



## Go On a (Club) Mission: Take Care of the Member

Many challenges clubs experience stem from forgetting about why the club exists. Over time, we can confuse what we do with why we do it.

Have your club's meetings become routine?

Are members simply going through the motions?

Is the only communication within your club on who's filling roles for upcoming meetings?

Are the goals of your club only defined in terms of Distinguished Club Program (DCP) goals? Are member goals only defined in terms of DCP goals?

If this sounds like your club, then your club isn't alone. Many clubs fall into the routine of routine meetings. Fortunately, your club and members will significantly benefit from revisiting the Club Mission.

This guide shares how to make the most of your club to help members grow. You'll transform your club from a series of meetings into a high-quality learning environment for members.

**What's Our Mission?** - Although many know the Toastmasters Club Mission, we rarely internalize it:

*We provide a supportive and positive learning experience in which members are empowered to develop communication and leadership skills, resulting in greater self-confidence and personal growth.*

In your own words, what does that mean to you?

To me, it means the club exists for its members. The club helps members grow and reach the goals that brought them to Toastmasters. Members use the Toastmasters program to receive the most learning value, but their real goals are outside the club. A successful club helps members develop skills to reach their goals.

**How Do We Fulfill the Club Mission?** - Focus on members and their needs. First, understand their specific needs, and then help them grow specific skills to meet those needs. In pursuing that, great meetings, member achievement, and membership growth happen as a consequence. It's the result of focusing on the member, and making the club work for the member (vs. making the member work for the club).

**Avoiding the Easy Trap** – Think critically about the routine activities your club performs and how they contribute to the Club Mission. Do they contribute to the development of members? Is there a better way?

- Sometimes we fall into routine and just have the usual meeting
- Sometimes communications only focus on filling roles at upcoming meetings
- Sometimes the focus is only on the club's membership level and DCP points. DCP is a great program that leads to quality and recognition, but it isn't the mission of the club.

Last summer, most of College Plaza's guests didn't join.

Six months later, 70 percent of visitors to this Edmonton club were becoming members and giving their icebreaker within five weeks: 14 of them in five months.

### **The Success Strategy? Personal engagement.**

Most guests come via the website and email in advance. "Getting a prompt – same day – reply is important," says President Wenjing He. A warm welcome and guest pack is equally important and finding out what the guest hopes to gain from Toastmasters.

The follow up – a personal email referring to visitors' expectations and needs after their first meeting – invites them to the next one. So does a friendly reminder the day before. If they return, they are asked to be the joke master at their third meeting, to join the club and are offered a date for their icebreaker (no one to date has refused). They get a mentor and icebreaker pack.

From the moment they walk through the door they have someone they can ask questions of. Guests and new members often go for a coffee with a Toastmaster to learn more about club roles, which most guests have found confusing at their first couple of meetings.

Club Coach Nick Wilson says, "Last summer when the club was still work in progress people came to meetings for weeks and weeks and we never asked them to do a role or join, and even after they joined it would be months before they did an icebreaker. Everything was on the guest."

The Result? Only 30 percent of guests joined. Today, that's 70 percent.

A problem the club must fix is that becoming a bigger club (20 members+ per meeting, with each meeting having perhaps five people who weren't at the previous one, and committee members needing assistants to handle the workload) has crashed into Pathways. New members aren't sure who does what: takes the money, processes membership, the Pathway Champion (not the same person as VP Education), matches mentors, does the agenda, arranges for them to speak in other clubs... The club found that some members had given up to seven speeches without registering any – once they'd given a speech they were reluctant to go back and do the training for it afterwards. Pathway speech registration being clunky also put them off: an unfortunate combo.

Nonetheless 17 members of College Plaza who've joined since May are now finally on their Pathway to success.

District 99 Club Growth Directorate



## Model Your Meetings for Better Engagement

Would you like more guests to attend your club's meetings?

Would you like more members to attend your club's meetings?

