

The Small-Town Advantage

Seven Secrets of Success for small-town Toastmaster Clubs

In 1907 the Kenora Thistles won the Stanley Cup.

At the time Kenora was a collection of shacks hundreds of miles from anywhere on the shores of Lake of the Woods in Northwest Ontario with a population of under 1,000. Delta Controls Toastmasters in Surrey is a corporate club from a company of about 100 people. They have been Select or Presidents Distinguished for the last 3 years. Their meetings are so well attended, people have to stand in the doorway and peer around the corner.

Robson Valley Toastmasters is one of BC's most remote clubs- 150 miles from the nearest clubs in Prince George. From a town of under 1,500, last year they found 8 new members to grow to a membership of 15.

Small-town organizations have a lot of advantages compared to their big city cousins. When you harness those advantages, success is just around the corner.

What are the Success Secrets that we can take from these stories and apply to small-town Toastmaster Clubs?

The seven secrets that follow are a summary. Each idea has a separate resource page to give more details and specifics.

- 1. Find out what is special about your town or your club and build on it.**

The Kenora Thistles team grew from a frozen lake, not much to do in the winter, and a group of teenagers. The teenagers discovered they could beat their parents, so they put together a competition team.

Delta Controls discovered a few of their members had a penchant for comedy. Now they all try to outdo each other for wackiness.

Have you got someone who is great on Parliamentary Procedure? Then offer special meetings on it and invite chairmen of other organizations along. Is your area known for it's park? It's history? It's unusual industry? Then create a club logo to match and put on a special series of meetings with featured speakers in conjunction with whatever other local organization(s) are appropriate.

Make sure that it is fun and that the audience has a chance to participate. (It's called Table Topics!)

- 2. Be social**

Robson Valley Toastmasters are known for their friendliness. Visitors feel so welcome and cared about they are reluctant to leave. As a club they organize excursions such as hikes that have nothing to do with Toastmasters but a lot to do with being friends and enjoying each others company.

For some people Toastmasters is the social highlight of their week. Make it a social highlight for *all* members of your club and their guests.

- 3. Get the support of influential people.**

All corporate clubs know that when the boss supports Toastmasters then life is a whole lot easier. Some people just want to be seen with the boss, others

think that if he/she supports it then there must be something to it and will come along. In Delta Controls the boss is a strong supporter. In Kenora, the town fathers saw that their hockey youth had the potential to become something special and actively supported them. They were pleased to let the hockey team's successes become their successes. Pride is a big motivator for people to go a little further, try a little harder, and talk a little louder. When you link club pride to civic or organization pride you will find other people promoting your club.

In small towns there are always a small number of influential people that are seen in the same light as the corporate boss. Invite them to be a guest speaker, offer to participate in their next community project, ask them to help judge a speech contest, get photographed with them and get those photographs in the local paper. Quote their words of wisdom in your newsletter and on your posters (with permission of course).

It is all about positioning your club as a prestige organization in the town.

4. **Work the local newspaper**

City Clubs count themselves lucky if they can get one article in the paper a year. Small towns usually have a newspaper or broadsheet that is always looking for news. Kenora support grew because their hockey team was the news. Remember though, it is news they are looking for. This quote from the Quesnel Observer... *Think of the " Boy who cried wolf". Remember our mandate is not to promote your particular group, but rather to provide a good, interesting read to our readership.*

Two clubs that have excelled in getting published are Quesnel and Walnut Grove. They have submitted write-ups on events, awards, how-to articles and human interest stories on how their members came to Toastmasters. Be creative. Build a personal relationship with the local editor and photographer. Ask them what they would like and then provide it - well ahead of their deadline.

5. **Relax and have fun.**

You may have heard the adage "Families that play together stay together". The same applies to Toastmaster Clubs. Delta Controls plays together at every meeting and it shows in the attitude of their members.

People who are laughing learn better. They are also more likely to bring along their friends.

