

Voices of Lincoln Toastmasters 2019-20 Public Relations Action Plan

Divya Venugopalan, VPPR for 2019-20

Timing/ Frequency	Area of Responsibility	Task(s)	Owner(s)	Performance Measure (Describe Target/Goal)	Status/Notes
August / September/ October 2019	Club promotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voices of Lincoln Toastmasters reaching out to neighborhood and community. Reach out to local stores, offices, apartments, library within Rocklin, Lincoln and Roseville. Catchy promotion tag line eg Voices of Lincoln toastmasters is here in Rocklin #VOLT in Rocklin; VOLT in Roseville; VOLT in Lincoln Prepare for contest with details mentioned Prize for maximum reach out. Winners declared will be declared (Oct or Nov) 	VPPR VPM	Plan includes activities that are measurable (with targets/goals)	In Progress
September 2019	Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team building- kayaking with Volt members on Saturday Morning (Dates TBA) 	VPPR, VPM	100% retention of current members (all current members renew for next 6 months)	TBD
September 2019	Open House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create open house marketing materials Eventbrite, Facebook page Publicize open house to social media and traditional media 	VPPR, VPM, VPE	At least two media outlets share our marketing materials, 10 guests attend open house, 5 new members	TBD
March 2020	Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish internal-focused newsletter highlighting club/member accomplishments and goals for next 6 months 	VPPR, VP Education, VPM Need to provide some info?	100% retention of current members (all current members renew for next 6 months)	TBD
TBD	Open House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create open house marketing materials Publicize open house on social media and traditional media 	VPPR, VPM, VPE	At least two media outlets share our marketing materials, 10 guests attend open house, 5 new members	TBD
TBD	Other Clubs in Rocklin/Roseville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit two other clubs in Roseville or Rocklin Explore how to best cross-promote 	VPPR/ VPM	2 other clubs in Rocklin/ Roseville/ Lincoln visited, exchange information,	TBD

Timing/ Frequency	Area of Responsibility	Task(s)	Owner(s)	cross-promotion and collaboration begin to take place Performance Measure (Describe Target/Goal)	Status/Notes
Weekly/ Monthly	Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities for collaboration Facebook Page <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post weekly updates on Facebook page Maintain active engagement (e.g., authentically) on community-based Facebook pages, publicize club when able to do so Instagram or LinkedIn <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an account 	VPPR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 52+ posts on club's Facebook page 12+ posts to Instagram Authentic/regular community-based engagement on Facebook and Instagram Encourage club members to like, comment, share posts All resulting in increased social media engagement/visibility 	Ongoing
Monthly	Photo Contest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in Toastmasters Photo Contest 	VPPR	Photo submitted monthly, win!	In Progress for August 2019
Monthly	Officers Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide regular updates on status of VPPR activities 	VPPR	Monthly updates provided	In Progress for August 2019

Goals/Impact for 2019-20

- 2 focused retention efforts resulting in 100% retention of current members (Meetup and newsletter)
- 2 focused recruitment efforts resulting in 8 new members (Open house)
- 52+ posts on club's Facebook page, authentic/regular community-based engagement on Facebook and Instagram in increased social media engagement/visibility
- Monthly VPPR updates provided at club officer meetings

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Presenting the **COMMUNICATION ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

A WIN-WIN SITUATION!

Imagine an evening with the leaders of your local community, all gathered to honor a local dignitary with a Toastmasters award for excellence in communication.

The evening commences with outstanding speeches given by club members, continues with some fun and excitement as the larger community experiences Table Topics for the first time, and ends with a heartfelt presentation of the Toastmasters Communication Achievement award.

The recipient then gives a presentation on a relevant topic and thanks your Toastmasters club for the acknowledgment. Everyone at this magical event has learned the name of your Toastmasters club and several people ask you about visiting a meeting and perhaps joining.

The following week, the work you put into promoting your event pays off and a story about the Communication Achievement Award ceremony runs in the local online paper. Your next meeting has five guests who discovered the wonderful things your club is doing and want to learn more.

It's time to enjoy this wonderful event in your town. Setting up this award is easy, and the results will motivate and energize every member of your club *and your community!*



BENEFITS OF THIS AWARD

TO YOUR CLUB:

By presenting this award as part of a special event, your club will develop its relationship with the larger community and be recognized for excellence in communication and leadership.