Are only the same members attending meetings?

It's a concern when guests don't visit, but it's a bigger concern when members don't attend meetings. These common challenges can be overcome by increasing the value of club meetings. This guide will show you how to attract both members and guests through your meetings.

**Why Do We Meet?** - Club meetings are opportunities for members to develop skills by working through the Toastmasters program. Meetings are for members, and they should meet the needs of members. When member attendance is weak, it can signal that meetings aren't satisfying members. It signals that meetings aren't a fair trade of value for the member.

**Fundamental Concept: Trading Value** – In any activity or aspect of life, it's important to understand the concept of trading value. Everyone is busy. This won't change. We each choose how we'll spend our time. We do that by evaluating if something will trade enough value in exchange for our time. Meetings are no exception.

Guests will attend a meeting if they perceive it'll provide value. Members will do the same. Just because someone is a member doesn't mean they'll attend a meeting. This is difficult to accept, but it's also useful.

Consider each meeting as an opportunity to trade value with members in exchange for their time. When members don't attend meetings, it means the learning value isn't a good trade. This problem can be solved by understanding what members value, and then modeling club meetings to provide that learning value.

**Model Your Meetings** – Meetings should be modeled after the needs and interests of members. When meetings don't serve members, attendance and engagement suffer. This might seem obvious, but it's all too easy to have routine meetings that don't address the specific needs of members. It's common.

To model your club's meetings after the needs of members, first ask each member the following:

1. What skills does the member want to develop?
2. What topics/subjects would the member like to learn about?
3. How will the member use the skills and knowledge in career/life?

The answers help you understand how the club and its meetings can help the member. The answers indicate the meeting roles, manuals/projects, themes, and educational presentations that'd benefit each member.

With the answers, plan meetings to incorporate educational presentations and activities helping members develop knowledge and skills. This may take creativity, but the benefit is worth it in many ways.



## **Seven Ideas for Retaining Club Members**

Helping Toastmasters Clubs "Aim for Excellence"

### **#1 Qualify Prospects**

Before a person joins your club establish that the prospect understands both the challenges and opportunities afforded to Toastmasters Members. New Members are more likely to 'stick to the program' and achieve ever higher goals if they start Toastmasters with a clear and realistic set of expectations.

### **#2 "...seek first to understand"**

Members stay in Clubs that meet their goals and needs. Clubs that retain members do a lot of listening. Encourage Mentors to sit with their Mentee and complete the New Member profile sheet.

### **#3 Induct and Commit**

Induct new members in a two way approach that bonds the New Member to the existing Members and sets expectations. Each new member can be inducted as they join or quarterly with a special ceremony. (Search New Member Induction Ceremony at [www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org) for a script)

### **#4 Orient and Mentor**

The first weeks following a new members joining are the key to predicting their degree of participation and therefore their chances of becoming long time members. Ask the new member to consider persons that they would like to have as a mentor, then arrange the connection. The Mentor should answer questions, explain the program and listen to ensure that the new member is receiving what they need from the program.

### **#5 Involve Immediately**

From their first meeting new members should be asked to participate in agenda roles. As soon as they are ready schedule their Ice Breaker, then follow up with other roles such as Evaluator, Table Topics Master, etc. If there is an event outside of the club (visiting a neighboring club, Area/Division Speech Contest, etc.) encourage the new member to attend...car pool to make it fun and accessible.

### **#6 Keep them excited!**

Meetings should be valuable use of the Members time: Meetings should be well organized, punctual, informative and FUN! Plan themed meetings with occasional twists to keep members engaged. Look for ideas online and in the Toastmasters magazine.

### **#7 "Moments of Truth"**

Every year we bring out car in for inspection, we have an annual physical at the doctors, so why not an annual checkup for our clubs. Moments of Truth is a module in the Successful Club Series that helps clubs to monitor and evaluate the overall health of their club with a 36 point set of service standards.





