



HOW TO MAKE AN IMPROMPTU TOAST

1 **Keep it simple.**

A toast made in front of colleagues should be brief and safe.

2 **Follow the “Past, Present, Future” (PPF) rule.**

Acknowledge past successes, present situations, and future objectives. For example: “We’ve been through a difficult year together, but in the end, we made it a successful one. I can think of no better team to be moving forward with—I love working with all of you. Here’s to a bright and successful future together.”

3 **Avoid problems.**

Stay away from losses, morale problems, indictments, former employees, or other natural or human-made disasters. If the last year has been truly horrible, refer to it in a neutral, ambiguous way: “It’s been quite a year . . .” or, “As this extraordinary year comes to an end . . .” If the problems are continuing and you don’t want to lie, say something emphatic but meaningless: “What a group of people to work with!” or, “I’ve never worked with a group like this!” or, “The talents and abilities of all of you continue to amaze me!” The future is the easiest portion of the toast, since you can hope and wish without regard to reality. Nonetheless, moderation is best: “The coming year promises to be astonishing!” or, “The sky’s the limit in the year ahead.”



4 Focus on the people.

Your toast should be about people in general—about spirit, creativity, and bonding—rather than about specific financial results, projects undertaken, or company goals. All of the partygoers are hoping you don't mention them by name, and they really want to get back to eating and drinking.

5 Use humor judiciously.

A little levity may be appreciated, but jokes can slow down your toast and breed restlessness. Depending upon your condition, you may be in no position to gauge what is funny. Attempts at humor could backfire and insult people, open wounds, or just be incomprehensible. If a remark or a joke bombs, keep going. Pausing will only call attention to it and add to the audience's discomfort.

6 Smile, nod, and look proud as you are speaking.

Keep your glass raised and lift it even higher as you conclude the toast. Remember, no one is really listening, anyway.