6. **Network**

In small towns lots of people are on several committees or groups. Use the contacts to set up inter-group activities. Toastmasters is unique in that it has virtually no competition as a volunteer provider of communication training for adults. This makes us a "safe" group to associate with. Challenge the Lions Club to bowls, have joint social events, offer to help with emcees for the next community fair, participate in parades, put on Youth Leadership courses at the school, become an integral part of the community and watch the community work with you to help you grow.

7. **Have creative meetings**

Toastmasters has lots of rules. Very few of them relate to how your club

meetings are run. We are just encouraged to provide a supportive environment that gives everyone a chance to speak. Period. Some people might be surprised to know that TI rules do not require each meeting to include a business meeting, a Grammarian or even (horrors!) a Timer. These are just conventions that have evolved over time as they usually help with creating the supportive environment that allows everyone to speak and to become better communicators and leaders.

It is easy to use the conventions as a crutch. It is better to use the meeting ideas in the TI manuals (to quote a TI publication...) *“to spark your imagination and inspire you to think of other ideas that will stimulate your Club’s members”*.

Some of the best creativity occurs when only a few people turn up for a meeting or the prepared speaker is not prepared. Instead of sliding into a “woe is us” chat session, look around the room and decide how you can get the most fun and learning out of the next hour or so and go for it. You will all feel energized and enthusiastic about the next meeting.

Encourage more creativity by having regular special events such as debates, how I came to this town ice-breaker nights, tall-tales night, and theme nights on just about anything.

With small towns, it is very easy to get locked into a particular meeting format because that is where one or two key people in the club feel comfortable. Encourage members to visit other clubs when they are away on holiday and report back. Challenge the club to try at least one idea from the report at the very next meeting. This rewards the person who went to the trouble to report back, and stops the ideas being forgotten. Remember, a rut is just a coffin open at both ends, so do not let your club fall into them!

From the reverse perspective, clubs that have little contact with other clubs can develop some excellent ideas when they are unpolluted with mantras on how things are “supposed” to be done. The Kenora team developed a whole new style of hockey (the rush) that way. Thankfully they shared it. Please share your successes too!

Small town people are a very special type. They tend to be more supportive of each other, belong to more organizations, take a longer view on planning, and are more civic minded.

Small wonder that 70% of B.C.’s premiers that were ever given the vote of approval by being re-elected... came from small rural towns.

Small-towns are growing our leaders.

It is only right that Toastmasters be part of that growth.

1. Finding a Club Identity

This is a great project for one of the panel discussion modules in the ATM manual The Discussion Leader. It is a way of letting the club decide what is special about it, and developing a marketing tool at the same time.

That will motivate the members and the guests.

There are 3 projects in the manual that work...

1-“SEMINAR SOLUTION” 20-30min

- Present an introductory talk or lecture describing a theory, model or information to be discussed by the group following the presentation.
- Use a buzz-session technique to facilitate group participation to a solution.

2-“ROUND ROBIN” 20-30min

- Using a problem-solving pattern, lead the participants in a brainstorming session.
- Screen the possible solutions and lead the group in deciding what action to take.

5- “WORKSHOP LEADER” 30-40min

- Guide the workshop participants in an investigative discussion of the problem.
- Follow a problem solving pattern to arrive at a solution.

You have two problems to find a solution to... a club logo and a club motto. Involve the whole club and get creative.

If some background on the history of the town is appropriate, use 1. If an open field will work, go for 2 or 5.

Be prepared to devote most of a meeting to it.

A simple and effective use of the logo is to print 6” or 8” x 2” ribbons to give to all new members. The ribbons look great with your name badges and are a handy thing to pin award pins to. Guests will treasure awards with a logo on too.

If you decide against ribbons, use business card holder badges and print the logo on them as well as the members name.

Obviously your logo and slogan should be used on all your club posters, flyers and your web-site.

Finding a club identity can be a great encouragement for a club.

Aldergrove Toastmasters use the ribbons. Their logo is the Alder Tree and their slogan is “Grow with Us”. The club has a lot of club pride and civic awareness. They regularly participate in town parades and run Student leadership courses in their local school. They have also achieved 10 out of 10 Distinguished Club goals for the last 4 years.

2. Being social

Put yourself in the shoes of a person who finishes work, rushes home, says hello and goodbye to the kids, then drives an hour to get to a meeting.

