

DISTRICT LEADER BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION



Candidate's Name: Vijayakumar Vijayaratnam

Candidate's Office: Division Director

District Number: 17

Toastmasters member since 1993

Education:

Advanced Communicator Gold (DTM in July)

Advanced Leader Bronze

Toastmasters offices held and terms of service:

D'Utama Toastmasters Club (1993-2002) VPPR, VPM, Secretary, VPE, President 1999/2000

Murdoch Southsiders President 2013

Toastmasters honors and recognition:

2015 International Speech Contest District Champion (District 17)

2000 Humorous Speech Contest District Champion (District 17)

2016 International Speech Contest District 1st Runner-up (District 102)

Led both clubs when I was President to Presidents Distinguished Clubs

Relevant work experience and how it relates to Toastmasters and your role as a District officer:

I have been in Sales and Customer Service since 1990, promoting the benefits of the products and services I sold. It also followed with guidance to customers on how to maximise the benefits, how things work and handle dissatisfaction and complaints

I have been a Trainer for 13 years facilitating the learning experience of people and coaching and mentoring them in their roles from beginners to experienced staff.

These skills will definitely help me with leadership roles in Toastmasters as Leadership requires promotion of Toastmasters for the benefit of the community and supporting members achieve their personal and leadership roles. It also involves clear communication and structured feedback processes to achieve common goals of the clubs, division and district

What experience do you have in strategic planning?

In my role as Change and Communication Manager with the largest general insurance company in Malaysia from 2016 to 2017, my role involved developing communication strategy for the company focused on specific changes in the industry. This involved stakeholder engagement, scheduling, planning presentations and delivery to internal and stakeholders.

As in Toastmasters, the challenges are similar – collaboration, negotiation, having hard conversations as well as implementation. These are skills that I relied upon in my role as Area Director for E11

What experience do you have in the area of finance?

I have been the Treasurer for 2 years in the Tamil Association of WA (TAWA) as well as another 2 years in The Association of Malaysians in WA (AMWA). This involved collection and disbursement of funds, account keeping, presentation of monthly accounts to the committee, Preparation of accounts for auditing and presenting to members at the AGM. This role requires integrity, diligence and discipline. It also requires adherence to the laws of the country and rules of the association.

What experience do you have in developing procedures?

I learned a lot during my previous term in Malaysia where the Club I was with had strict procedures in place and took pride in its succession plan. I served for 5 years in various roles and appreciated the importance and challenges in each role. When I took over the presidency in Murdoch Southsiders, I used this experience in implementing some procedures with this committee and club. This included scheduling monthly committee meetings, adhering to a two-hour committee meeting schedule, formulating a structured and consistent agenda for the committee meetings and getting each committee member to provide monthly reports on achievements and challenges.

In my role as the Area Director, I established chat groups and email groups with the Presidents and VPEs of the clubs, developed a communication structure as regards to Club Visits and progress on Club Success Plan. What I am proud of as well is instilling in each club the commitment to contribute to the success of the Area Competitions and extracting equal contribution and participation.

There are challenges whenever we want to develop new procedures, but that comes with the territory when we become leaders

What lessons did you learn from previous leadership positions?

The main things I learned were:

- Clubs have their own culture, most of them positive but some changes will be helpful
- Collaboration is key. It requires some work to engage all leaders but it is more effective than having a directive approach.
- No club is “safe” in its numbers and quality if there is dependency on key figures. Succession must be in the forefront
- Multiple club membership is a double-edged sword. It helps to leverage off the strengths of members but it can also dilute the focus of these members, especially if one of the clubs is struggling

Why do you want to serve as a district officer?

I learned so much being an Area Director. It helped me develop my leadership ability and I think throwing myself in the ring with other leaders of higher caliber and experience will take me to the next level.

I also feel there is work I can do to support the district in building Toastmasters at the Division level.

In your opinion, what are the district mission's major objectives and how would you work to achieve them?

The District is striving to live up to the expectations of Toastmasters. Are members getting what they expect to get when they join this wonderful organization. How do we grow membership? How do we retain members? How do we provide the right support to the clubs and assist the leaders?

Obviously, there is work to be done. I do not have answers or solutions but I am willing to work collaboratively with the district leadership to strengthen the district and ensure the members get the best Toastmasters experience.

Additional information about yourself:

I have stepped up to support the district at various levels and in multiple roles. This includes being Chief Judge at Division level, Toastmaster of the Day, organizing supper, being an inspirational speaker and judging at competitions. This has given me a lot of exposure and I believe I can contribute more and learn more.