

Our Christmas Party

Women In Banking & Finance Toastmasters would like to wish all our members and friends a very merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year. We celebrated early this year, on Dec 3rd, and in my opinion, delivered a night of fun, surprises, and some great speaking!

*“As Christmas is not so far away,
We thought our next meeting should include some play;*

*With colours, gifts, wine and good food,
Why not come along and be cool dude;*

*The game for the night is Secret Santa,
Anything of £2-3 will be enough for a good banter;*

*Don't forget to bring your manuals too,
Until then good speakers.toodle doo!!!”*

The evening got off to a merry start in the festive Credit Suisse Auditorium. Our President Veena Hirani & Toastmaster Camilla Allwood promised a fun evening.



We were promised that if we were good we would be rewarded - our lessons would be shortened, and seasonal foods and drinks would be provided in one of the canary-wharf bars. Our guests were treated to an overview of how our meetings work, and the key players for the evening were introduced – including our very own Santa Claus, Christine Yuen.



Santa Claus Christine had arrived in costume, with a bag-full of gifts. However, unlike little children, our members and guests were delivered their gifts with a challenge – the first 6 up, had to provide an impromptu speech, placing their new product, in a settling of Santa-Claus’s choosing...

...Up first to visit Santa was the Area 31 Toastmasters Governor, our own, Jane Campell. Jane was invited to dip her hand into Santa’s Bag, and provide a 2-3 minute marketing pitch. I felt my mouth salivating when I was invited to be “overcome with feeling as I sink my tongue into the chocolate for the creamy luxurious centre”. It left me looking forward to the interval where we were all promised a real taste!



Next up, was Tina Chugani, who was challenged to provide a technical overview of her gift. Tina really stepped up to the mark when her Christmas parcel was revealed to be a luggage tag. The fact that I remember the durability, colour, and stitching on what I’d normally describe as a rather non-descript item is testament to Tina’s sales-skills. And ever the practical person, the fact that this luggage tag will stick on your luggage for ever more, was one of Tina’s key selling points.

Santa’s next helper, our guest Kevin, was challenged to explain why the Wispa Bar presented a major “Health & Safety” challenge! I suspect none of us will take look what we thought was an innocent chocolate bar in quite the same light again! Kevin, dramatically explained just how dangerous this evil bar really is – not only does it damage our waste-lines, we could do untold damage if we slipped on it, or, children may play with it ...and “Oh!” what damage that might cause!

Another guest, Sheryl then visited with Santa. Sheryl was generously rewarded for being a good girl all year – she was rewarded with large chocolate pieces seasonally wrapped in bright green paper. And boy was she happy – she thanked Santa for the wonderful gift, recognising that “There is a God” and commented on the amazing chocolates that were all different shapes and sizes.

The next brave visitor to Santa’s Cave was our past president Deepa Srinivas. Deepa unwrapped a great fridge magnet, and suggested we should all take the message to heart – something like “We should accept that great-results from teamwork, but that when something goes wrong, make sure someone else gets the blame!” Having read the message aloud, Deepa chose the brave route for a Toastmaster – changing her mind, and reminding us how great team-work really is!

Alas, not everyone could visit Santa during the meeting. Our last member to receive this honour was Angela Caldara. Angela, with her usual display of humour and imagination, took us all on a journey with her – we listened as her radio broadcaster dreams came though – Santa had revealed to her, the location of an object that landed on earth from Mars. And we were all spell-bound..

And so, back to reality, and the members of the club who, elected as “good girls” for the night, had worked through all the merriment of Santa’s Visit. Anabela Pinto & Charmian Ingham, evaluated each visit, and delivered gems of the wisdom, encouragement, reward, and practical suggestions based on the proceedings. Bella Patel rewarded everyone for not overstaying their welcome. And alas, at this point, our Santa Claus was on her merry-way, bring with her a close to our impromptu speaking session.



After a brief intermission out Toastmaster for the evening, Camilla Allwood, reconvened the merry-making. Having introduced all our guests earlier in the night, Camilla called upon our prepared speaker Gauri Dandeker with an appropriately festive speech title “Make ‘em laugh”.

For Gauri, “Comedy is a Serious Business” - she enthralled us with tales of her stand-up comedy classes and treated us to a free 5-minute intro to her skit. Her recount of the difficulties experienced by Asian-looking travellers in today’s Airports had all of us in tears of laughter! She’s certainly a lady who knows how to exercise her funny bone. Gauri, unfortunately is moving clubs in 2009, following a work relocation, and we’d like to take this opportunity to wish her well. I’m sure we’ll see much more of this lady in the Toastmasters world in the near future.



How appropriate that Gauri’s evaluator was the winner of this years humorous speakers contest, Raya Brody. Although Raya commented that her status as Club Comedian was under threat she provided an interesting and thought provoking evaluation, that we all learnt from – and was awarded “Best Evaluator” of the night.

As promised, our formal lessons were wrapped up early for the night. However, there was one final treat in store for each of us – the esteemed Freddie Daniels took to the stage to provide a general evaluation of our meeting. Freddie, the London division governor (i.e. most senior member), of Toastmasters provided us all with some food for thought, as he commended the things he had enjoyed during the night, and suggested areas in which we could all improve. I personally appreciate the way he moved about the stage to demonstrate the power of choosing the right position for your message.

Once Veena had wrapped up the formal part of the evening, Santa returned to deliver us all a Secret-Santa present, and invited us for drinks and refreshments at a local venue... To reveal the story of what happened next would be telling...Join us at our new members evening on January 28th 2009 to find out more. For a hint, check out our our Facebook club (WIBF Toastmasters) or our photos

<http://picasaweb.google.co.uk/BELAphotography/ToastmastersWIBF>

Thanks again to our wonderful sponsors Credit Suisse for their on-going provision of a meeting-room and refreshments