

Toastmasters International PR Toolbox

District 99

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TRANSFERABLE SKILLS, PR PROGRAM OF THE YEAR AWARD

Being Vice President of Public Relations (VP of PR) is an opportunity to develop transferable skills: campaign development, planning, consulting, editing, event management, photography, graphic design, networking, team leadership... Furthermore, the district offers a PR Program of the Year Award – see District 99’s website: Club Resources – drop down tab Of the Year Awards.

PR SUCCESS PLAN AND COMMITTEE

There so many PR opportunities and options. You can get a crew together in a PR committee, find out who wants to do which jobs and let them surprise you with their creativity. Writing your objectives for the year and who will do what by when creates ownership and accountability. (Ask District 99’s Communications team for PR success plan examples and templates)

The PR Committee also serves as Succession Plan if a member steps up to be VP of PR next year. Bring other officers and members into the PR Program and encourage everyone to share their ideas.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS & CORPORATE CLUBS

These organizations are closed loops for communication and may have TV & radio stations; HR & communications teams that support Toastmasters; notice boards; internal TV screens; intranet/social media such as Yammer; eblasts and newsletters.

If a senior executive is a Toastmaster it’s a PR coup, as it shows clearly that the organization values the program. Open-to-all presentations about speechcraft and leadership gain publicity and attract guests. The University of Alberta used internal newsletters to get 100 people registered for such workshops.

TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Events open the doors of newspapers, radio, and TV. The smaller the community, the easier it is to gain coverage.

For example, a club in Red Deer, population 100,000, has also been successful without special events. RDNewsNow, a local online media outlet, publishes a monthly update/post about activities at Sunrise Toastmasters. <https://rdnewsnow.com/community/news/592213/sunrise-toastmasters-club-red-deer-kicks-new-year> Inviting a reporter from The Red Deer Express to a meeting generated this story: <https://www.reddeerexpress.com/news/sunrise-toastmasters-club-helps-folks-conquer-public-speaking-fears/>

Supply an interesting photo, not just the standard grip and grin – get the contestant winners to fist bump or jump for joy. Unleash your team’s creativity.

Club and members achievements are news: A press release including a quote from president about what TM offers is more effective than one that just says “Jane Doe won a speaking contest/has earned Pathway Level 1,” as that secondary quote is the real call to visit a club.

EVENTS

Event listings can be free.

Examples from Saskatoon (population 250,000):

Sasktel networking https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1076058285904491&id=638831206293870

Saskdo

Kijiji & classifieds

Coffee-news.ca sometimes gives free event listings. This newspaper brand distributes free copies in coffee shops across Canada.

Other event listing opportunities include: local internet media groups i.e. informal business directory, local buy and sell groups, local community and events groups.

Send press releases to your local media about: club contests, club & individual achievements such as a Pathway Level, or Distinguished Club Award.

The more creative the better

At the start of the wedding season Saskatoon Toastmasters organized a mock wedding, a ticketed event with catered Mexican dinner and live music.

The public took part and asked questions and advice – plenty of nervous emcees & best men out there. The Bride & Bride were volunteers. Event included icebreaker and roasting of the Bride and Best Man’s speech. An excellent way to attract media coverage before and after the wedding.

Each year Saskatoon Toastmasters gather at Speakers’ Corner by the Town hall next to the public speaking monument. This Town Hall Meeting gains TV coverage.

A camper van decorated with Toastmasters banners and balloons in the summer, Christmas and pride parades is low-cost, fun publicity.

Hold a job search event with mock interviews. Or one on how to give a presentation and tackle impromptu speaking. Such an event can be advertised via a club’s mailing list of former guests and members, with a Facebook link included for sharing. It isn’t asking them to return to the club, it’s saying “Here’s an expert whose information speaks to your needs.”

In Sylvan Lake, population 15,000, a rodeo queen came to Toastmasters to practice her speech ahead of the big day. The club held an open house, using her star power as guest speaker to attract 10 guests.

Base an open house on something, instead of just advertising “Open House”. A guest speaker’s “Overcome your inner fears to achieve your dreams” speech attracted 30 guests to one club. Holding open houses in a well-known central venue such as a coffee shop or library instead of the less-appealing and hard-to-find church basement boosts attendance.

A club’s anniversary attracts former members and community support.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Facebook messenger group, Whatsapp or Slack let club officers chat; and targeting information to defined groups in the club by Mailchimp takes guests out of “the reply all” email chain, which annoys non-participants as it pops up over and over at the top of their inbox. Mailchimp also protects privacy providing specific lists for groups & can send notes to guests: “Hey, did you have a good time?”

