

Hundreds of Membership Building Ideas

<http://www.larkdoley.com/LDCD/3.Clubs/MembershipBuildingIdeas.html>

From Mary Jo Manzanera, LGET of District 32

- Ask a member from another club (look for one who you believe is especially motivational in their speaking ability) to do an education module at one of your club meetings. Create a guest list to invite prospective members who can benefit from the topic. Choose from the Successful Club or Successful Speaker series. (Note: the evaluation and listening modules work particularly well.)
- Create a holiday invitation (St. Pat's, Halloween, Thanksgiving, spring, etc.) and ask each member to hand out invitations to friends and co-workers. Plan your agenda around a holiday theme.
- Plan a special showcase meeting. Invite members from around the district to present a special program. Invite guests and be ready to sign them up on the spot.
- Conduct a Speechcraft. If you do not have enough members to successfully launch the program, call on members from other clubs to help out. Warning: don't expect someone else to do all the work, though. Charge a fee for the Speechcraft that will cover the new member fee and the first six months of dues. At the end of the Speechcraft, offer a "free" membership to all successful participants.
- Take your show on the road. Schedule your meeting in a new location where it will get new visibility. Suggestions: community center, library, retirement community, bookstore, etc. Get the facility to help promote your special appearance. Invite guests.
- Appreciation night: Honor a community member at a special meeting. Ask the guest to say a few words promoting Toastmasters. Be sure to have lots of guests to help express your appreciation.
- Design a club brochure and distribute it to prospective members.
- Ask your Chamber of Commerce to list your Toastmaster meeting information in their newsletter.
- Consider starting an advanced club that focuses on in-depth evaluations. Suggestion: each speaker should have three evaluators, in addition to the manual evaluator. These evaluators would concentrate on a specific area, such as: visual presentation (gestures, body language, use of space, etc.); verbal presentation (verbal crutches, creative language, variety, pitch, tone, etc.); and content (organization of thought, opening, body, close, impact on audience, etc.).
- Advanced club idea: Start an advanced club that focuses on club building ideas. Have all educational presentations and speeches concentrate on the topic of club leads, strengthening weak clubs, prospecting for members, etc.
- Develop a web site listing your club information. Make it visually appealing and interesting. (NOTE: Toastmasters has specific guidelines regarding web sites. Be sure to check this information.)
- Use the videos from Toastmasters at a specially designed recruiting meeting. (NOTE: Your LGM and Division Governor should have these videos.)
- Contact your city's various cultural centers. They may be interested in starting a Speechcraft for their members or perhaps a club. (NOTE: Many of these individuals will have English as a second language. It may be helpful to work with someone who is associated with the specific cultural community.)
- Post brochures and flyers about your club at your local library.
- Post brochures and flyers about your club at local book stores, both new and used.
- Invite a prospective member to attend a conference with you.
- Invite your family and friends to attend a speech contest.
- Have a guest book at your meetings, and ask each guest to sign. Follow up with each guest by sending a thank you note and inviting them back to another meeting.
- Offer to pick up a guest so you know that they will make the meeting.
- Listen to your guest talk about their interests and reasons for visiting your club. Then match them up with a club member who has similar interests. Ask them to join.
- Make sure you have lots of membership applications readily available at every meeting.
- Order membership supplies from the Toastmaster catalog. Make sure you re-order before you run out. Have these available for guests.
- If members belong to more than one club, ask them to bring their extra copies of the Toastmaster magazine to your club meetings. Prepare a binder with these copies, and have it available for review by guests.
- Plan a club membership-building contest.
- Have an occasional social meeting to recognize the family and co-workers of your club members. Remember it is the support of these people who help enable the club member's participation. It's nice to include them once in awhile. (NOTE: This is often done successfully around a holiday or other special event.)
- Make your meetings fun. People will want to invite guests to share in the fun.
- Keep business to a minimum at meetings when you have guests. Guests don't care about the business any way. If you don't have business to conduct, skip the business meeting all together.
- Send out press releases on all your activities. Don't be discouraged if it takes awhile to be noticed. (NOTE: Small community newspapers are likely to give you the best coverage.)
- Send personal notes to members that you haven't seen for awhile. Let them know that you've missed them, and are anxious to have them back.
- Keep in touch with absentee members by sending out a review of each meeting by e-mail.
- Buy a classified ad in your local paper.
- Have club business cards made with your meeting date, location, time, and a contact number. Pass them out everywhere.
- Develop a mentor program. This will help encourage new members to keep involved with the program, and will help long term members renew their enthusiasm.
- Run a Toastmaster ad in your company newsletter.
- Invite your boss to a club meeting.
- Make a list of all the people you know who would benefit from Toastmasters. Invite one person from the list to each meeting. Ask them to join.
- Have a procedure to follow up on new member leads.
- Put a Toastmaster bumper sticker on your car.
- Use a Toastmaster coffee mug at work.
- Wear your Toastmaster pin on a regular basis, not just at

