



DD Lessons Learned/Best Practices

Compliments of Monnica Rose, DTM, PRA

PLANNING YOUR YEAR

- Let the District Mission guide you. Avoid getting distracted by activities that require attention but are not key success factors. Remember that you can – and should – delegate the work of planning the Conference and the contests. Don't sweat the small stuff. Act on decisions that really make a difference to members. Here are the words of a past District Director who regretted not being more mission-driven:



"I let myself get caught up in the minutiae of the district. I thought that by doing the right things the right ways, Distinguished would take care of itself. So, I dabbled in a little of everything (mentoring members, working with TLI teams, etc.). I should have been focused on the mission from Day One and kept the entire Trio and leadership team focused on the mission."

- Include a robust promotion program geared to supporting each of your district goals and stick to it. Make sure that your budget reflects the priorities established. Ensure all team members have been involved in the design of the budget so they support the decisions along the way. Large-scale goals are best achieved with an engaged team behind you. Together we achieve more.
- Ask your predecessor what initiatives led to the greatest success for the district last year. Find out what your predecessor wanted to create/do, but didn't get a chance to. Ask him or her what he or she would have done differently.
- As you develop the District Success Plan with your team, ask last year's team what worked well in supporting the District Success Plan. Did any District Success Plan items not get completed?
- Consider developing a theme for your district-director year and branding your communications to members with that theme. Use the theme to set the tone for the year and unify your messages.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

- Find the right people, set clear expectations, trust, and follow up. The importance of finding the right people cannot be understated. The role of Area Director is one of the most important and requires members who are dedicated and willing to show up, learn, and be proactive. They need to be well trained and to commit to their role as consultant to their clubs. Consider using a Contract or Service-Level Agreements for all appointed positions to aid in clearly defining expectations, consequences and accountability.
- Plan fun activities so you can get to know your team members, such as a social dinner and drinks after a DEC meeting. These activities build relationships and inspire people to get involved.

- Meet with the trio regularly. Set a schedule that works for your trio members and your District. Weekly is not excessive. If you do not need to meet that often, twice monthly should probably be your minimum. Consider including your Administration Manager to keep notes for you. Consider also including your Public Relations Manager and Finance Manager as necessary. Meetings can be followed by a home-cooked dinner or other social activity. Trios who live relatively close to each can meet in person. Review the budget monthly.
- If you haven't already done so, consider a trio retreat to plan the year. If you hold it at the home of a trio member, you can prepare meals together as a team-building activity.
- Work regularly with at least one mentor. Qualities to look for in mentors are brutal honesty, availability, and experience in the District. Past District Directors (Governors) are a good source. You will find your mentor(s) invaluable.

DISTRICT COUNCIL

- It's normal to feel nervous when you're about to preside over your first District Council meeting. Plan ahead for a smooth and time-efficient meeting. If your district doesn't already have them, ask your Region Advisor for a sample agenda and sample script. Provide as much information and documentation as possible to council members in advance of the meeting. Unless you are an expert parliamentarian, it's critical to have a good parliamentarian at your side as you conduct the meeting. Help meeting attendees follow along with a slide show of meeting elements, including officer reports. Use a timer.
- Familiarize yourself with Robert's Rules of Order and Parliamentary Procedures.
- Choose a reliable and experienced Credentials Chair. Immediate Past District Director may be the presumptive choice in your district. Past District Directors/Governors are a good source.



RESOLVING CONFLICT

- Many trios have conflicts. Expect conflicts and be prepared to address them directly and decisively.
- Realize that some people will never be happy, no matter what you do. Sometimes you just have to let them vent and say nothing.

COMMUNICATION

- Keep in touch with all DEC members so you can identify issues and concerns early.
- Personally communicate with members through emails, cards, phone calls, etc. By engaging people personally (as opposed to mail merging letters/emails,) you will find it easier to call upon people later to get their help. The smallest gesture or kind word to someone does not go unnoticed.
- If you make a mistake, admit it and apologize. We all make mistakes. You can enhance communication and build good relationships by admitting mistakes and saying you are sorry even before you are confronted. Remember the words of the late great Ann Landers, "If you want to end an argument, show some class. Apologize."

SUCCESSION

- Create a plan to find and prepare future district leaders.
- Develop a strategy to keep the trio team focused on current-year goals toward the end of the TM year. Once your District Council meeting has occurred in the spring, and the new trio is elected, those advancing in the trio understandably get very interested in planning for next year. They need to strike a balance between finishing strong this year and laying the groundwork for next year. You may find it valuable to discuss this issue early in the year to set expectations.