TO YOUR COMMUNITY:

When community members are recognized for their leadership and extraordinary communication skills, the entire community benefits. Such acknowledgment can encourage more members of your city to step up and take responsibility for the well-being of the community.

The Toastmasters' Communication Achievement Award is your club's opportunity to honor someone outside your club, either in the community or your organization – a distinguished individual in the fields of communication or leadership. In addition to recognizing someone's achievements, the presentation of this award, if handled wisely, can result in excellent publicity for your club. Here are some guidelines to make the Communication Achievement Award event a success for your club:

WHEN AND WHERE TO PRESENT THE AWARD

- ▶ You can make it an annual event. However, since the high standards of the award should be maintained, do not feel that the award must be presented every year. Present it when the club feels that someone in the community or organization deserves it. By the same token, don't present it more than once in any given year.
- ▶ Look around your community. Is there a location that is well-known for special events?
- ▶ The award can be part of a special club program – an officer installation night, theme meeting, anniversary celebration or other special event.

CRITERIA – SELECTING YOUR RECIPIENT

- ▶ The recipient should be known in the community in which the club is based or by the organization sponsoring the club.
- ▶ The recipient should be distinguished as a leader or outstanding speaker. Examples might be a company executive who has been a spokesperson for a particular industry or trade association, a city mayor who has improved the community, a media person (radio, TV, Internet or print) who is an effective communicator – perhaps one whose articles or program have had particular impact or promoted Toastmasters.
- ▶ The recipient should be able to personally accept the award.
- ▶ The recipient can be a former Toastmaster who has gone on to become successful in business or other fields.

PUBLICITY – MAKING THE MOST OF THE EVENT

- ▶ Try to find a newsworthy recipient – someone the local news media would cover.
- ▶ Consult *Let the World Know, Toastmasters' Publicity and Promotion Handbook* (Item 1140) for more publicity ideas and news release examples. Also visit the Media Center at mediacenter.toastmasters.org.
- ▶ Distribute a news release well in advance of the meeting. Follow up to ensure receipt of the release, but don't depend on the media to cover the event. The Communication Achievement Award news release can be found at www.toastmasters.org/samplenewsreleases.
- ▶ Take photographs of the acceptance speech and distribute a clear photo to your local media with a synopsis of the speech and your event.
- ▶ Be sure to provide your district's public relations officer with a photo and information about the award recipient for inclusion in the district newsletter and website.
- ▶ Also notify World Headquarters, at pr@toastmasters.org, about the news coverage you receive.

CEREMONY – PLANNING A MEMORABLE EVENT

Use *Put On a Good Show* (Item 220) as a guide in planning your arrangements. Here are some hints:

- ▶ Prepare a meeting agenda or program.
- ▶ Check with the speaker beforehand regarding his or her presentation needs. Handouts? PowerPoint requirements?
- ▶ Create an introduction of the award winner that emphasizes why he or she is being honored.
- ▶ To save time, introduce only the most important guests.
- ▶ If other clubs are represented, invite the president of each club to introduce his/her club without naming individual members.
- ▶ As a simpler alternative, you may wish to present the award within a regular club meeting.

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**Tips for
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Bring in visitors to build a bigger, better club.

BY PAUL STERMAN

So you want to add more members to your club. It's a goal that members have strived toward ever since ... well, likely since Ralph Smedley formed the first Toastmasters International club in October 1924. No doubt members of that small Santa Ana, California, group said to themselves, *Let's get more people in here so we have more help with the meeting roles!*

The more members, the better the club experience.

Of course, not everyone loves to be in a big club. But for the most part, that's an enviable problem to have. A quality club should have at least 20 members.

So how do you gain more people? Especially now, in a year where COVID-19 has cast its shadow, prompting Toastmasters clubs around the world to move online for their meetings. Here are some tried-and-true techniques to aid your mission, whether your recruiting efforts are aimed at online meetings or the traditional in-person club setting. The sections below explore key aspects of membership-building, including **social media**, **open houses**, **recruitment strategies**, and **community outreach programs**.

