



**WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE**

# **BLUEPRINT FOR CLUB AND MEMBERSHIP GROWTH**

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## Template Documents

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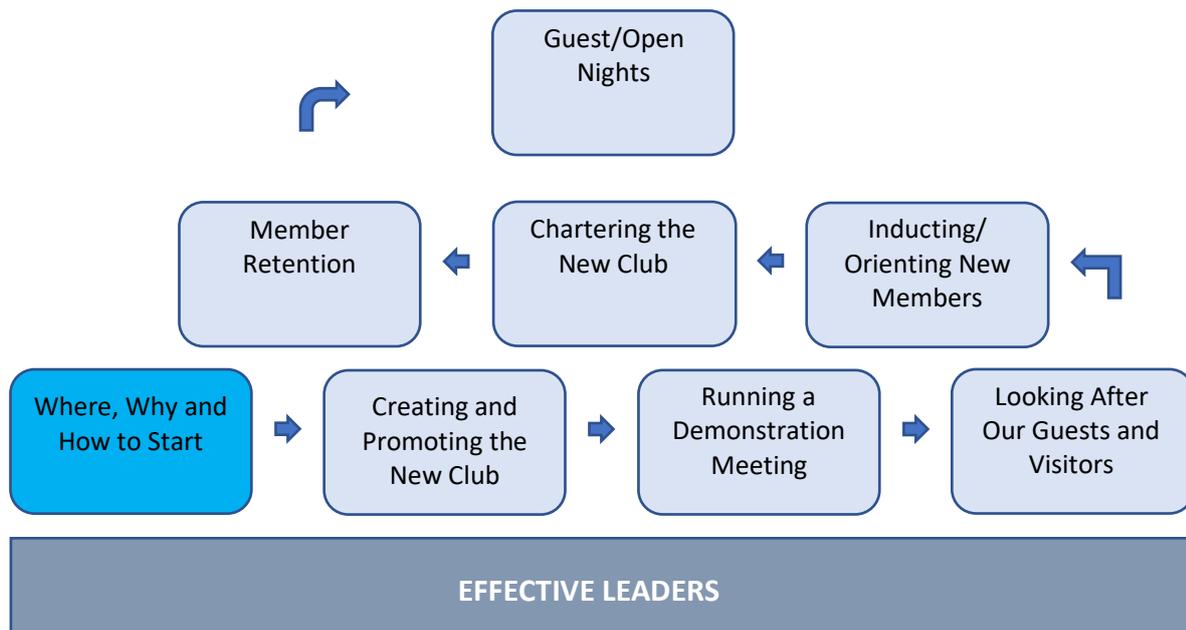
|        |                         |
|--------|-------------------------|
| Pink   | Club Promotion          |
| Blue   | Demonstration Meetings  |
| Red    | Induction/Orientation   |
| Green  | Chartering              |
| Yellow | Open House/Guest Nights |



The **BLUEPRINT FOR CLUB AND MEMBERSHIP GROWTH** is work in progress and should be a living document that can be passed on year on year to each incoming Club Growth Director with new ideas added.

I'd like to thank this year's Division and Area Directors, Club Sponsors, Mentors and Coaches for providing some of the ideas and suggestions, particularly the many examples that can be found in the Area Directors' Club Visit Reports.

## CHAPTER ONE - WHERE, WHY AND HOW TO START A NEW CLUB



There are lots of reasons for starting a new Community, Corporate and University/College Club including:

- Toastmasters is too much of a best kept secret
- A Club has so many members that it's difficult to get a speech slot or a role
- Organisations want to enhance their communications and develop their leaders
- There are locations without any clubs nearby
- An individual wants to start a club
- The ability to communicate and present well is a big differentiator in the world of business, not-for-profit organisations and work
- Growth is important to and encouraged by Toastmasters International
- To prepare youngsters for the world of work

There are plenty of locations around the District where there are either no or very few clubs. And if a location like Dublin can support over 30 clubs then most of our major cities could also.

I don't necessarily buy into the argument that a location needs a certain size of population to support a club, I believe that many small towns can and do support one or more clubs.

However Corporate clubs probably need to be of a significant size (500 +) to support a club, bearing in mind that you will be targeting a certain percentage of the workforce and their availability to attend regular meetings that maybe shorter and in lunchbreaks.

There are many motivations for people joining a Toastmasters Club and that may help us to target our marketing and promotion:

- I have moved into management/supervision and need to do presentations
- I need to become more confident
- I am about to start a small business and need to sell to clients
- I have a speech impediment
- English isn't my first language
- I have a wedding speech to do
- I need to improve my interview skills
- I'm looking for opportunities to give something back
- I like belonging to something with likeminded people

The list goes on.

Toastmasters International has recently carried out several focus groups around the world and identified the typical Toastmasters member (personas) and their reasons for joining.

### **Some Basics**

Starting a new club demands a few basic things:

- One or more people with the time, commitment and persistence to make it happen
- An appropriate venue – good negotiating skills may get you a free one initially that will save you start-up costs
- The venue is important to attract the right kind of members. Does it look and feel professional? Rooms in pubs have been found to be ideal because you can get refreshments and food and are able to socialise after the meeting. Is it easy to find/get to and with a carpark?
- Corporates and Universities and Colleges generally don't have an issue with meeting rooms
- If you do end up having to pay for a venue you may need some start-up funds from a sponsoring club, and clearly the membership fees will be more expensive
- A bank account to enable you to start collecting membership fees
- An appropriate Club Name
- It's a numbers game – the more people you contact the more successful you will be

## Promoting Toastmasters to Corporates

Ideally to support a Corporate Club an organisation or a branch of an organisation probably needs to have 500 + employees.

Corporate clubs are often quicker to Charter, easier to recruit members and get payments in, and will have a free meeting room.

They are likely to have an employee only membership restriction, although some have considered inviting key suppliers to get involved.

Clubs typically meet at lunchtimes but evening and breakfast clubs are also practical. Meetings are generally shorter as a result.

Promoting Toastmasters to corporates does present some very different challenges.

They may have varying reasons for having a Toastmasters club in their organisations which could include:

- Their organisation sponsors a Toastmasters club in the USA or elsewhere
- To help identify and develop future leaders
- To help improve the overall communications in the organisation
- To help employees deliver better presentations to clients, management, staff members, suppliers etc.
- To help the Human Resources (HR) department meet their training and development plans
- To avoid the potential loss of an important client because of a bad presentation
- To give more constructive feedback to employees to help improve individual performance
- To make meetings more productive

There may be some early resistance from the HR department who believe that developing communications, presentation skills and leadership development is their responsibility, and may see a Toastmasters club as a threat – so promoting a club to them needs to be treated sensitively.

You ideally need a very senior person (a Director) to act as a sponsor and enthusiastic promoter of the new club. It will be easier to recruit members if it is seen to have senior management encouragement and support.

On the downside, it is more of a challenge to get senior managers to become members as they may not want to expose their deficiencies as a public speaker.