Clubs can create a Gmail account to sign up for things, such as social media account. Create a VP of IT position who has passwords and/or create and admin manager. A specific Gmail account to link all operations to allows the user to access Google Analytics for metrics.

Google Docs allows storage of documents, so things don't get lost during succession.

Newsletters

Can prepare members and guests for upcoming meetings, scheduling roles - reaching out three weeks in advance to find out theme and Word of the Day.

When members contribute to the newsletter you have more content to share on social media.

To help promote events, include them in weekly meeting summaries, which go to past members and all prospects, too. This way they get to know what they are missing.

Collaboration with other clubs

Tag other clubs in events and invite them to co-host. A joint newsletter, a social event with table topics, an on-line platform to meet share & discuss, doubling up in summer when attendance numbers are low, visiting each other's clubs, supporting clubs during guest open houses, cross referencing websites saying for example, “We meet on Tuesdays at noon – however, if you need another day or an evening club here are their meeting days and websites.”

PROMO HAND OUTS & POSTERS

Fliers.

Leave TM magazine in wait rooms with your club's sticker on it.

Posters: High-volume venues such as library, gym, community centre, recreation hall. Either in advance of a particular event (e.g. a public meeting held in the open area restaurant of a hotel) or as a general invitation to visit our club.

TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL (TMI) WEBSITE RESOURCES

Graphics, templates, logos & promo material available at

<https://www.toastmasters.org/resources/logos-images-and-templates>

These graphics can be put on the website and Facebook, Instagram and shared with other clubs to avoid reinventing the wheel.

CLUB WEBSITE

Upgrade imagery – video and photo quality – out-of-date-posts make it look like the lights are on but no one's home. Refreshing webpage shows it's an active club.

Nature of one club is early riser professionals, so they cleaned up the look to show: very professional, fun, learn together, well-dressed, modern up to date, can carry into workplace.

Testimonials are powerful third party endorsement. samples are here:

<https://d99tm.org/about-district-99/testimonials/>

Content makes club look attractive & show its personality.

Video main speakers & presenters and share so each member can review his/her performance.

Create 30 second to one-minute video clips so they can also be used in social media – Instagram has a limit of 60 seconds.

Video is the most popular medium in social media showing things like:

having fun – just someone cracking a joke or giving a funny speech. Twenty seconds of someone's first nervous speech, then 20 seconds of them three months later and 20 seconds of them talking about their experience in the club is a nice one-minute video combo

(see social media section below).

Other video bursts could be a good table topics question and answer, and another clip of someone giving an evaluation of an icebreaker.

Congratulate members on their achievements on the club website (home page).

BOOTHS

Towns and small cities often have: Fall & spring registration for local groups; community fairs, volunteer breakfasts or appreciation nights, town & country days... where volunteer groups get a free booths or Toastmasters can get a free booth in exchange for emceeing.

Trade shows, Women's Conference and professional association events also sometimes offer free booths and promo opportunities in exchange for emceeing.

“Where leaders are made” sounds nice but is a bit vague

So our banners don't say what we offer: Confidence building, training and experience in public speaking and leadership skills.

A poster, whose message makes a passerby want to join, can complement your banner. Being as big and prominent as the banner makes it a focal point.

ASSOCIATIONS

Become a member of local Chamber of Commerce and get advertising and hold a partnership open house.

Offering free training to non-profits – very popular with new Canadians who want to perfect their English.

Give presentations at other organizations, such as Rotary Club & political associations. Can be done in local library, which will also advertise the event.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Showcase members' success outside of the meeting.

Social media posts - tag the member every time someone is tagged in a photo or comment, all of their Facebook friends see that post.

Update club meeting time and location on Google Maps & ask your members and guests to write a Google review.

Blog on: Effective communication, public speaking, presentation tips...Video Blog - YouTube Channel.

Instagram posts, post the schedule on community bulletin boards

Do not despair if you are not tech savvy. The chances are that at least one of your club members will have the necessary knowledge to help you (or take over) social media updates. Find out which members are interested in working on Blogs, Video Speeches, or Social Media Campaigns (which are optional Pathways projects).

Standard club social media thinking includes: weekly posts to keep accounts looking fresh; very brief report on each meeting with as many photos as possible; sharing the post on personal accounts and on the D99 Toastmasters Fan Page, which communicates with other groups rather than prospect Toastmasters; links to club Facebook in all advertising internet media group sites.