Social Media

Digital marketing is particularly valuable in today's world. Promote your club and its events on social media networks like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram. Toastmasters International also has a YouTube channel and a Twitter account. [Meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) is a popular site for promoting Toastmasters meetings.

Lauren Parsons, a New Zealand Toastmaster, says Facebook is a fertile ground for generating interest in your club. She suggests having a club member be assigned at each meeting to take photos—someone giving a speech, for example, or participating in Table Topics. Post the pictures on your club's Facebook page. Then tag those members, which means their friends and connections will see the photos too.

"This means we will be able to organically reach more people and create conversations about what is going on at our Toastmasters club meetings," says Parsons, 2019-2020 Club President of the Talk of the Town Toastmasters in Palmerston North, New Zealand. She created [three videos](#) on PR tips for Facebook, including how to create a club Facebook page.

Yesica Vazquez, DTM, a Toastmaster in California, is also a big advocate of social media as a marketing tool. She has posted about her club's Toastmasters meetings on Instagram, describing snippets of action to spark interest from non-members.

"I think social media is one of the most pivotal things that members and clubs can use to help promote their clubs, especially smaller ones," she says.

Meetings Matter the Most

Membership-building starts with quality club meetings. Like trying to sell a car with a shiny outside but a lame engine, you can't sell your Toastmasters club if the product isn't sturdy and successful. High-quality meetings show visitors this is a place where they can learn and grow, where they can achieve personal and professional goals. That's what turns guests into members.

Balraj Arunasalam, DTM, Toastmasters' 2017-2018 International President, knows membership-building well. When he became president of the Colombo Toastmasters Club in Sri Lanka nearly 20 years ago, there were only three clubs in the small island nation. Now, because of the work done by him and other Toastmasters leaders, Sri Lanka has more than 150 clubs.

Compelling club meetings draw people, stresses Arunasalam. As he stated in a 2018 column for the *Toastmaster* magazine: "Guests and members are eager to attend club meetings that are exciting, offer diverse topics, provide valuable opportunities, and have great speakers and dynamic leaders."

That applies equally to online meetings. The virtual format offers a high-quality experience of its own. It presents an opportunity for members to stretch their skills, building their confidence and comfort level with communicating online. That's a particularly valuable skill in today's global workplace.

One advantage of recruiting guests to online meetings is that it's easier for them to attend—they can see what Toastmasters is all about from the comfort of their own home. And if visitors are inexperienced with virtual communication, share [resources for online club meetings](#) that will help them feel more comfortable in that setting.

"In some ways, you've won or lost a new member in their first 30 seconds in the room."

— IAN BROOKS

Hold an Open House

An open house is basically what it sounds like: an open invitation to visit your Toastmasters home and see what you do. It's one of the most reliable tools for recruiting new members.

Set up the event like a standard club meeting, with the same kind of structure and activities (and applause!) Show your guests the feeling of achievement they will gain. Explain each aspect of the meeting. And provide plenty of time for members and visitors to mingle.

Vazquez, the California Toastmaster, says her club—the San Diego Toastmasters 7—typically tries to hold three or four open houses a year. One such event drew close to 80 people last year, she says.

What's the key to a successful open house? Planning and promotion. Have a club committee plan the event. Invite members of the community and publicize the free program in local media outlets. (Access contact information for such outlets at [Mondo Times](#).)

Promote your program with a [customizable Toastmasters flier](#). Email the flier or print it out and post it around your community. Be sure to include online meeting information, if applicable.

Also invite "alumni"—past members who for one reason or another let their membership lapse. In addition, consider inviting members of local Rotary clubs; Toastmasters International and Rotary International recently formed an alliance to mutually benefit each organization. There's an email template you can personalize and use to invite Rotarians to Toastmasters club meetings, as well as a [PowerPoint template](#) for talking to Rotary clubs about teaming up in a local alliance.

At the event, have a guest packet ready for visitors, even a virtual one you can email later. You can fill it with marketing materials such as the Toastmasters brochures [Find Your Voice](#) and [Your Path to Leadership](#), and provide a link to the online [Toastmaster magazine](#).