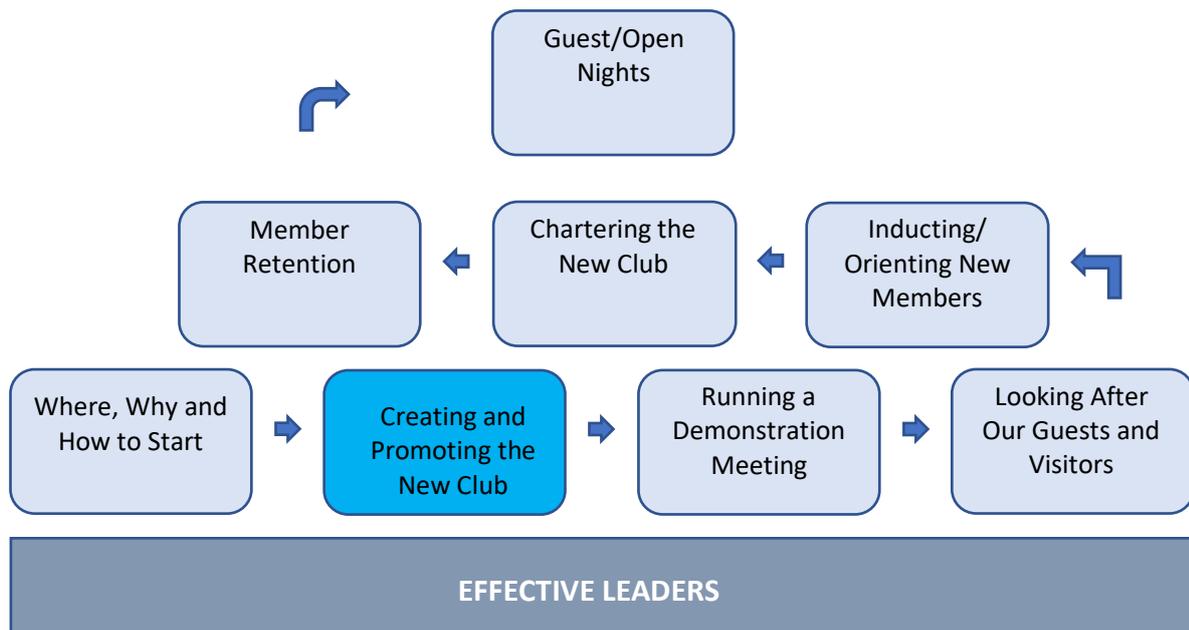
Payment of dues to Toastmasters International may also present a challenge as many corporate's bill payment procedures might not match up with TI's half-yearly dues renewals. Many corporates pay their members' fees, which could also impact on an individual's commitment to the club.

Despite these challenges having a corporate club can be very beneficial to a forward-thinking organisation that strongly supports employee development.

In the Toolkit is the Toastmasters International Corporate marketing letter and the Features, Benefits and Values of having a Toastmasters Club.

For a full list of Corporate Sponsors go to: [www.toastmasters.org/corporatesponsors](http://www.toastmasters.org/corporatesponsors).

## CHAPTER TWO – CREATING AND PROMOTING THE NEW CLUB



### **Club Name**

In these days of the internet and social media what you call your new club is paramount. Online searches will need a location and a description of what a club does. Avoid having an obscure name with no reference to where you are located. Reference to a location, speakers club and Toastmasters is probably the best catchall for search engines.

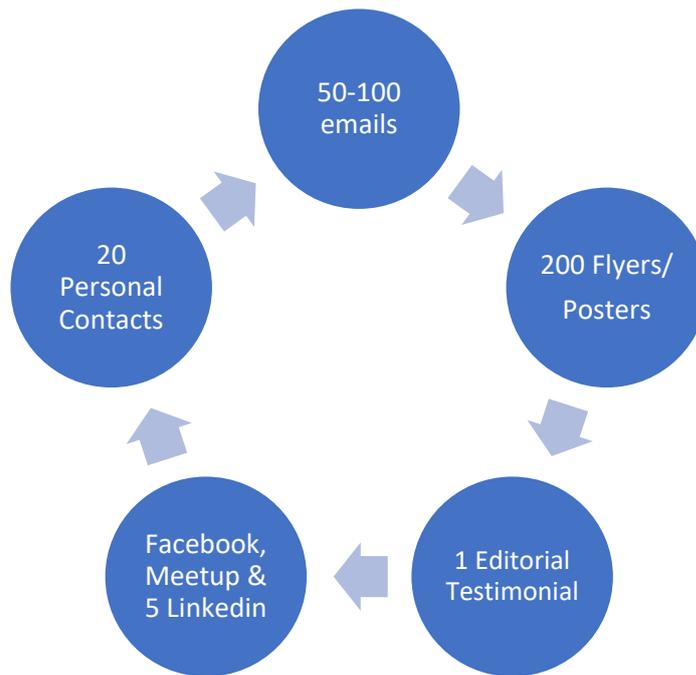
### **Checklist/Tips for Starting New Clubs**

One of the largest membership organisations in the UK had a proven five-pronged attack for starting new clubs that guaranteed 25 new members.

It had been proven many times over that their 5 key steps would achieve the desired membership yet missing out on one of these steps or only half-heartedly carrying them out would result in less success.

It has proven that the same principles work in Toastmasters and that we should also adopt a similar set of steps to ensure clubs get off the ground successfully, within a reasonable timescale and continue to grow.

Having been involved in starting four new community clubs and one corporate club, and getting another club through to chartering, I believe that the following 5 steps are the key to success:



### **Step One**

Compile a list of **at least 50 (ideally 100)** personal email addresses of **local connectors** – people and organisations who can connect you to potential members – Chambers of Commerce, local branches of Professional Institutes (CMI, CIPD, IET, CIM, CIMA etc.) Business in the Community, Education/Business Partnerships, Enterprise Agencies, Universities and Colleges, Business Clubs and Business Networks, Prince’s Trust, local large organisations’ HR people, Government Offices, Local Authorities, Social Enterprises and Third Sector Agencies, and all your own and your colleagues’ personal contacts.

To target the 25-35 age group consider contacting Young Farmers, Junior Chamber (JCI), Round Table, Youth Centres, Rotoract, etc. Many of these organisations also run speech contests.

Mail out a professional (and a targeted) flyer and invite them and their colleagues, friends and relations to your demonstration meeting or guest night. Sample e-mailers, letters and flyers are available in the Toolkit.

### **Step Two**

**Post up/distribute at least 200 Flyers/Posters** at local libraries, council offices, large company notice boards, universities & colleges, hotels, supermarkets, coffee shops, post offices, churches, doctors’ surgeries, vets, accountants, sports & social clubs, leisure centres, health clubs, health centres, youth centres, etc. The list is endless!

Leave posters/flyers at every other event you and others attend – workshops, seminars, conferences, training events, etc.

### **Step Three**

Get **at least one** editorial into the local press about the new club, the benefits of membership and provide if possible successful case studies/testimonials.

Do something similar with a local radio station - offer to be interviewed about Toastmasters.