Sponsor a Toastmasters booth at community events. Follow up with people who express an interest.

Promote Toastmasters at Career Fairs and Employment Fairs. Have a plan to follow up with interested individuals and groups.

Start a speakers bureau. Make sure your speakers promote Toastmasters at their engagements.

When someone compliments you on a presentation or a speech, be sure to mention that you developed your skills in Toastmasters. Ask if they would be interested in doing the same.

Ask your doctor, dentist, optometrist, etc., if you can leave Toastmaster brochures in their offices. Make sure there is a phone number to call for more information.

Ask your guests for feedback after a meeting. Then listen to what they liked and didn't like. Make changes as appropriate.

If a guest visits your club, but the meeting time or location doesn't work out for them, make sure you refer them to another club. Contact a district officer if you need help in doing this.

If a member announces that they will be moving, or have accepted a new position that doesn't allow them to continue with club meetings, have a going away gift for them --- a list of the Toastmaster clubs that meet where they will live or work. Let them know that they can transfer their membership.

Start an advanced club that does television work. Contact your cable access channel or a vocational school that does this training.

Does the company where you work have a Toastmaster club? If not, start one. Contact a district officer for assistance.

Have a Table Topics session that is based on membership ideas. Make sure someone writes down all the ideas and then plan a follow up strategy.

Challenge the other clubs in your area to a membership contests.

Challenge another club to a membership contest. Loser buys pizza for the winning club.

If you belong to other organizations that schedule speakers, try to include a fellow Toastmaster on the program.

Write articles for your local newspaper. Make sure your biographical information includes your Toastmaster membership.

Read your Toastmaster magazine each month. There are good membership ideas in it.

If you have a strong club, consider being a "big brother" to a struggling club. Help out with speakers, evaluators, and just being an audience member.

Start an advanced club that focuses on storytelling.

How many clubs do you belong to? If the answer is one, consider joining another club (at work or home) or maybe an advanced club.

Plan an executive committee meeting and brainstorm for ideas about how to reach prospective members.

Attend officer training and talk to officers from other clubs about how they prospect for members.

As you reach the end of the Toastmaster year, make sure your membership is over 20 so you qualify to receive your Distinguished and Select Distinguished ribbons. Nothing is worse than missing out on this recognition because your club is not at charter strength.

Celebrate your charter date annually. If you are not at charter strength, make plans to increase your membership so you will be on your charter date.

List your Toastmaster membership and achievements on your resume, as appropriate.

Be active in your community. This puts you in touch with other people who may be interested in Toastmasters.