It's important that open house speakers represent a mix of experience levels, says Vazquez, a 2019–2020 Division Director in District 5. If only the club's most distinguished speakers give speeches, she notes, novices in the audience might feel intimidated, thinking there are no beginners in Toastmasters.



“I think social media is one of the most pivotal things that members and clubs can use to help promote their clubs.”

– YESICA VAZQUEZ, DTM

Reach Out

There is an art to reaching out and recruiting new members. One immediate step is something Toastmasters know well: talking. Talk up Toastmasters. Tell people about the organization’s value. Give an “elevator speech” about your own experience and how you’ve benefited. Share your message with friends, family members, neighbors, colleagues, community members, and others.

Pitching to potential members isn’t just about touting the value of Toastmasters—it’s about what the program can do for that person specifically. Find out what they’re looking for and tailor your message to how Toastmasters can help them with their own specific goals and needs.

Like so many things, word of mouth carries weight; in fact, it’s still the most effective recruiting tool. That’s what helped Ian Proud’s club boost membership. “People do things because someone they trust asks them to do it,” says Proud, a member of the Greater Susquehanna Valley club in Pennsylvania. “Members [in our club] asked friends and colleagues to accompany them to a meeting. They tended to stay and became members.”

If your club is meeting online, invite guests with a digital document created for that very purpose: the [Online Prospect Flier](#).

Follow Through

As important as getting the word out is following through on your actions. A first impression is made even before a guest walks in the door. If someone calls or writes your club to ask questions or express an interest in visiting, make sure to respond promptly. Consider this: In a Toastmasters International survey last year of prospective members who had contacted a club, 60% of the respondents said they did not ultimately attend a club meeting; when asked why, more than 70% said it was because the club failed to respond.

Ian Brooks is determined to not let those opportunities slip away. “We work to get an email answer out to every inquiry within hours, and certainly within 24 hours,” says the 2019-2020 Vice President Membership (VPM) for the Eagle Club in Wallingford, Connecticut. “I always offer my cellphone number and invite questions at any time by ‘talk, text, or type’ and remind inquirers of the next meeting details a few days prior.”

The club’s initial email response features a positive, encouraging tone, highlighting that there is no charge to visit and no pressure to speak. It includes an invitation to attend the next meeting. “We are promoting public-speaking training with friendly individual and group support,” says Brooks. “It’s how we connect with guests who clearly have some ‘need’ to simply make the effort to contact us.”

The 25-year-old club has attained President’s Distinguished status every year since 2003.

The Kossowan Touch

Peter Kossowan, DTM, is legendary in Toastmasters circles for his persuasive powers. The Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, resident has chartered more than 170 new Toastmasters clubs. That’s not a misprint. A member for 50 years, he is passionate about bringing new people and clubs into the organization, and very successful at it. He finds a softer approach works better than a hard sell.

When Kossowan meets prospects, he doesn’t say, “You should join Toastmasters”—he says, “Why don’t you join me at a Toastmasters meeting and see for yourself the benefits?”

Many clubs and Districts have membership-building resources on their website. [District 97](#) in Southeast Asia has such materials, and one resource offers these tips, among others:

- ▶ Ask members to wear their Toastmasters pin or badge—it will generate questions from other people that members, in turn, can answer and use as an invitation.
- ▶ Print club business cards and give them to members to hand others.

District 69 in Australia features a [raft of resources](#) on its site, including customized videos, presentations, letter templates, and a checklist—compiled from varied Toastmasters materials—to monitor the effectiveness of a club’s guest-to-member journey.

“These tools have been very effective for our clubs,” says Mark Snow, DTM, the District’s 2019-2020 Club Growth Director (CGD).

He and his team developed the framework for the resources, basing it on best practices of customer experience and sales practices in the corporate sector, he says. The District posted the resources in the summer of 2019 and the number of new members increased by 10% before the coronavirus outbreak, Snow adds.

In the Meeting

Greet your guests and make them feel comfortable and welcome. That's the golden rule of visitor protocol. A club member should greet guests when they walk in the door—some clubs even have an “official greeter.” Invite the guest to sit next to a member, who is essentially a personal host, helping the visitor understand what's happening every step of the way.