### **Step Four**

Set up your website. Clubs can obtain the FreeToastHost site free of charge from Toastmasters International. It is a good starting point and gives you a web presence quickly. You will need to set up a web address and again try and make it clear about where you are and what you do, eg. [www.weatherfieldspeakersclub.co.uk](http://www.weatherfieldspeakersclub.co.uk)

**Social media** – set up a Facebook site for the new club and subscribe (as an Area) to Meetup. Also consider a Twitter page and the use of Eventbrite to publicise meetings. Importantly post something about Toastmasters and the new club every week to all sites particularly counting down to the launch and each meeting.

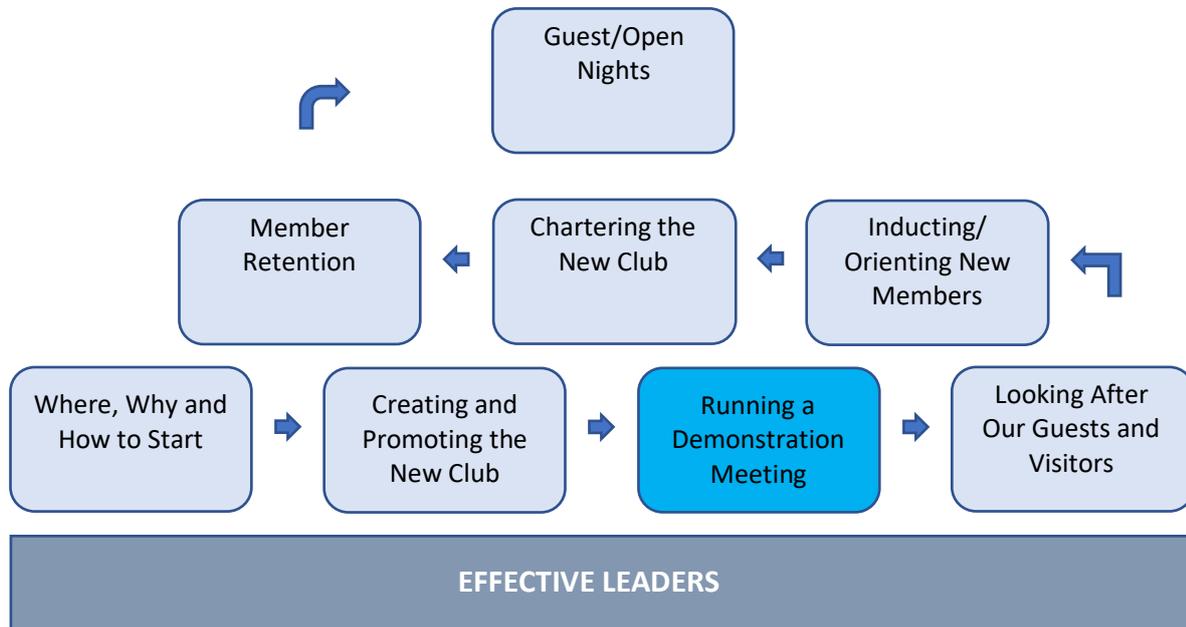
Identify/join **at least 5** local active LinkedIn sites (Chambers of Commerce, Business/Community Networks, coaching/mentoring groups, etc.) and publicise the new club two or three times prior to and after the launch

### **Step Five**

Each member of the sponsoring club to talk to **10-20 personal contacts each** and invite them and their colleagues, friends and relations to a meeting. Word of Mouth is great. Talk about the club to everybody you and your colleagues know. Keep posters and flyers handy to give out. If five people talk to 10 others and give out 5 flyers to each of them to distribute, we are getting to another 250 people!

***Whatever you think you have done, if you are not getting those new members you've not done enough. Go and do more!***

## CHAPTER THREE – RUNNING A DEMONSTRATION MEETING



The Demonstration Meeting will be your showcase for the new club – you will only have one chance to make a good first impression.

Make sure it is well planned and well organised.

Bring out your best stars and club ambassadors, but have a balance – you don't want guests to think that they will never be as good as the people they see. It is good to have a mix of expertise on show.

It is essential to try and get some people to sign up on the night, maybe offer a discount if they do and pay at or before the next meeting.

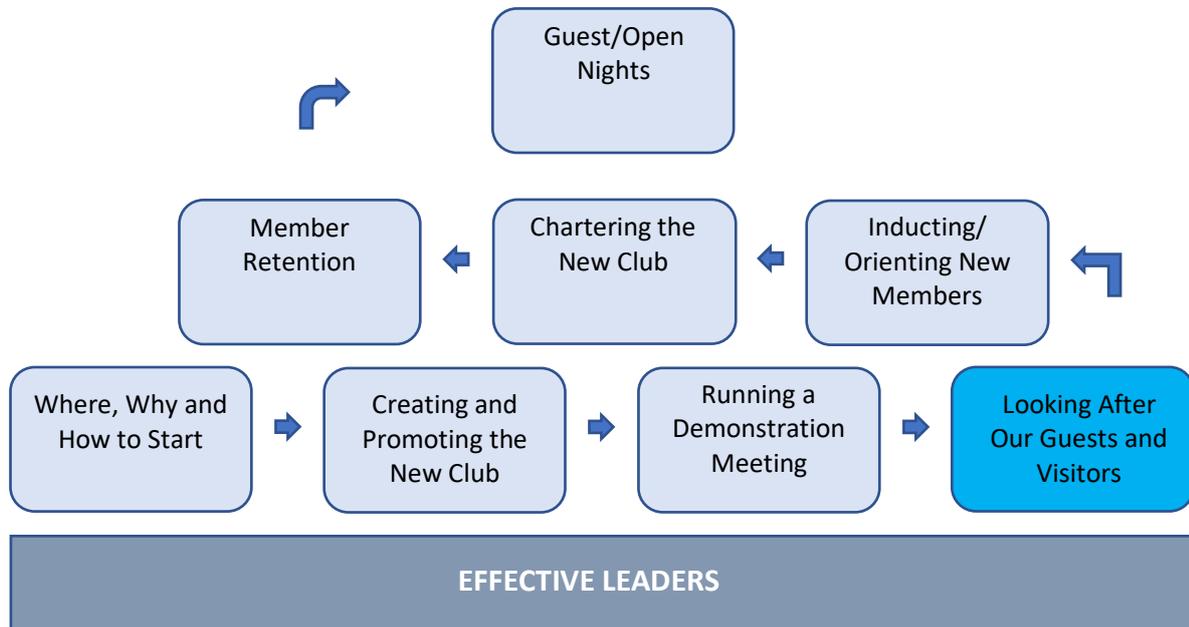
Follow-up with all guests/visitors straight away. Thank them for attending, invite them to the next meeting and send them the next meeting's programme as soon as it is ready.

Remember your initial target is 20 members of which only three can be members of another club.

