

Daniel Sandars, DTM - Program Quality Director

29th April 2021

The Program Quality Director is responsible for all aspects of education and training within the District:

This includes:-

- Promoting and supporting club quality
- Promoting the Distinguished Club Program
- Planning and executing the District Conferences
- Responsibility for all speech contests at club, area, division, and district

Region Advisor visit

Past International President Pat Johnson DTM visited the District between the third and fourth weeks in January 2021. A diverse itinerary was prepared that included training District Officers and Corporate club officers, visits to corporate clubs at McAfee and VMWare as guest General Evaluator, a visit to prospect Bolton Toastmasters' demonstration meeting, and public relations interviews for the District Newsletter and the podcast Talk show for Talkers.

Training – with special thanks to District Training Chair Danny Banks DTM

96% of District Officers were trained online in June. A very successful second round District Officer training took place in January and was attended by PIP Pat Johnson DTM our Region Advisor.

The District delivered its first district wide Club Officer Toastmaster Leadership Institute (TLI) online in June with nearly 400 attending. This helped pool and incubate training skills to deliver high quality online training within months of the district being locked down for COVID19. It also added capacity to Club Officer Training with 914 officers trained compared to 840 the previous year.

In January and February, the District carried out its first lunchtime series of Club Officer Training sessions aimed at the officers of Toastmasters' programs in Corporations. Seventy-three officers attended one or more sessions, with twenty-nine attending for four or more sessions to earn a credit.

83% of clubs had a minimum of 4 club officers trained in June and

74% of clubs had a minimum of 4 club officers trained in January

The following Areas achieved 100% of clubs trained at both sessions – A3, C10, D28, D40, E6, F4, H20, H32, H44, N15

The TLI and the online format helped relaunch a District Trainers' Bureau. Seventeen Toastmasters are available now to support clubs with their training needs. Since November, with Toastmaster John McFadzean DTM's help, monthly Speaker to Trainer courses have been sponsored with 50 Toastmasters benefitting from training. The Trainers Bureau has been the backbone of a weekly online evening training series that has seen 16 sessions on a range of topics that have benefitted over 250 Toastmasters, with others viewing the recordings on YouTube.

Winter Educational Summit - with special thanks to the chair Elizabeth Khan Panni DTM

The District held its first winter summit in the first weekend of December with 12 world class presentations benefitting 80-100 Toastmasters in each. It was a welcome opportunity to reconnect the District mid-winter, develop skills, and raise morale. A District Christmas party addressed by International President Elect Margaret Page DTM accompanied the summit.

Zoom academy - with special thanks to section leads Eddie O'Mahony DTM, Dinah Simmons MS1, Sarinca Janga DTM, Liz Welch DTM, and Moira O'Brien DTM

When the District meetings went online, our members, spear-headed by Toastmaster Nik Lakhani DTM, self-organised to pool their skills on zoom to support each other to form an academy of Zoom masters. The District sponsored a zoom pro license that help deliver over 58 training sessions. Over 350 members attended basic training, 134 attending advanced training, 23 came back for refresher

training and 22 used the sandbox practice sessions. Separately, 134 attended general zoom contest training, 15 the advanced zoom contest mastery, and 18 an accompanying team/project management Trello training. This resulted in a core team of 37 (+4 subs) highly proficient zoom masters supporting District 71 events and some events in District 91.

Incentives

This year we are piloting incentives as financial incentives on eligible receipted claims presented via concur and subject to approval. This allows the club more freedom and convenience over how the incentives are spent compared to Toastmasters International gift certificates. Gift certificates have often gone unused due to the inconvenience of ordering by mail and shipping costs. Prior to that physical items purchased from the store involved delays in obtaining the items on the district order and then logistic delays of manually moving items from person to person at events until the item arrived with the intended beneficiary if it did. For several years now the District has also been concerned that there is little evidence that our incentive programs drive behaviour despite very significant 40k+ euro budgets.

Distinguished Club Program

Seventy-three clubs are currently distinguished with 20 distinguished clubs, 28 select-distinguished clubs, and 25 President's-distinguished. For the District Recognition Program our targets are 86 distinguished District, 98 select-distinguished District, 107 president's-distinguished District and 118 Smedley-distinguished District. One hundred and eighteen clubs have the goals to be distinguished, but 47 are currently lacking the 20 members or net growth of 5 members to qualify. New members, at 1359, are down a third on previous years.

Educational Awards

Nine hundred and thirty-nine members (23% of all members) have earned 1475 new educational awards this program year. The District has 18 new Distinguished Toastmasters and 66 Pathways Level 5 Awards. One hundred and eight members have attained triple crown with 423 awards between them. Congratulations to you all. Online, educational advancement has been subdued with clubs tending to run shorter meetings to combat zoom fatigue and seeing up to a third of their members avoiding online meetings and or avoiding speaking at online meetings.

Pathways – with special thanks to chairs John Allsop DTM and Zain UI Abidin DTM

With the substantial transition from the previous educational program the District's adoption has improved with 2/3 of clubs above 85% adoption, 1/3 of club above 95% adoption, and only 11 clubs (5%) below 50% adoption. The stragglers are mostly corporate or new clubs. It is possible delayed renewals are affecting the data, However, there is a case to provide specific help to some clubs. We have also caught up on adoption with our Region 10 peers.

Pathways training sessions and panel discussions have been held at District seminars, officer training and corporate club officer training events. Increasingly, the emphasis has swung towards optimising the deployment of Pathways. This has been done by training officers to recognise that meeting and leadership roles at club, area, division, and district are opportunities for Pathways elective projects. Members can bank these until that level is ready for completion. Furthermore, we have provided training to help corporate officers align staff development targets with Pathways projects.

Community programs - with special thanks to speechcraft chair Sultan Kus CC, ALB and Youth Leadership program expert Brendan Haughton DTM

It seems to have been a subdued year for Youth Leadership with many schools struggling to function online. Speechcraft has seen significant activity. Early work by Toastmasters Krystal Long TC3 and John Allsop DTM helped adapt and demonstrate online delivery under lockdown using pathways projects that complimented the roll out of the new Speechcraft Digital Experience. Toastmasters Ted Mellamphy PM4 and Heidi de Wolf IP4 led the first two Speechcraft Digital Experience programs. There were also several examples of the paper based Speechcraft running. Across the District support has been provided to help advise, plan, and sometimes deliver a variety of Speechcraft and

Youth Leadership Programmes. The District also created a framework where Area and Division budgets can be used to incentivise and support the costs of clubs doing community programmes.

District Chief Judges – with special thanks to Tina Norbury DTM and Anthony Garvey DTM

Invaluable assistance has been provided to deliver training, leadership, and advice for online contests.

Conference

Solihull 2021 conference was cancelled with a loss of deposit. In its place the District is delivering an online conference “Fulfil your Promise” between 21-23 May. We are using a professional virtual event management solution ‘Whova’ to deliver a fully featured conference across three virtual stages that includes networking, contests, 19 workshops, social activities, and district business. This is being funded by raffles and sponsorships to enable us to reward our loyal members with a free conference in these strange times. In 2022 we hope to return to a physical conference in Galway, Ireland.

Summary

Great strides have been made to take advantage of the opportunities provided by being online, and globally connected, to deliver training, educational summits, and community programmes. Unfortunately, digital inequality also exists leaving isolated cold spots of disengaged struggling clubs and members. More can be done to help provide support down that final mile by doing more to empower local connections and solutions. I’d like to thank everyone who has got stuck in and helped this year, especially as the ever-present digital tether has conspired to make almost continuous demands on our lives.

Daniel Sandars