## No Member Left Behind: A Guide to Membership Renewals

Do some members silently fall through the cracks during membership renewals? Does your club get feedback to help it improve?

Too often, membership-renewal activities consist only of sending emails and reminders to members. Members that don't renew quietly disappear and the club doesn't fully understand their situation. There's a better way. This short guide shares how to strengthen the focus on members through the membership-renewal process.

**Why Is This Important?** – On average, each club loses 20% of its members each renewals round. By improving renewals, each member and your club benefit. Plus, your club receives priceless feedback.

**Adding the Personal Touch** – Membership renewals should be more than sending emails to all members, requesting payment by a deadline. Although well-intentioned and efficient, from a member's perspective, that approach can be impersonal. Let's add the personal touch of individual communication.

Membership renewals is a time for dialogue between club leaders and members to understand and improve their experience. Each member has specific needs, and individual communication will best uncover those.

**A Simple Process** – Below is a simple process for officers during each membership-renewals round:

1. Contact each member individually. First focus on members who might not be fully engaged.
2. Ask the member about his/her experience in the club:
  - a. Is the member receiving value, enjoying the club, and developing skills?
  - b. Is anything getting in the way or not working well?
  - c. Are there suggestions for improvement?
3. Capture the feedback above to review and address with the club's leadership team.
4. Thank the member for the feedback and commit to address it with club leaders.
5. Invite the member to renew and continue with the club.

**Summary** – With personal communication and a request for feedback, membership renewals can retain more members, better satisfy needs, and help the club improve. Further, it's how we want to be treated as members.

To keep your club in good standing with Toastmasters International, please submit payment for at least 8 members by April 1<sup>st</sup> and October 1<sup>st</sup>. If your club won't reach 8 members, don't worry. Contact your district officers to assist your club and continue serving members.

Call on your leadership if you have any questions. Our mission is to help your club fulfill its mission.

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## Membership Growth: A Sustainable Approach

In any year, ask members and leaders of 10 clubs what their top challenge is, and 9 clubs will say it's membership. Membership is a perennial challenge for most clubs.

This guide presents a sustainable approach to growing membership in your club. It preserves the club mission, improves quality, and grows your club consistently over time.

Before covering specific actions to grow membership, let's first examine the exhausting cycle we want to break from this point forward.

**Breaking the Exhausting Cycle** – On average, each club loses 20% of its membership each renewal cycle. To recover from those losses, club members and leaders work hard to grow membership over the next 6 months. But, just as the club gets back to its original membership level, the next round of renewals approaches and takes 20% of the club's members again. Then the cycle repeats.

If a club loses 20% of its members every renewal cycle, and there are 2 renewal cycles each year, how long will it take for the club to lose the equivalent of its total membership? Answer: 2.5 years (5 renewal cycles).

The point of this example is to show that any effort to retain members quickly leads to growth for the club. When a club retains more members, it's easier for the club to grow for the long term.

**Why Promotion Isn't Enough** – A reality I've learned over the years is that promotional efforts (websites, social media, open houses, etc.) aren't sufficient for sustained membership growth. Promotional efforts can bring new members to a club, but real growth occurs when a club has processes that retain those members.

If a club promotes itself and gains 20 new members from an open house, how many will remain after 6-12 months? Too often, many new members leave within 6-12 months and the core members remain. This is demoralizing. It indicates the club would benefit by investing more into mentoring, quality, and learning value for those new members. In sum, promotion isn't enough to break the cycle.

**Retention Is the First Step** – The examples above show how first focusing on retention leads to membership growth for a club. When a club focuses on taking care of its current members, it creates a high-quality, member-focused environment. As a result, it's even easier for the club to gain more members. Although it might seem counterintuitive, when we take care of what we have, we receive more of it.