### **Checklist for a Demonstration Meeting**

- Name Badges for members and visitors
- A system for capturing names and contact details
- A professional looking printed programme
- Room layout – probably theatre style if you expect large numbers
- Aim for 30-50 guests/visitors to ultimately get 20+ people to join
- A Guest/Visitor Pack with (see sample in the Toolkit):
  - An Introductory letter from the Club President
  - An explanation of the meeting roles, lights etc.
  - The Benefits of Toastmasters Membership Flyer
  - Membership Application Form (simplified)
  - A copy of the Toastmasters magazine
- Everyone to act as Meeters & Greeters with (ideally) Tea, Coffee and Cakes and Networking before the meeting starts
- Start and Finish on time, save time for socialising/networking at the end
- The programme could include:
  - Welcome & Introductions
  - An Explanation about Toastmasters and the Educational Programme
  - An outline of the officers and meeting roles
  - An outline of a typical meeting
  - Two speeches – one at each end of the CC projects – eg a CC2 and a CC9 or AC
  - Two evaluations
  - A Table Topics session
  - Table Topics Evaluations
  - An explanation of How to Join - costs, bank details etc.
  - A Question and Answer session where some members explain what they have got out of their membership
  - Fix and announce the next normal club meeting within a month
- Have copies of the magazine and Toastmasters leaflets to take away
- Follow-up. Thank guests for attending and invite them to the next meeting

## CHAPTER FOUR – LOOKING AFTER OUR GUESTS AND VISITORS



Guest and Visitors are the lifeblood of our Clubs. We need to make them feel important.

I learnt a long time ago in business we should treat our clients or customers like guests in our own home or even like our first girlfriend or boyfriend. Words like wooing and romancing our guests and members aren't too strong "a word" to use.

Do we make it easy for guests and visitors to find our club and our meeting room – do we have good signposting – and do we make it easy for them to find out about our club and how to join and pay? Do we have someone, or are all our members involved in Meeting and Greeting visitors? Hand out your Guest Pack and explain its contents. Make sure visitors have the bank details if you want them to pay online.

Whatever got visitors along to our meeting suggests that they had a need that wanted fulfilling and we need if possible to identify what that is, and to demonstrate how Toastmasters and our club can fulfil that need.

Link guests up with someone in the club. The idea of someone acting as a Sponsor or Buddy to a guest is a great idea. They can explain how we do things in the club, explain the education programme, introduce them to officers and other members and ultimately encourage and assist them to join.

They may also help a new member identify an appropriate Mentor. New Members' Sponsors get recognised by Toastmasters International with badges according to how many new members they sponsor. Make sure that you name the new member's sponsor when you register new members with Toastmasters International.

We should create a database of warm leads that includes everyone who makes contact with our club – be it through Toastmasters International, our website, Facebook, Meetup etc.

Meetup itself will accumulate a lot of Meetup “Members” over time but few will ever visit your club in the first instance. But the more information and photos you post, the more people see interesting and entertaining things going on at the club, the stronger the likelihood that they will come along.

It is possible to mail out to every Meetup Member via your Meetup webpage. I urge you to do it regularly and you will start to find more people attending.

Timing is often a key issue. People may not join straight away as the time wasn’t right for them. But if we keep in touch, our communication may just arrive in their “in-tray” at the appropriate time.

Send all the people on your guest list your meeting agenda and invite them along

We have had people joining several years after their first enquiry.

The Toastmasters “Moments of Truth” ([Toastmasters International Shop - Item 290](#)) educational session sets out very well the guest and member experience. Based on a book by Jan Carlzon who was the CEO of Scandinavian Airlines (SAS). He turned the airline around by focusing on what he later called “moments of truth,” the various points at which people within the airline came into contact with airline customers.

Clubs are encouraged to run this programme at least once a year to gauge member opinion and identify areas to improve.

### **Managing the Finances**

Make it easy for people to join your club and to continue paying their membership dues.

Many clubs use a Standing Order as a way of spreading membership payments. See the template Standing Order document in the Toolkit.

An initial upfront payment covers the Toastmasters International joining fees, and then a regular amount is deducted each month from the members and paid directly into the club bank account.

Some clubs have also been using GoCardless and Monzo as a way of collecting payments and transferring funds to Toastmasters International.

If you do collect dues half yearly, and the club can afford it, try offering a discount for early payment.

It can also help to publish the names of members who have paid when chasing up slower payers.



The Toastmasters International Shop has [Item No 1162](#) – New Member Orientation Kit that contains:

- New Member Orientation Kit Cover Letter
- Orientating New Members Guidance
- 5 New Member Profiles
- Induction Ceremony for New Members
- 5 How I Would Like to be Introduced
- 5 The Role of Mentor
- 5 Membership Certificates ([Item 513](#))

New members can also be presented with a Toastmasters Pin ([Items 5757 or 5753](#)) and the Promotion Welcome Ribbon ([Item 393W](#)).

The more importance that is placed on new member Induction/Orientation the better chance of retaining the member.

It's a well-known fact that organisations that don't induct new employees well are likely to lose them within six months.

Some clubs also officially present their educational materials and announce the new member's mentor at the induction ceremony.

We acknowledge that a formal induction process will take up valuable time in a club meeting but it is a key step in a new Toastmasters journey that shouldn't be skimped on.

There is a script for inducting/orienting new members in the New Member Orientation Kit but some clubs have modified or simplified it to make it more appropriate for our clubs.

## **Mentoring**

Toastmasters International has a Mentor Programme Kit ([Item 1163](#)), that includes:

- Instructions
- 20 Mentor Interest Surveys ([Item 1163A](#))
- 20 Mentee Assignment Notices ([Item 1163B](#))
- 20 Mentor Assignment Notices ([Item 1163C](#))
- Mentor Certificate ([Item 1163D](#))

With the advent of Pathways mentoring will become a critical skill to acquire and several clubs have already appointed a Vice President Mentoring.

The key aspects of mentoring include the right selection of mentor – the chemistry between the mentor and mentee – and finding an appropriate time to meet or connect – at the club meeting, over the phone, email, face-to face over coffee – or a mixture of all approaches.

Agreeing goals and timescales can help to guarantee a successful programme.

Toastmasters International also has an educational presentation on Mentoring ([Item 296](#)), part of the Successful Club Series.

### **Ice Breaker Speech**

New members should be encouraged to take on the less onerous roles straight away (Timekeeper, Ah Counter, Wordmaster) and to do their Ice breaker speech within a month or so of joining. Make sure they have sufficient support to help them select their topic area and in the preparation of their speech.

Some clubs have encapsulated guidance notes for each of the meeting roles – see examples in the Toolkit – and make these available at each meeting. It is also useful to have an encapsulated prompt sheet of the Toastmasters' Salutation at the lectern.

You can send out the current Ice Breaker guidance to new members well in advance of their educational manuals arriving (can be downloaded as [Item 1167F](#)).

### **Recognition**

Recognition is not only important throughout our lives but never more so than in our early Toastmasters journey.

Many clubs have the concept of Best Table Topics Speaker, Best Speaker and Best Evaluator and present the Toastmasters Mini Certificates ([Items 602](#)) to winners. It also creates a great photo opportunity to get photos of every meeting up onto to your website and social media.