- If you meet in a public location, have a placard or other sign which announces your meeting location, date and time. For example: XYZ Toastmaster club meets here, Wednesdays at noon.
- If you will be traveling, for business or pleasure, look for clubs in the area where you will be. Visit the club and see how they look for new members. Sometimes we all get in a rut and its good to see what other clubs are doing.
- Some members feel that Toastmasters has significantly impacted their life and are willing to financially scholarship a new member. This is a way of extending Toastmasters to an individual who may be otherwise unable to join. This is typically handled by a member covering the initial membership and dues payment, with the new member maintaining the dues payment after the first six months.
- If you meet at a church or other community location where you pay a small token as a meeting room fee, discuss the possibility of offering a new membership and six month dues payment as your fee. The out of pocket expense to the club would be comparable, the benefit to the church would be that a member would be sponsored to a Toastmaster membership, and hopefully this would encourage other people to join. Sponsor a new member for each period of time that you make a payment. After the initial six months, the member must continue the dues payment on their own.
- Contact a women's shelter about sponsoring a Speechcraft. Since these are generally women in transition, make sure they have information about where to join a club after the Speechcraft ends. Check with the agency sponsoring the shelter. They may be willing to have the Speechcraft as a regular event.
- If your meeting attendance is dropping, take a look at your meeting location. It may be time to move.
- If you are experiencing membership problems, make sure you don't discuss them when you have a guest visiting. No one wants to join a club that has problems.
- Be nice to your guests. Sometimes we focus too much on getting someone to sign an application, and forget basic courtesy.
- Membership is the responsibility of every Toastmaster, not just the Vice President of Membership.
- Leaflet a neighborhood with flyers about your club. (NOTE: This works well in apartment or condominium complexes.)
- Have a recognition meeting to acknowledge all members who have sponsored a new member.
- Have an induction ceremony for new members. It makes them feel important and a part of the organization. It's almost impressive for other guest in attendance.
- Take a look in the mirror. Do you smile enough. Guests want to see a smiling face welcoming them to a meeting.
- Is your club so large that members aren't getting speaking opportunities. If this is your challenge, consider splitting into two clubs with at least 20 members in each club. (NOTE: This option is viable, but may cause other challenges to develop.)
- Tell your friends how much fun you have belonging to Toastmasters.
- Write an article for the Toastmaster magazine. Circulate it at your work.
- If you own your own business, have you encouraged your employees to join Toastmasters?
- Leave club flyers at your hair salon.
- Ask the people you do business with on a regular basis to come with you to a meeting. Some ideas: banker, grocery clerk, gardener, veterinarian, postal clerk, real estate agent, clergy, retail store clerk, etc.