**1. Incorporate a Process to Retain Members** – How can we retain more members? Ensure the club and its meetings work for existing members, providing a quality learning environment that helps each member develop skills. It's a shift of focus to the member. The simple process below is a great start:

1. Listen. Understand each member's goals and needs.
2. Provide each member with mentoring, support, participation opportunities, and recognition
3. Find and remove obstacles that impact the member's learning experience
4. Promptly follow up with any member missing multiple meetings to address any issues early
5. Regularly ask each member for feedback to improve the club's effectiveness





## **Toastmasters Open-House Checklist: 4 Steps to Success!**

Plan • Promote • Perform • Post-event

### **Step 1: Plan (28 days or more in advance)**

- Create an open-house committee: chair, promotion, food, program (printing), AV, etc.
- Select a date (at least 30 days into the future) and location. Select a back-up date.
- Reserve location
- Create a budget and have the club vote on it
- Plan the event: Toastmaster (experienced member), any special speakers? Member testimonials? Shorter agenda so that there is time for mingling/sign-up? Name tags?
- Prepare guest packet/membership applications/guest book (capture contact information)

### **Step 2: Promote (start 21-28 days in advance)**

- Invite previous visitors
- Ask all members to invite friends/coworkers. Consider prizes for bringing visitors.
- Remind members at each meeting prior to open house
- Corporate clubs: per company policy or, fliers in common areas, desk-drop invites, calendar invites
- Community clubs: club website, newsletter, Meetup.com, Nextdoor.com, Facebook event, fliers in community spaces, possible press release

### **Step 3: Perform (day of event)**

- Committee members (chair, food, program, etc.) arrive half an hour early
- Have visitor packets, guest book/sign-in sheet, and pens available (make sure to capture contact information).
- Have name tags or name tents for everyone
- Welcome guests warmly and invite them to participate in table topics
- Remember to include explanation of various aspects of the meeting and how Toastmaster skills translate into benefits for careers
- Allow time for answering guest questions (5-10 minutes)
- Ask them to join the club! And have members ready to help them sign up!

### **Step 4: Post-Event (follow up within 48 hours, on-going)**

- Have a process in-place for post-event follow up, for example:
  - For those who joined: New Member Process (voting in, adding to website, adding to newsletter, creating name tent, assigning mentor, one-on-one "getting started with Pathways" session, etc.)
  - For those who didn't join: Visitor Follow Up Process (add to email distribution list for future meetings, personal follow up within 48 hours: call, text, or email)
- Debrief with members. What went well? What could be improved?
- Thank committee members, guest speakers, and others who contributed
- Remind members to turn in receipts for reimbursement to the club treasurer

**Harold Osmundson, DTM**

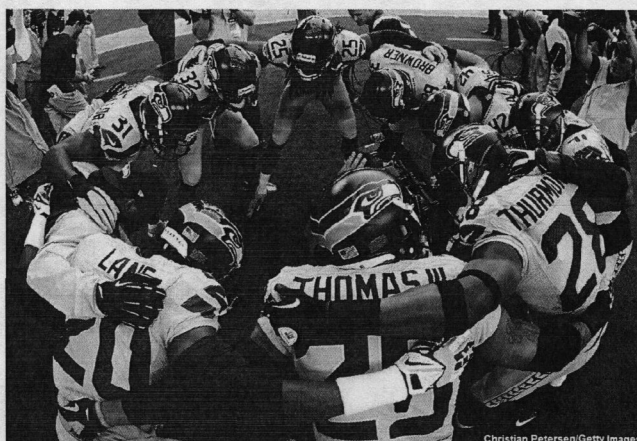
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## Pre-Game: Preparing for Quality Meetings



Does your club have many cancellations, no-shows, or unprepared members at meetings? This is a common challenge for clubs. Unfortunately, this also has serious impacts on members and the club.

Meetings are the “game time” for clubs, as they’re the opportunities for members to develop skills and gain value from the club. Poor meetings create stress and disappointment for members, impacting their learning value. Ultimately, this causes retention issues and threatens the club’s overall health.