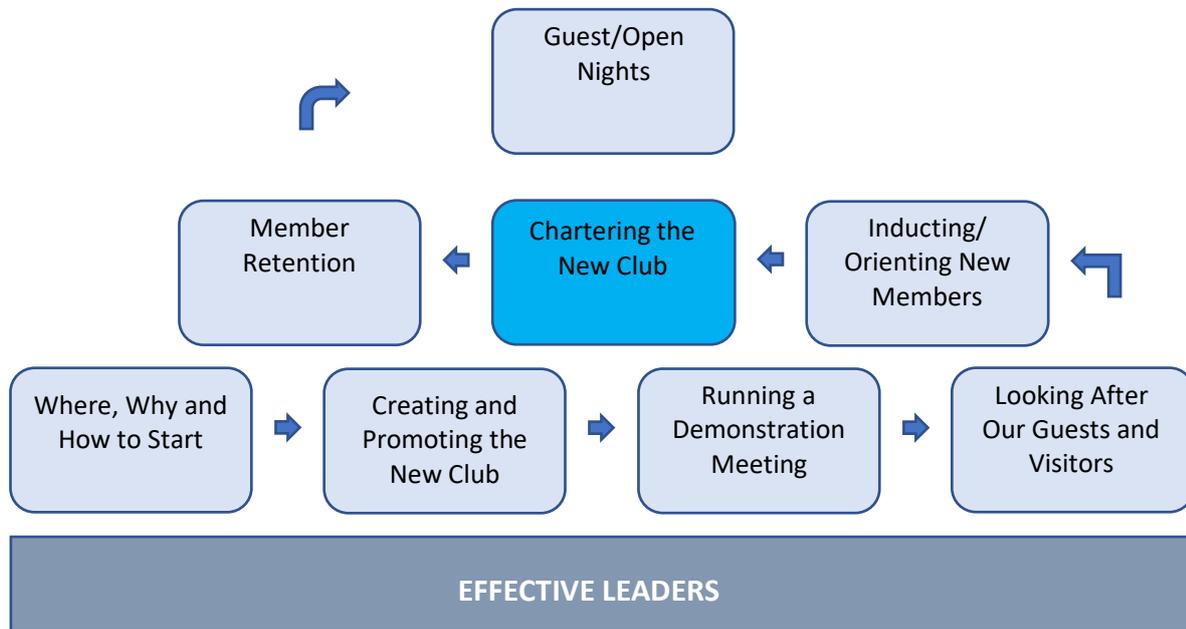
But don't forget that we also need to recognise our Most Improved members ([Item 394MI](#)).

Ribbons ([Items 393](#)) are also available for winners and the Halfway to Competent Communicator and Halfway to Competent Leader are a really useful way to recognise members for their first 5 speech and leadership projects.

Pathways Ribbons are starting to appear in the Toastmasters Shop.

I've mentioned on several occasions that we should never underestimate the power of chocolates (or certificates and ribbons) when it comes to recognition.

## CHAPTER SIX – CHARTERING THE NEW CLUB



### **Club Sponsors, Mentors and Coaches**

There is often some confusion around the titles of Club Sponsors, Club Mentors and Club Coaches. Here is a brief explanation of each of the roles and how they operate in a Toastmasters environment. Helpful resources are available from Toastmasters International – see the Item numbers below.

#### **Club Sponsors (Item 218H)**

The role of the Club Sponsor is integral to the success of a new club. The main duties of the New Club Sponsor are:

- To organise the new club
- To set up regular meetings
- To complete the paperwork and help plan the Charter Presentation

There are plenty of support materials available from Toastmasters International including:

- *How to Build a Toastmasters Club (Item 121)* that includes all the relevant forms
- Promotional brochures for recruiting members

The team working to charter a new club and support it afterwards usually consists of the following:

- Two sponsors
- Two mentors
- Experienced members who may join the newly chartered club and provide support and guidance through the new club's first six months to one year
- The District Director - responsible for appointing all sponsors and mentors for new Toastmasters clubs
- The Club Growth Director - responsible for assisting the district director with appointing sponsors and mentors
- Other Toastmasters and district leaders who have chartered new clubs and are resources for advice and information

The names of sponsors must appear on the **Application to Organise** sent to World Headquarters. The district director or club growth director can also appoint sponsors by emailing [newclubs@toastmasters.org](mailto:newclubs@toastmasters.org) with the names of those sponsors. Having the new club's president sign and return the Get Credit form to World Headquarters is the final step to ensure you are awarded for your sponsorship.

### **Club Mentors** [\(Item218G\)](#)

Mentors are the advisors and tutors for new clubs and have a great affect on the operation of the club and the degree to which a new club succeeds.

Up to two new club mentors are appointed by district directors or club growth directors. The mentors' names and member numbers should appear on the prospective club's **Application to Organise**. Alternatively, district directors or club growth directors can submit mentors' names by emailing [newclubs@toastmasters.org](mailto:newclubs@toastmasters.org) no later than 60 days from the charter date. Mentors and the new club's president sign and return the Get Credit form to World Headquarters after mentors have completed six months of service.

Sponsors pass the baton of support and development of the new club to the mentors, after their responsibilities as sponsors are complete.

A Club Mentor's responsibility can include:

- To provide insights such as how officers' actions, or inaction, affect every member and the club as a whole
- To identify options that clubs have regarding meetings and customs
- To ensure Quality Club Meetings. One of the deciding factors of a club's success is the value of club meetings. People join Toastmasters because they have a goal—they want to learn something. However, if the learning environment is stale or routine they will go elsewhere to reach their goal. This is why club meetings need to be focused and fun
- To help build and maintain membership. As a mentor, you are responsible for teaching the club how to maintain membership of at least 20 people

- To make sure club members know how to work through the Toastmasters Educational Programme
- To educate officers in the Distinguished Club Programme

As mentors, you are a new club's primary nurturers, educating and training by example. It is impossible to tutor a new club about every situation it may encounter but if you instill best practices from the beginning, it will be prepared to overcome the obstacles it encounters and sustain its members' educational growth. As mentors you are responsible for the beginning of a club's journey.

### **Club Coaches** [\(Item 218F\)](#)

Information on Club Coaches can be found in Chapter 9 Supporting Clubs at Risk.

### **Chartering a New Club**

The length of time it takes to get a club ready for Chartering is variable. To Charter a club it needs a minimum of 20 members of which at least 17 of them must be totally new members.

20 members should be considered as a minimum. With a typical club attendance of 50% - 60% it will still be a challenge to fill all the roles and three speech slots. A healthy club is considered as one with 30+ members. Above 40 active members clubs may need to consider the benefits or otherwise of splitting or starting another club in their area.

Some corporate clubs are able to Charter within days of their Demonstration Meeting, particularly if the organisation is funding part or all of the membership fees.

Community clubs will generally take longer. 12 months is considered the norm whereas some will get there quicker and some may take considerably longer.

Are there some tips to getting Chartered?

