire a nation, make this world a beautiful place."

Qahtani joined Toastmasters six years ago. He competed in many speech contests and honed his timing in standup comedy before reaching his goal of earning the title of World Champion of Public Speaking, which he hopes will be a springboard into a career in professional speaking. In his acceptance speech, he encouraged others in the audience to "face your fears." He said, "I used to be the laughing stock at school, but look at me now. If this can happen to me, imagine what could happen to you."

Contestants delivered five-to seven-minute speeches on wide-ranging topics and were judged on content, organization and delivery.

Qahtani claimed the title of Toastmasters 2015 World Champion of Public Speaking during the organization's annual convention held in Las Vegas, Aug. 12-15. This was the first time in the history of the contest that all three top winners came from countries outside North America.

Second- and third-place winners were Aditya Maheswaran from Mumbai, India, with his speech titled "[Scratch](#)" and Manoj Vasudevan from Singapore with his speech titled, "[We Can Fix It](#)."

About Toastmasters International

Toastmasters International is a worldwide nonprofit educational organization that empowers individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders. Headquartered in Rancho Santa Margarita, California, the organization's membership exceeds 332,000 in 15,400 clubs in 135 countries. Since 1924, Toastmasters International has helped people from diverse backgrounds become more confident speakers, communicators and leaders. For information about local Toastmasters clubs, please visit www.toastmasters.org. Follow [@Toastmasters](#) on Twitter.

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