Meetings are also the club’s best membership-building tool, as guests decide to join (or not join) depending on the meeting experience. Meetings are the best indicator of the experience a club provides for its members. Any improvements in meeting quality make a big difference in terms of membership and member development.

Although US football teams play relatively few games, and each game is 2-3 hours, their preparation for each game is significant in the week before the game. The best teams prepare to win, and the score takes care of itself on game day. The same principle is true for your club:

*The quality of your club’s meetings is a result of the quality of the preparation before each meeting. The process for having great meetings begins well before the meeting, and the score takes care of itself at the meeting. Many issues are a result of the preparation and communication before the meeting.*

Is your club’s process for meetings documented, communicated, and understood by all members? If not, your club certainly isn’t alone. But, for your benefit, and the benefit of other members, let’s define and communicate our club’s pre-meeting process. This will reduce the stress that you and other members experience.

**An Example Process** – An example process is below. Do what makes sense and works best for your club.

- **6 days before meeting (or right after the previous meeting):**
  - VP Education announces the roles and lineup for the next 3 meetings.
  - VP Education contacts next-meeting’s Toastmaster to share the lineup, instructions/expectations, and materials (agenda template, etc.). VP Education requests a response/confirmation from the Toastmaster within 24 hours. Once confirmed, the Toastmaster is responsible for the meeting.



# Ideas for Company Clubs

1. Once every 6 months or yearly, invite one of your company executives and present him/her with an award/recognition plaque for their embracing the Toastmasters educational program for its employees and/or for their support of your Toastmasters club. Then publicize it with photos in the company's newsletter, websites (yours and the company's), write up an article and send it to your local paper, Chamber of Commerce, Company's headquarters, etc. That will ensure you continuous support and bring in new members (the executive's staff, division staff, etc.).
2. Ask Human Resources to include a flyer about the club in the new employee orientation packet or with payroll checks.
3. Ask Human Resources for an appointment to give a 20 minute presentation on the benefits of Toastmasters, and how it can help the company's training efforts.
4. Ask Human Resources (HR) or your education/training department to actively promote membership in your company club.
5. Have HR recognize a club member for stepping up and taking on a club officer role/leadership position.
6. Inquire about the possibility of club members earning continuing education credit.
7. Place an ad in your company newsletter.
8. Post a notice on your company electronic bulletin board.
9. Notify communications department about upcoming events: contests, award presentations, etc.
10. At company tradeshow, ask to have a booth/table for your club.
11. Make a company VIP who communicates well with teams and subordinates an honorary member of your club.
12. If your company promotes several clubs within the organization, even if not in the same city, have some friendly rivalry – using the DCP.
13. Ask to have an "Open House" in the cafeteria, lobby, etc. staffed by club members with lots of club members and hand-outs (brochures, flyers, old TI magazines each marked with club contact info).
14. Encourage attendance at contests and conferences, TLIs, or ask for promotion/support of either or both. (For example: help defray the cost of printing conference handbook; take out an ad; sponsor conference participation; sponsor refreshments, etc.)
15. If there is an in-house directory, request that your Toastmaster club be listed with telephone number/contact info.

NOW GO AND DO IT!

## **A TOASTMASTER'S PROMISE**

As a member of Toastmasters International and my club, I promise

- ▶ To attend club meetings regularly
- ▶ To prepare all of my projects to the best of my ability, basing them on the Toastmasters education program
- ▶ To prepare for and fulfill meeting assignments
- ▶ To provide fellow members with helpful, constructive evaluations
- ▶ To help the club maintain the positive, friendly environment necessary for all members to learn and grow
- ▶ To serve my club as an officer when called upon to do so
- ▶ To treat my fellow club members and our guests with respect and courtesy
- ▶ To bring guests to club meetings so they can see the benefits Toastmasters membership offers
- ▶ To adhere to the guidelines and rules for all Toastmasters educational and recognition programs
- ▶ To act within Toastmasters' core values of integrity, respect, service and excellence during the conduct of all Toastmasters activities