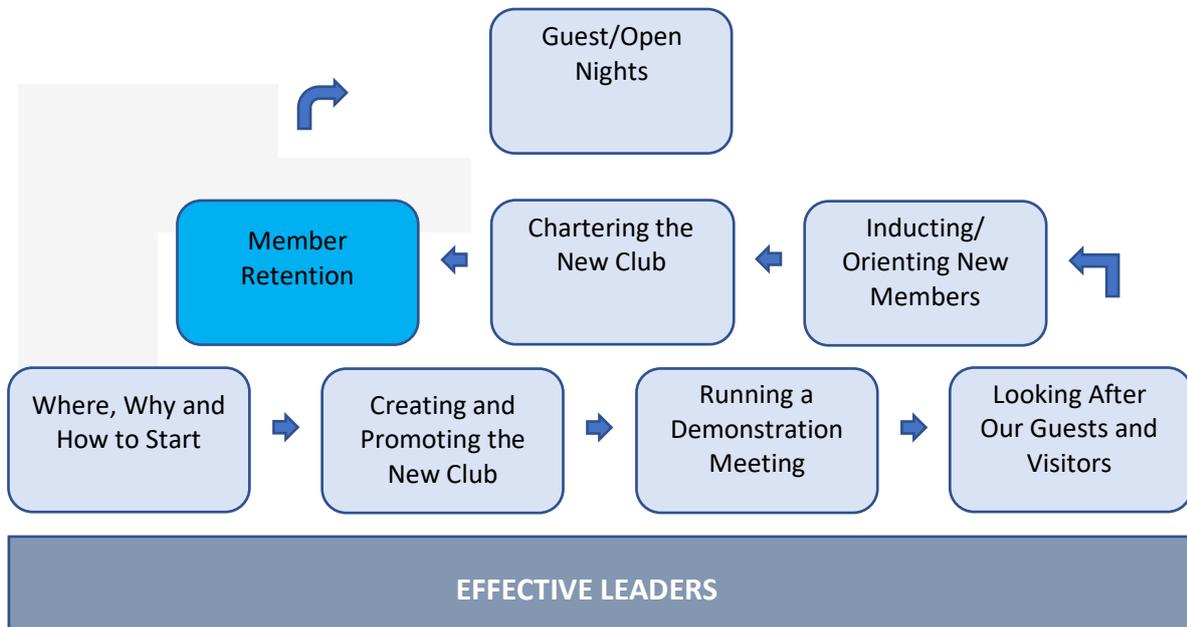
- **Selecting the Right Sponsors.** Having a sponsoring club is helpful, partly to provide some funding if required and partly to provide start-up materials and expertise. New clubs can also have two Sponsors who will work with the club right through to Chartering. Ideally they need to be individuals who have the time, the expertise, the commitment and the persistence to see the club through the highs and lows of getting to Chartering.
- **Having the Right Officers in Place.** Probably of equal importance is having a good leadership team who are committed and dedicated to developing and growing the club.
- **Commitment to Being a Quality Club.** Many of the aspects of good practice mentioned earlier will ensure that the club grows and that members stay – but Toastmasters isn't for everybody so expect a few disappointments along the way.

- **Make Club Success the Goal – not just getting Chartered.** Chartering should be the result of having a successful club, not the main goal. If you follow all the principles listed in the previous Chapters you will have a successful club and Chartering will automatically follow. Members in the short term tend to have little interest in the club being Chartered. Work hard at selling the benefits as you get closer to your Chartering date.
- **Understand the Paperwork and the Costs.** Initially clubs need to complete the **Application to Organise a Toastmasters Club Form** that can be found in the Toastmasters International **How to Build a Toastmasters Club** manual. There is an initial cost of a \$125 Charter Fee.
- **Chartering Paperwork.** In the **How to Build a Toastmasters Club** manual you will find all the Charter forms:
  - Form 1      Application to Organise a Toastmasters Club
  - Form 2      Charter Payments
  - Form 3      Charter Membership Application (one required per member)  
Applications must be signed by both the applicant and club officer
  - Form 4      Charter Club Officer Information
  - Form 5      Club Information
  - Form 6a     Club Constitution for Clubs of Toastmasters International
  - Form 6b     Addendum of Standard Club Options

To save scanning and sending 20+ Charter Membership Application forms to Toastmasters International TI will now accept a Spreadsheet Membership Roster providing the club maintains signed copies of the Charter Membership Application forms.

Currently all the Charter and Membership Fees have to be paid by credit card. Corporates can pay by wire transfer at a cost of \$10.

## CHAPTER SEVEN – TIPS FOR MEMBER RETENTION



It's not just Toastmasters but many membership organisations that struggle with member retention.

Internationally Toastmasters has a retention rate of around 50%. So we can expect some members to fulfil their learning and other objectives and move on.

There are many justifiable reasons as to why members leave – change in career, moving away, change in personal circumstances – finance, time commitments, family issues, etc. But there is more we can do to improve the member experience and to hang on to our members.

The more meetings that a member misses then the more of a challenge it becomes to return.

If a member doesn't have a role at a meeting it can give them a good reason to not attend.

Therefore, it is good practice for officers and an individual's mentor to follow up on absentees quickly and to get them back onto the programme.

Too often we wait until dues renewal time to find out that a member isn't planning to come back – then it may be too late.

It's also partly back to making individuals feel wanted, that we miss them and would love to see them back at the club.

Clubs that have more of a social feel about them appear to have better retention – having meetings outside of the club – meals out, bowling nights, Christmas parties and Pantos, summer barbeques, family days out, Charter anniversaries etc. all help in making a club part of a regular way of life and not just a fortnightly meeting.

The quality of club meetings is equally important in retaining members. There have been numerous negative comments about timekeeping putting guests and members off. It certainly doesn't set a good example if speakers are not keeping to time. Some clubs have made it an acceptable habit of clapping off speakers who exceed the 30 second rule, unless it is the Ice Breaker speech. Clubs that do this have seen members become far better timekeepers and have meetings that don't overrun.

When members have come straight from work they often want to get home for a meal.

Keeping meetings light-hearted, fun, with variety, yet professionally run is also paramount to keeping people coming along.

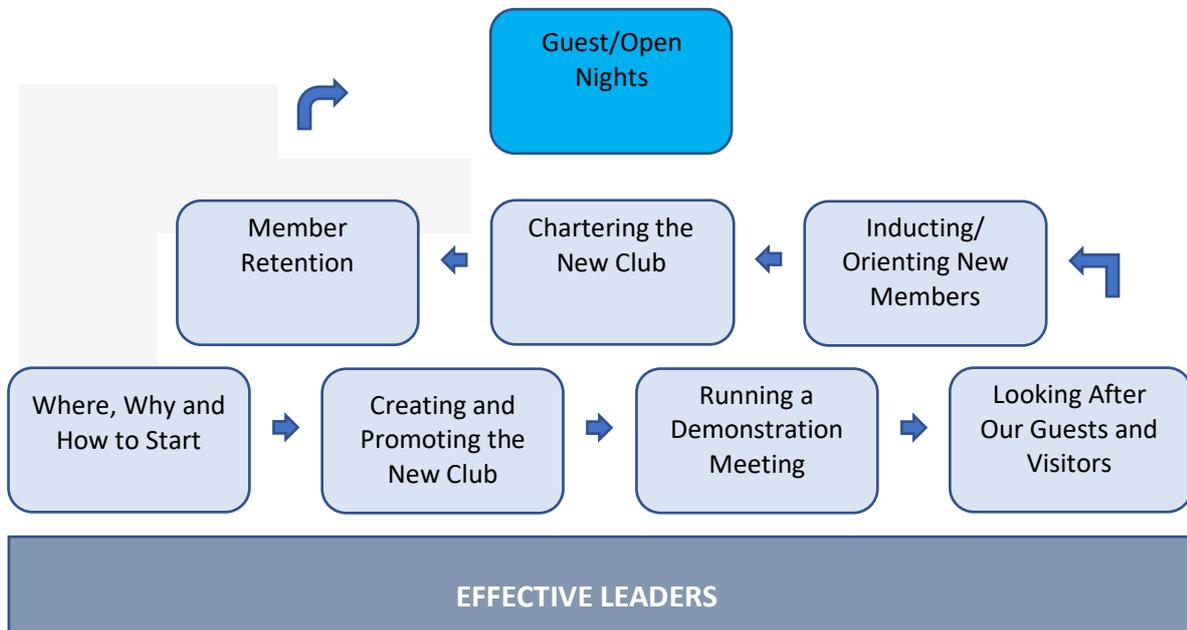
Lots can be done to ring the changes yet still follow the tried and tested Toastmasters format. Themed meetings for American Independence Day, Valentine's Day, Halloween, Christmas etc. can encourage members to dress up and apply the theme to their speeches and Table Topics.