How important is this initial welcome? “In some ways, you've won or lost a new member in their first 30 seconds in the room,” says Brooks, the Toastmaster from Connecticut.

You can add a more personal flavor by giving everyone name tags to wear or putting name tents in front of everyone's seat. In Zoom calls, have people set their names to appear on the screen. Have visitors sign a guestbook or a similar document, so the club has their names and contact information on file. Also, provide them with information about your club, a club contact, and Toastmasters materials about membership and benefits; this can be done virtually or through a physical packet.

One practical but essential matter: Be sure your club website information is up to date, particularly when and where your club meets. The last thing you want is a guest missing your meeting because the information they read was wrong. Confirm that your club's information is also accurately listed on the Toastmasters website's Find a Club section.



Offer Speechcraft

A Speechcraft program is a great pitch for Toastmasters. Speechcraft is one of the organization's community-outreach programs, and clubs use it to teach the fundamentals of public speaking to non-members. Aside from helping people boost their comfort level with public speaking, the hope is that participants will decide to continue their skill-building by joining Toastmasters.

Clubs typically present Speechcraft through a series of workshops, delivered in four, six, or eight sessions. The program introduces people to the core of club meetings, with speeches, Table Topics, and evaluations.

Speechcraft offers non-members a taste of Toastmasters, a brief exposure to the benefits you can gain over the long term. As such, it's an excellent recruiting tool—and about to get better.

The Education Team at Toastmasters World Headquarters is modernizing and improving the Speechcraft program, bringing its content more in line with the current education program, Pathways. The updated program will include digital content. The expanded program is expected to be ready later this year; in the meantime, the [original Speechcraft program](#) is still available and highly effective. **T**

Be sure to formally acknowledge your guests in the meeting, and at the end, ask them if they would like to offer any comments on their experience. Always invite guests to come back, and ask them to join your club. That last part—“the ask”—is essential. Kossowan, the champion club-starter from Canada, says he has been to too many meetings where that final step is skipped. “They don't invite visitors to join. You have to ask for the sale!”

Always invite guests to come back, and ask them to join your club. That last part—“the ask”—is essential.

MORE MEMBERSHIP-BUILDING RESOURCES

- ▶ [The Benefits of Membership](#) outlines the value of being a Toastmaster.
- ▶ [Moments of Truth](#) offers tips for making positive first impressions on club guests.
- ▶ A [PowerPoint presentation](#) is available to use at open houses.
- ▶ Toastmasters [membership-building contests](#) are held throughout the year.

Do you have particular membership-building strategies that have worked for your club? Share your tips at magazine@toastmasters.org.

Paul Serman is senior editor, executive & editorial content, for *Toastmasters International*.

Spread the Word

How to get press coverage in a disrupted, digital world.

BY CORINNE CARD

Getting publicity is a huge boost for any organization, including your own Toastmasters club. Seeing the club in the media is exciting for members. Publicity can also build awareness for what the club is doing, bringing in new members who could find Toastmasters a life-changing experience.

One way to bolster your skills and knowledge is through the “Public Relations Strategies” elective project in [Pathways](#), where you’ll get a chance to road-test your public relations (PR) skills and help your club get noticed in the process.

The biggest question for clubs seeking to showcase Toastmasters’ benefits for their communities is: “How can we best work with journalists?”

“If you want publicity for your Toastmasters club, or for anything else in the digital age, you need to get involved in content creation,” explains Jon Card, a business journalist and author of *How to Make Your Company Famous*. “Create your own bio—a short, powerful sentence about who you are; learn how to tell your story; have a longer, written profile about yourself; have lots of images—both still and moving; and become very quotable.”

When it comes to digital media—press coverage that gets published online—it’s often said that content is king. What this means is that you will need to prepare the stories, pictures, quotes, and data for the publications in which you want to appear.

In this respect, PR and media haven’t changed that much, says Chantal Cooke, managing director of PR agency Panpathic Communications in London, England. For Cooke, it’s all about creating good and

relevant content. “With any campaign, you have to start with the outcomes you’re hoping for. What do you want to achieve and who are you trying to reach?”

According to Cooke, the next step is to look at the platforms your target audience will be using and build content that will likely get published on those platforms—perhaps that means a compelling story, a video, a photo, or straightforward information. She adds, “At the end of the day, it’s always about the content being relevant and right for the publication.”

