

A FIRST-TIMER AT THE 2011 TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION IN LAS VEGAS



Some of the delegates from Malaysia.

Attending the TI Convention (August 17-20, 2011) in Las Vegas was an eye-opener for me in many ways. I went expecting to be awed by what I would experience there. And I was not disappointed. Having the convention in the 'sin' city of Las Vegas meant that there was also plenty to see and enjoy outside the convention – an added bonus!

About 2000 delegates registered for the convention, with first-timers accounting for almost half of the total. First-timers were invited to a special gathering on Day 1, where they were warmly welcomed by the 2010-2011 TI President Pat Johnson, DTM.

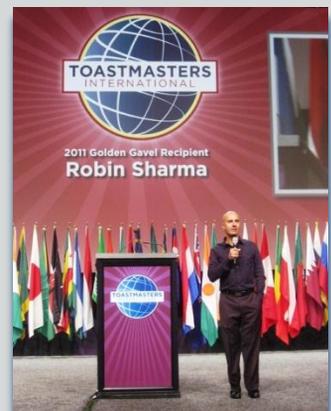
The educational sessions were divided into six Communication and six Leadership sessions. Delegates had a tough time deciding which sessions to attend.



Dana LaMon signing my copy of his book.

Dana LaMon's presentation touched me the most. He delivered such an awe-inspiring and incredibly motivating speech on "E is for Excellence in Speaking and Leading". Toastmasters here would be glad to know that Dana will be the keynote speaker at the District 51 Annual Convention in KL next April. Do seize this opportunity to hear him speak!

The other speaker who left an impact on everyone was Robin Sharma, this year's Golden Gavel recipient. His message resonated with the audience – one can be a leader without a string of titles or qualifications.



Robin Sharma - Golden Gavel recipient.

Whenever there was a break in the program, the delegates would make a beeline for the TI store. I had expected discounts or special offers for delegates, but there were none. Every item was priced as listed in the online catalogue. I had wanted to buy a banner (complete with a stand) with the new TI logo for my Maxis Toastmasters Club, but the price tag of USD70 made me think twice.

At the end of each convention day, there was a 2-hour Candidates' Reception at the foyer, where delegates could meet up informally with the candidates vying for the posts of International Officers and Directors. Each candidate had a campaign booth and a team of volunteers to help lobby for votes. As I was a proxy-holder for two clubs, I could attend the Annual Business Meeting and cast my vote as well. It was my first experience observing how a TI Officers' Election was conducted.



Browsing at the TI store.



Winners of the International Speech Contest.

The highlight of the convention was the International Speech Contest on the last convention day. The hall was packed. I sat just across the row of past champions, which included Darren LaCroix. I enjoyed listening to every one of the nine finalists. They were definitely speakers of world class standard. My favourite speaker was the eventual 1st runner-up, Kwong Yue Yang, who spoke on "Fortune Cookie".

The only grouse I had was the food served at both the Golden Gavel Dinner and the President's Dinner and Dance. At USD 95 (RM285) per pax for each dinner, I was expecting to be served fine cuisine. Fortunately, this was just a small hiccup out of an otherwise fabulous four days of learning from the (Toast)masters and enjoying the camaraderie of new and old friends at the convention.

If you have never been to a TI Convention, put it down on your to-do list. It is an experience you will never forget or regret. Believe me.

Lily Fu, CC, CL, Maxis Toastmasters Club