Some clubs have run the meeting backwards – starting with Summations and Evaluations can create a challenge for speakers to deliver their speeches accordingly.

Clubs can also run the Tall Tales Contest at Club, Area and Division level adding yet more variety to their meetings. And don't forget to add plenty of variety also to Table Topics subjects.

Sometimes meetings can become too serious where all speeches become an extension of work and don't necessarily challenge the speakers – we need to consider our audiences and make sure we entertain them. A good night out will keep them coming back.

## CHAPTER EIGHT – RUNNING A GUEST OR OPEN NIGHT



If we are likely to lose a percentage of our members each year then running at least one Guest or Open Night a year seems sensible.

Timing needs to be carefully considered. Whilst clubs are extremely busy around contests and training periods we also need to consider when people might be thinking about their lives and careers.

Health clubs have a surge in membership in the new year when people start to think about their fitness and maybe we also use Christmas time to reflect on our lives and minds as well.

The new year may just be a good time to run a Guest or Open Night and maybe straight after the summer when dark evenings are creeping in.

### **A Case Study**

Many clubs go through periods of peaks and troughs.

Recently two clubs in the East Midlands outwardly appeared to be healthy with a membership of over 30 at the beginning of the year, but they were seeing less than 50% of those members regularly attending meetings.

Both clubs believed they needed to do something about membership, particularly when at the September dues renewal their reduced attendance was reflected in several members not renewing their membership.

Both clubs had a great team of officers who were all keen to help address the membership problem, both in terms of recruitment and in recognising that the quality of club meetings impacts on member attendance and retention.

It was agreed that they would look hard at enhancing the quality of their meetings, add more social activities and carry out a Guest/Open night to help with recruitment.

They felt that the New Year would be a good time to have their guest/open night – when people are reflecting on improving both their bodies and their minds.

Their Committee members came up with the idea of **New Year, New You**, using a photo of Ed Balls in Strictly Come Dancing and the strapline – ***“If Ed is willing to try something new, then why can’t you?”***

They decided to produce a quality, professional looking flyer and utilised the services of the student who designed their Robin Hood Conference brochure. The two clubs shared the cost.

They also agreed to offer a membership discount to anyone who signed up and paid on the night, or before the end of the next meeting. This information had a prominent position on the flyer.

### **How to Reach Potential Members**

Both clubs had used Meetup for some time and both had several hundred Meetup members, few of whom had ever visited the clubs. They discovered that it was possible to regularly email them all.

Both clubs had also kept a register/database of enquirers and visitors from the time the clubs were formed, and again this numbered two to three hundred names.

They also posted the flyer onto their Club Facebook pages with an appropriate accompanying message.

They encouraged every member to contact at least 10 people they knew – work colleagues, friends and family, and to email the flyer to them.

They also encouraged members to post the flyer on to their personal Facebook page if they had one.

Flyers were posted onto company notice boards, and wherever else they could find including supermarkets, doctors, dentists, vets, local libraries, council offices, universities & colleges, hotels, post offices, churches, accountants, sports & social clubs, leisure centres, etc.

They set up Eventbrite to record who was planning to attend.

Experience had taught that “it’s all about numbers;” the more people you contact and the more often you contact them the better the results. In the two to three weeks leading up to the guest/open night the clubs repeated the emailing and social media exercise 3 or 4 times – slightly varying the messages each time.

### **So did it work? You bet!**

The Guest/Open Nights consisted of an introduction to Toastmasters and the Club, a demonstration of one speech and an evaluation, a mini Table Topics Session with a Toastmasters theme, details on how to join, and a Q&A session where some members explained what Toastmasters had done for them.

The Guest/Open Nights were in January and over thirty people attended the first club’s meeting 12 signed up on the night and subsequently joined. Five weeks later they celebrated their 250<sup>th</sup> Meeting and 9<sup>th</sup> Birthday with 45 attendees, including many of their new members.

The other club held their Guest/Open Night later on 25<sup>th</sup> January with 55 attendees.

A local University Business School had also promoted their flyer amongst their students and around 20 of those attended.

14 people signed up on the night and subsequently joined; 3 of them students, opening the door to a University club.

Success breeds success and their subsequent meetings continued to bring in several guests and more new members. The two clubs brought in a total of 44 new members in the year.

### **Lessons Learned**

Guest/Open Nights really work – but you need to put in the effort.

Keep a track of everyone that has ever enquired and build up a database of email addresses – treat this as a goldmine of potential members.

Contact people often – it may eventually just arrive at a time when Toastmasters is right for them.

Make the most of your social media, keep it up to date, keep posting club photos and videos, and great toastmaster ideas.

The Clubs’ challenge continues by inducting their new members professionally into the clubs, to provide them with great mentors and do their best to make their meetings fun, entertaining and enjoyable - and hopefully to keep their new members for a long time.

## **Marketing/Promotion/Recruitment Checklist**

- Use **Meetup** to help attract new members. Share the cost with other clubs in your area
- Produce some different examples of club flyers – templates can be found on the TI website under Brand Portal – and get members to circulate them widely in the community. Local colleges media/marketing departments are often looking for design and marketing projects
- Regularly email your **Meetup** members and invite them to the next meeting
- Have a club **Facebook** page and add photos of certificate/ribbon presentations and a write-up about each meeting
- Send out a reminder on Facebook about each meeting
- Make good use of **Twitter, Eventbrite** and other social media
- Keep your website fresh with photos, articles, and public speaking, communications and leadership tips
- Maintain a Guest List of every enquiry and visitor to the club, regularly email them and invite them along
- Have a Club Business Card (Vistaprint) for members to give out to friends, work colleagues, relatives, etc.
- Follow up immediately on visitors and invite them to the next meeting
- Have a Guest Pack with:
  - an Introductory Letter from the Club President
  - an explanation of the meeting roles, lights, salutation, etc.
  - a copy of TI's "Benefits of Toastmasters Membership"
  - a Membership Application Form and "how to pay"
- Make good use of the First Timer and other ribbons, and Best Table Topics, Best Speaker and Best Evaluator Certificates. Post photos of recipients onto your **Facebook** page and website
- Hold one or two Guest/Open nights a year
- Appoint a club member to look after a guest/visitor, to explain the meeting and education programme, act as their sponsor/buddy and encourage the guest/visitor to join
- When a guest/visitor joins ensure that the sponsor gets recognised when registering the new member with Toastmasters International
- Provide guidance to the new member on booking roles and speeches, choosing a mentor and preparing their Ice Breaker
- Use the Halfway to CC and Halfway to CL ribbons to help maintain momentum

## CHAPTER NINE – SUPPORTING CLUBS AT RISK

There may come a time when a club struggles to recruit new members and gets poor attendance from existing members. Sadly, this can result in a downward spiral with the club initially falling below the magic 20 members that ensures that it is a distinguished club, and ultimately ending up with fewer than 12 members that now makes it eligible for a club coach.