Face Book

Outside of the box Facebook thinking came from the Devon, population 7,000:

The VP of PR realised the club Facebook page only has a few dozen friends – all former /current guests or members, who already know about the TM program. So he looked for the social media chatter pools where folk gather online to discuss local restaurants, politics etc., such as Devon Talks and Devon Rants and Raves, and the club joined them. He posted onto their Facebook pages once a week: Toastmasters – build your confidence; Toastmasters - learn public speaking etc alternating the posts over a three-week cycle so it wasn't too repetitive. This reached 8,000 members instead of 50 friends. Devon did the same in a nearby small town of Calmar posting about Toastmasters builds your job skills. Drayton Valley's social media chatter pool is Drayton Shout Out.

Tip: Hunt around in your community to find that Facebook group where local folk gather to talk online. Join any group you can: project manager, climate change activists, senior chat – hey, they all need Toastmasters right? You will be welcome.

Many of your Facebook friends will have checked out – they are former guests or members who think they're done with Toastmasters, so they've blocked your posts or the algorithm has detected lack of engagement and so no longer shows them the club's posts.

Find a theme that has a wide appeal - way beyond public speaking and leadership - and organize a special meeting. For example, "Get your Dream Job" where the presenter shares tips, advice and experience on covering: The Search, Resume & Cover Letter, Your Professional Profile, including LinkedIn, The Application, The Interview, Post-Interview Follow Up. This is followed by attendees' chance to answer mock interview questions in impromptu speaking, and get an explanation of what interviewers are looking for in your answers.

Email former guests and members and send them the Facebook link to the post about "Get your dream job". This e-blast will boost your social media posts' reach. Even if each person only has 25 Facebook friends who actually read their posts, which is very low and conservative, and only 10 of your network share the post, that's still 250 new people being exposed to it. Tag your neighbouring clubs so they can share it too.

Monitor the response: Number of likes and shares and new friends, survey all your guests at the special meeting as to how they heard about it, record how many become members.

Analyse the campaign's effectiveness and how it could be improved and think of your next special theme night.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Meetup.com

This is an online community where many people go to find events or groups. Toastmasters is classed as "communication". A club in Saskatoon gains two to three guests per week via meetup and one in Edmonton has seen meeting attendance soar from nine to 20 because of it. It is not free, so District 99 has an account that clubs can use without charge: contact the PR Manager to set one up.

Edit the tags/topics of the group in imitation of the top-ranked Toastmasters Meetup groups in Edmonton. Add a group picture that captures the personality of your club.

It is very different from a club website, where most visitors probably already know about Toastmasters and are looking for a club – many come via find-a-club in TMI's website.

With meetup.com far more people come across Toastmasters for the first time. Just giving meeting times and places doesn't tell visitors what Toastmasters is. A link to the TMI website to explain the program may help. Instagram is preferred by millennials and Generation Z over Facebook. Using humour and inspiration brings more viewers of posts and guests to meetings. E.g. https://www.instagram.com/sunrise_toastmasters_reddeer/ Reddit for Edmonton (fill in your city name) – people ask for recommendations. LinkedIn Targets the Toastmasters demographic: professional development. Hootsuite is a platform that allows you to schedule posts and post to all your social media accounts in one go.

WORD OF MOUTH

"Bring a new guest" meeting.

And ask new members if they want to bring someone to share with them this journey – 90% of people do. Track members and see who brings most guests and which ones of these become members ("sponsor a member" in Toastmasters jargon, which scores individuals points towards the Of the Year Awards.)

At the end of the year, the club PR Committee picks the member who has the most number of guest for the whole year and will be recognized and give certificate or token. This also counts towards the District's Rookie of the Year and Toastmaster of the year awards (see website club resources – of the year awards).

Ask all of your club members to think of three people they know who could help your club with their skills. Next, ask your club members to think of three people they know that your club could help. In most of the cases, there will be an overlap of at least one person between first three and second three. Invite "overlap people" as guests. Tell your club members that they owe a duty of care to their friends and their club; so it's on them that these guests show up.

Encourage members to invite guests, family or friends when they are presenting an important speech (last speech for a Competent Communicator manual, Level Completion Speech, Path Completion Speech).

Public relations is seeking a place to post your name for free because what you offer adds value to its viewers and visitors – Happy Hunting!

District 99's Communications team.