- Do you use the services of a department store personal shopper? These people come in contact with hundred of people a day, and need strong communication skills. Ask yours to accompany you to a club meeting.
- Ask a district officer to come to a membership building meeting and give an inspirational address.
- Talk with your area governor about membership problems you are facing. Sometimes getting an outsider's opinion will give you a new way of looking at things.
- Have a secret pal program within your club. Outside of the meeting times, the secret pal will send encouraging notes, ideas, evaluations, etc. to the person who is their secret pal. Reveal after six months. Keeps people coming to meetings as they try to figure out who is their secret pal.
- Participate in career day at school where you can tell students about Toastmasters. Don't forget, many high schoolers are eighteen and eligible to join a club.
- If your club meets at a church, request that your meeting location be published in the church newsletter or bulletin.
- Set a good example at your club meetings. Encourage excellence.
- Have at least one meeting each month where the speakers and educational program focus on membership and club building topics.
- Does your club stop meeting during the summer months? Continue on instead. Even though attendance may be low, you can keep your momentum going instead of stopping and then trying to build back up all over again.
- Meet weekly instead of semi-monthly.
- Even if there is a low attendance at a meeting, still have the meeting. Continuity matters. Don't give up hope. There are lots of success stories about 3-4 people showing up for meeting after meeting. Keep doing that, and you can turn things around.
- Don't let internal strife destroy your club. Address your problem, resolve it, and move on.
- Make a list of the best things about your club. You now have a list of selling points to use when recruiting new members.
- Make sure that every speech given at your club is a manual speech. As members see growth in others, it will encourage them to stick with it. And guests will want to join, so they can start achieving this success as well.
- Stay on time. Nobody wants to go to meetings that start late.
- Mail dues reminders to unpaid members. If they are temporarily unable to make a meeting, at least let them know they can keep their dues current.
- If you have children over 18, remember that they can join Toastmasters. While you may not want them in your own club, encourage them to find a club that will work for them. And don't forget their friends!
- Have a time during the meeting when members can announce promotions or special assignment that they attribute to their Toastmaster membership.
- Buy a Toastmaster T-shirt from the catalogue. Wear it when you work out, exercise, to the grocery store. Be prepared to answer questions.
- Personally donate a new membership and six months of dues to a charity auction. Make the membership for a club of the bidder's choice if the auction is drawing people from a broad area.
- Personally donate a conference registration for your district's conference. Arrange to meet with the successful bidder at the conference, and convince them to visit a club.
- Post club flyers at local business school and vocational schools.
- Develop contacts and local business and vocational schools. Ask to do a presentation to classes regarding communication skills and how valuable they are in the job market. Have Toastmaster club information available to pass out and encourage students to attend a meeting. (NOTE: If the instructor permits, get names and addresses of students who would like someone to follow up with them.)
- Get some fellow Toastmasters to donate time for a television fundraising campaign like PBS, telethons, etc.. Wear Toastmaster T-shirts. If you get a group together the station will give the organization a plug. If it's a large enough group, you may be able to arrange an on camera interview about the organization.
- Develop a list of potential members who have e-mail access. Forward information about Toastmaster events to these people. Keep people on the e-mail list as long as there is interest. Don't SPAM! Only e-mail people that you've had contact with. Remove people from your mailing list, if requested.
- Look for ways to get publicity for Toastmasters in general, and your club in particular.
- New club idea: Consider the existing clubs in your community. Is there a day of the week that is not served by Toastmasters? Is there a time of day missing (no morning or lunch hour meetings)? How about a weekend club in a metropolitan area?
- At all areas within the district (area, division, district, club) have workshops on how to start a new club.
- Award pins for recruiting a particular number of members.
- Think about groups that may not yet be served by Toastmasters in the community: seniors, physically challenged, unemployed, non-English speaking communities, etc. Can you start a club for them? Invite them to a club meeting?
- Start a club with mid-day meetings for stay at home Moms. They club may choose to have a parenting focus. Possible meeting time 3-4:30, maybe meeting at a local school with students helping out with child care during the meeting.
- Remember to submit semi annual dues on time. If you don't pay the dues, you don't have any members.
- Build membership, and retain current members, by having an excellent product: dynamic meetings.
- Do an in-club Speechcraft and/or Success/Communication or Success/Leadership module. Send out press releases about these exciting educational opportunities.
- Once a quarter have a "Guest Night." Each member should bring at least one guest.
- Break club members into teams and have a one month membership contest. The team that signs up the most new members is served a special dessert, provided by members of the other team(s).
- Ask a Toastmaster who is working in the Discussion Leader advanced manual to do a session to lead the club in a membership building idea session.
- Do press releases to local media on all special events and on member's accomplishments. Include photos whenever possible.
- Form a Guest Committee under your Sergeant at Arms. Ensure that every guest receives a follow up call and/or note. Be sure to invite the guest to come to another meeting.
- Invite every guest to join. Many people are waiting to be asked.
- Ask TI for a list of all your club's former members. Plan a special event and invite them all. Include them in the program, if possible. Send out a press release, and if any of your former members are high profile in the community, be sure to mention this in the press release.

Enhance membership retention by ensuring that every member is a stakeholder in the success of the club. Put every member on a committee, and make sure that they have a specific job to do. There are many benefits to this besides membership retention, including an opportunity for leadership experience.

Build morale internally within your club. Thank and praise your members for a job well done or an outstanding performance. A few kind words can keep members coming back for more.

Stay on task. Keep focused on the important success factors within the club. People join Toastmasters as an educational organization. Don't lose them because you lose sight of your goals.

Share pride in the accomplishments of your members. Celebrate the success of reaching a goal. Make the club a place that members want to come to share the successes outside of Toastmasters as well.

Don't lose members after they complete their CTM. Make sure all members are aware of the outstanding advanced manuals available. Explain and talk about the advanced manuals early on, and create an expectation of continued membership.