It would help if clubs were able to take action sooner to prevent the club falling into a position of risk. Warning signs would be poor attendance, members not renewing their dues, a lack of visitors at meetings and meetings with low energy.

In the same way that success breeds success, decline also has a knock-on effect and a negative impact on the members that are left. The key is in keeping positive, having a turnaround plan and a plan for growth. It often pays to bring in a member or members from a nearby club to help with the plan.

This is where the Club Coach programme comes into play.

**A Club Coach** (Toastmasters **Item 218F**) is appointed to help and support struggling clubs become Distinguished Clubs.

A club coach may only be assigned by the District Director or the Club Growth Director.

A club must have at least one but not more than 12 members when a coach is appointed, and the coach cannot be a member of that club until their appointment request has been processed.

Up to two coaches may be appointed to a club. The appointment lasts to June 30 of the current programme year if the club becomes Distinguished or better. If Distinguished club status is not reached in the initial program year, the assignment will be extended to June 30 of the following year.

A Coach:

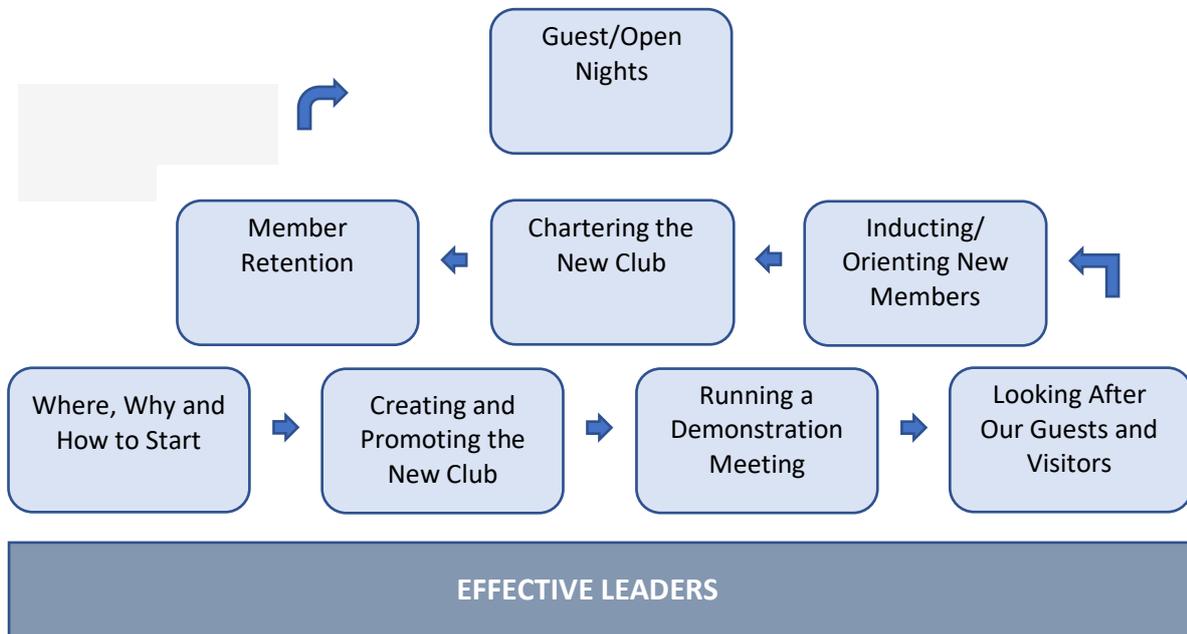
- Builds a rapport with club leaders and members
- Observes and analyses the club environment, then assists the club in generating solutions
- Helps the club develop a plan with goals for improvement
- Enables the club to achieve goals
- Instills enthusiasm, fidelity, and a sense of responsibility for the club's future

Some of the duties of the Club Coach can include:

- To connect with the club and observe, ask questions and build rapport
- To check the current club status, strengths and challenges
- To help to enhance the quality of club meetings
- To develop a membership building culture
- To encourage the club to recognise achievement
- To help the club and its members build its future vision

For a coach to earn credit toward the Advanced Leader Silver award, the coached club must achieve Distinguished Club recognition. A club coach must teach members to recognise threats to the club's stability and progress, as well as foster members' fidelity and responsibility for the club's future.

## CHAPTER TEN – EFFECTIVE CLUB LEADERSHIP



The foundation for success at each stage in the club building and growing process is to have effective leadership in place. Whether it be the initial club Leadership Team or the club Sponsors and Mentors, they are all key in making the journey a success.

Should a club get into difficulty at a stage in its life then the Club Coach is again a critical component.

### **So how can we measure leadership effectiveness?**

Fortunately Toastmasters International has some useful quantitative and qualitative tools in place for helping to measure club, and therefore leadership success.

The Distinguished Club Programme (DCP) helps to measure the impact we are having on our members' education, as well as membership growth and retention. It also covers the key aspects of club administration and officer training.

Moments of Truth, mentioned in Chapter Four, looks at the qualitative aspects of managing our clubs, covering:

- First Impressions
- Membership Orientation
- Fellowship, Variety and Communication
- Programme Planning and Meeting Organisation
- Membership Strength
- Achievement Recognition

We should regularly capture our members' opinions on the six Moments of Truth attributes and continually examine the impact we are having on the clubs in which we are part of the leadership.

It is imperative that club officers attend the two club officer training (COT) sessions during the year and ideally to get out and visit other clubs to learn how they deal with things. As we can see in this toolkit there is plenty of good practice around and it can help to bring new ideas, techniques and processes into your club.

One of the downsides – yet it's also a strength of the organisation - is that the officer team is rarely in place for more than a year. By the time we have got the hang of the role a new team is elected.

However as effective leaders we should make sure that we hand the club over to the new team in a better position than when we received it.

Starting and Growing Clubs and their Membership is a huge challenge but an extremely fulfilling one and I wish all those involved in every stage of the process a great success.

Sharing good practice is all about not having to reinvent the wheel. Please keep me, and my and your successors informed of examples and hopefully this Toolkit can become a living and breathing document.

Many thanks for all your help and support.

**John Cox**  
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**District 71 – Toastmasters International**