

DISTRICT LEADER (DIV-G) BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION



Candidate's Name: **Eric James Garza**

Candidate's Office: **Division G Director** District Number: **55**

Toastmasters member since: **06/2016**

Education:

**BS Information Technology
BS Electrical Engineering**

Toastmasters offices held and terms of service:

**2018-2019 G34 Area Director
2018-2019 President
2017-2018 VPE, VPM**

Toastmasters honors and recognition:

**CC, CL, ALB
DL5 (Dynamic Leadership Path complete)**

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

My job as a qualitative researcher for USAA keeps me "close to the people", but also allows me the flexibility to lead part of a project that could impact thousands of employees - working with people is a big part of what I do for a living. I also serve as the Communications Chair for the San Antonio Chapter of Adelante - USAA's Hispanic Diversity & Inclusion Business Group. In this role, I lead over 40 employee-volunteers to create communications and produce multi-media deliverables (videos, posters, fliers) in support of the group. In Toastmasters, I serve as Club President of USAA Toastmasters and G34 Area Director. The summation of all of these experiences has prepared me for the next level in district leadership.

What experience do you have in strategic planning?

My professional career in USAA often had me in areas that were new and needed a lot of planning, forecasting, and development of metrics and KPIs. In the data and analytics space, I pioneered the establishment of the information design domain. In the qualitative research space, I currently serve as the work stream owner for communications and design. Both of these domains required a lot of strategic planning and forecasting in order to meet our objectives. The strategic imperatives I designed mapped directly to executable tactics that I was responsible for overseeing.

What experience do you have in the area of finance?

My finance experience is spread mostly across my roles in Toastmasters and in Adelante. With Toastmasters, I trained my club Treasurer on how to properly utilize USAA's internal financial system to track spend on new membership dues and renewals. With Adelante, I am responsible for tracking proper spend of over \$10,000 of company funds in support of the group's communications and audio/video equipment.

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What experience do you have in developing procedures?

I don't believe in relying on "tribal knowledge" - I never liked not knowing something because the subject matter expert didn't bother to document their thoughts. When Adelante started in 2017, I personally created the process and procedures for the San Antonio Communications Committee. We had to have a documented process to field incoming requests from our Events Committee to maintain an acceptable service level objective. So I created the process for developing communications and marketing tactics, reviewed with key stakeholders and established the cloud storage medium to easily share the information with working group volunteers. My processes received rave reviews and have been shared with other chapter leads in Colorado Springs, Phoenix, and Tampa.

What lessons did you learn from previous leadership positions?

One of the biggest lessons I learned is delegation. I'm a problem-solver by nature. When someone tells me something is wrong, I immediately jump into fix-it mode. As Area Director, there are many areas of opportunities that I became aware of during my club visits. I had to reformat my thinking to change from "fix-it myself" to teach others how to address these situations. Not everything can be fixed overnight, but teaching the people "how to fish" is a much more efficient use of time and will eventually yield greater results.

Why do you want to serve as a district officer?

I'm ready to tackle the challenge to lead at a higher level within the Toastmasters organization. I've told everyone who asked, and some who haven't - Toastmasters changed my life. Engaging with the program, delivering speeches, and serving as an officer has given me a new sense of confidence that I know would've taken so much longer to develop had it not been for Toastmasters. I want to continue to expand my influence from my club, to all USAA clubs, to the Division.

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

The district, and Toastmasters in general, are in a delicate state right now. Though a fantastic program, Pathways has created a knowledge gap and we've lost members and even clubs because of it. The need to educate has never been greater. I feel many of our tenured members were comfortable and Pathways upset the natural order as they saw it. We have to continue to push Pathways education to officers and members in order to stabilize the "Toastmasters Experience" for existing and new members alike. We will not be able to achieve or maintain any of our objectives if Pathways doesn't get straightened out.

Additional information about yourself:

I saw the train coming. Once it was announced, I knew Pathways was going to be a killer. I knew that there would be some who would accept it, but I knew it would be slow moving for most members. When the program launched in February 2018, I hit it as hard as I could. When members came to me as VPE, I wanted to give them first-hand knowledge and advice on how to best utilize the program to their advantage. I wanted to give my fellow officers first-hand knowledge on how to be a steward of Pathways in support of our club. I hit Pathways so hard, I was the first in District 55 to complete a path (Dynamic Leadership). I accepted a role on Lorraine Boyden's Pathways Support Team (PST) as an avenue to share my experience and continue to teach and educate our members in Pathways. I feel we're more on-board the train, rather than under it.