For example, if your club is looking for new members, consider which news outlets in your area would best reach potential members. Then pitch the kind of stories those news sources and websites are likely to publish. For Toastmasters, this could be your local newspaper, news or radio websites, magazines, and blogs.

I’ve spent my career as a digital PR professional helping businesses promote themselves and have provided five top tips to help you get noticed by journalists and the media in the digital age.

Tip 1: Learn to tell your story.

Every Toastmasters club or individual needs a good story if they want to get press. “Journalists need to know who you are, what you do, why you do it, and how you’re trying to make a difference to the world,” explains Card. “The fastest and most memorable way to do this is to tell them a short story that explains why you are doing this. Why did you join Toastmasters and what benefits can it offer someone else? Why should someone visit your club? Journalists want

to know the human story, the personal motivation—that’s absolutely key.” When it comes to finding the human story, think of your club members’ achievements, personal and professional goals that were met through Pathways, or a success story of someone who competed in a speech contest.



Tip 2: Conduct your own photoshoot.

The digital age has brought about changes, not only in the process journalists use, but also in the budgets they’re working with. Lower budgets mean it’s less likely a journalist will be able to send out a photographer, even if they like the story. And often, no photo can mean no coverage. The solution? Organize your own photoshoot, aiming for high quality, illustrative pictures that help to tell the story. James Hurley, enterprise editor at *The Times*, a British newspaper, says, “A good picture can bring the pages and a story to life.”

If you don’t have the budget to pay a professional photographer, you can still get good, high-resolution pictures using a



smartphone. For best results, go outside for natural light, choose a location with an interesting background, and find someone you know who has some photographic ability to help you out. And always try to illustrate the story you're telling in your pictures.

Tip 3: Get linking.

A clickable link can be valuable in digital PR. Often, it simply means readers can easily click through to the event, website, or competition you're trying to get publicity for, making it far more likely that you'll get more visits.

Always think about where you might want a journalist to link to and include that link in the article you send them. Just

“If you want publicity for your Toastmasters club, or for anything else in the digital age, you need to get involved in content creation.”

—JON CARD

journalists on any of the topics you might want to speak about. These can be quotes from other members of your club or people who have come to visit, but be sure to get their permission!

Meanwhile, calling up journalists is not generally recommended, as top journalists can no longer deal with the influx. “I have more or less stopped answering my landline at certain times of the day because of the constant bombardment,” says Hurley, *The Times* editor. “It’s a shame, because it does mean I miss some good ideas.”

One way around this is to get ahead of the pack with perfect timing. Look ahead for key newsworthy dates and pitch a story just when journalists will need it. This way, your story’s email subject line will stand out from the crowd.

For example, during the holidays, journalists tend to publish holiday-themed stories. Is your club



make sure the link is relevant and potentially useful to the reader, because the journalist will need to be able to justify it from their audience’s point of view.

Tip 4: Prepare a quote bank.

In the digital age, journalists are more desk-bound, and email interviews are the new normal. You can take advantage of this by building up a bank of quotes, stories, and photos that are available on demand and ready to send out to

Also, if you receive a list of questions from a journalist, it is important to remember that they are attempting to elicit quotes from you. Avoid answering questions with a “yes” or “no”—even if they are closed questions. Instead, aim to answer each question with a few meaningful sentences.

Tip 5: Time the perfect pitch.

Sending out a [press release](#) about your organization is increasingly hit and miss in today’s digital era. Even local journalists will often receive upward of 100 email pitches per day, meaning good, relevant stories will get missed if they don’t catch a journalist’s eye straight away.

planning a holiday-themed event or special occasion? Send details to the local news at the beginning of December, with a fabulous photo from last year’s event, to show readers what might be in store this year. And look ahead to other calendar dates to see what you could prepare.

Make journalists’ lives easier by giving them exactly what they want, exactly when they want it. Follow these tips, and you’ll quickly start seeing results. **T**

Corinne Card is co-founder of [Full Story Media](#), which helps make mission-led entrepreneurs famous so they can change the world for the better. Get in touch: corinne@fullstorymedia.co.uk