Have a member present a module from the Successful Club Series. These are designed to be 10-15 presentations that can be given within the club. They offer great information on attracting and maintaining members. Some examples: Finding New Members For Your Club and Closing the Sale.

Read the Toastmaster magazine. This wonderful publication alone is worth the price of membership.

If a member has missed a couple of meetings, have someone drop them a note (or email). Even if you know why the members is gone (out of town, vacation, work commitment, etc.), the note may serve as a reminder that they are missed at the club and that the club is anxious for them to return.

Don't let a new member drop out after their icebreaker speech. Make sure they are put on the schedule again as soon as possible.

Greet all guests warmly and make sure they are introduced to club officers and members.

Have a guest book, and ask guests to sign. Make sure you get their name, address, phone, email, for follow up. Then be sure to follow up!

Make sure that all members wear their name tags, and have them available for guests as well. Don't make people guess at remembering names. Be sure to use your guests name when talking with them.

Make sure that your meeting location is conveniently located, accessible and user friendly.

Encourage guests to participate, if they are interested.

Ask for guest comments at the end of the meeting. This may give you a specific hook to use in asking the member to join. Or, it may give you information that indicates that you need to change your ways to make your club attractive to prospective members.

Have a formal induction ceremony to present the new member with their pin.

Assign a mentor/coach for the new member. Make sure that the mentor can help keep the member motivated about coming to meetings and committed to their Toastmaster membership.

Consider scheduling a social event that can showcase what Toastmasters can offer. Make sure you follow up on all new member leads.

Create a newsletter. Make sure it is sent to all members. If a member has been away for awhile, it may help to remind them all the excitement that they are missing.

- Have a monthly drawing for a Toastmaster prize. Every time a member brings a guest to a meeting, their name is put into a basket for a drawing. At the last meeting of the month a name is drawn out and a prize is awarded. Have a duplicate prize to give the guest if they became a member.
- Contact local businesses to see if they will allow your club to have a counter display at their location.
- Have and use a club web page.
- Have club business cards printed with the club name, meeting location, time, etc. Make sure members give them out to everyone.
- Consider a booth at a fair, craft show, trade show, or career fair.
- Research the possibility of running an ad (even better if you can get an interview or article) in Company newsletters of businesses in your area.
- Provide inserts to be used in payroll envelopes.
- Place an ad in local church newsletters or programs.
- Post flyers on community bulletin boards.
- List the club with the Chamber of Commerce.
- If you have members who travel a great deal, encourage them to visit a club when they are on the road. (This information is easily accessible through the Toastmasters web site.) Ask them to share their experiences with the executive board. Maybe you can get some new ideas for your own club.
- Know how to fill out the membership form. Make sure all club members know how to do it. Maybe this could be used as an educational moment in the club.
- Have membership forms filled out with standard club information. Then all you have to do is add in information specific to the new member. This may help cut down on the time and confusion of the forms.
- Be sure to send the membership form and a check to TI. A person is not a member until TI knows about it.
- Develop club talking points that can be used when talking to prospective members.
- Have a guest evening that is totally devoted to guests. Have a speaker explain what Toastmasters is all about, how much it costs, meeting frequency and time, etc. Every member must bring a minimum of one guest. Advertise in local newspapers. 161. Develop a public relations campaign to keep your club name in the public eye.
- If you have a good membership idea, forward it on to your District Officers for inclusion in the District Newsletter. Hopefully other clubs can benefit from your idea as well.
- Break down your annual goal for new members into a monthly goal. It will seem much easier to meet that way.
- Send out dues statements to encourage members to pay their dues early. You have to pay your dues to be a member.
- Prepare a two-sided flyer. One side tells all about Toastmasters, the other side gives testimonials about the organization, along with the individual's profession. Distribute to local businesses.
- Have a secret greeter at your meeting to make sure everyone is warm and welcoming to members and guests.
- If members have membership in multiple clubs, collect the extra Toastmaster magazines and distribute to local businesses. Have a card stapled to the front with information about who to call for more information.
- Prepare a flyer listing clubs in your geographical area, rather than just an individual club.
- Invent your own!