At the meeting you say their speech, get clapped down just before you finish, have 5 minutes at the break waiting for the VP Ed to get your book signed, then at the end are hustled out the door because the janitor has to lock the building. It is an hour drive home again, to be greeted by a spouse who says “how did your speech go? Did you have a good time?”

I do not care how great it was in terms of learning, the answer to those questions is probably “OK” and “so-so”.

Learning might get people started on the program, but it will not keep them there. OK's and so-so's are not enough.

Back to the person at the start... what would *you* want in those circumstances?

How about

- A chance to unwind
- Comfortable chairs
- Food
- Drink
- Time to talk with friends about nothing in particular.
- Time to get congratulated and encouraged outside the meeting time.
- Time to discuss your next project.
- Laughter and fun

These are all things that relate to the social aspects of the meeting. All except the last relate to how the meeting is set up.

Clubs where people travel a distance to attend need to take particular care that the meeting set-up is meeting the social needs of their members.

Consider the following possibilities

- Meet for dinner before the meeting – even if it is at a fast-food restaurant!
- Meet for coffee, drinks or dessert after the meeting
- Break for 30 mins for a snack in the middle
- Have one person rostered to bring snacks and drinks each week
- Have turns bringing a music CD to play in the break
- Schedule the meeting to end 30 min before you have to be out of the building.
- Schedule chat time at the start of the meeting
- Keep the schedules light to reduce the pressure on keeping to time.
- Allow a generous time at the start for introductions, or a “how did your week go?” round-robin.

Being social also relates to how guests are treated.

How do you talk to them...

Thanks for coming / Sit here / Excuse me while I Or...

A genuine attempt to listen to them talk about themselves. Apart from making them feel cared for, when guests talk about themselves they are also telling the listener how they can be sold on the program. As Zig Ziglar said, "You can have anything in the world you want if you'll just help enough other people get what they want." Of course you have to find out what they want first!

To raise the club's conversation skills, encourage someone to do the ATM project in the Interpersonal Communication Manual

1- "CONVERSING WITH EASE" 10-14 min

- Identify techniques to use in conversing with strangers.
- Recognize different levels of conversation & initiate conversation with a stranger.

The third part of Being Social is all those extra things that you can do as a group outside the normal meeting time.

How about ...

- Christmas Dinner at a restaurant
- Pot-luck BBQ's
- Going out to celebrate new CTM's
- Indoor Bowls
- Club Olympics (where the club is split into teams and each team competes in a range of sports from darts to bocce to scrabble)
- Sing-a-long nights
- Club excursions to visit local industries, gardens, institutions.
- Visits to other clubs. (This is a traditional Toastmaster pastime. The unofficial rules are that if 5 or more members of any club visit another club as a group they can borrow that club's banner until such time as the host club sends 5 members to claim it back. Note that not all clubs like to lose their banner, so it is best to call beforehand and find a club that wants to play.)
- On a grander scale, all the Prince George Toastmaster clubs get together and host a ball every year. Why not do the same and do it in conjunction with other clubs? More on this subject in section 6 on Networking.

Within the meeting there is also scope for more social activities such as:

- Theme nights
- Kids night (where you bring along your kids (or grandkids) and the meeting is set up to include them.
- Bring-a-dessert night

Section 5 covers more ideas under Fun

3. Get the support of influential people

This page goes hand in hand with the networking page.

It is therefore appropriate to repeat the quote from Zig Ziglar from the bottom of those pages:

If you go looking for a friend, you're going to find they're very scarce. If you go out to be a friend, you'll find them everywhere.

So you are going to cultivate the influential people in your town?

Question 1 Who are they?

- Chamber of Commerce
- Church leaders
- High School principal
- Leaders of active service organizations such as Elks, Lions, Rotary, Kinsmen, Legion
- Managers / owners of large industries
- Mayor or councilors
- MLA's and MP's
- Newspaper editors
- Organizers of the local festivals
- President of the Business Improvement Association or Merchants Association
- RCMP

Question 2 How can you meet them?

- Find the linkages between your members and other organizations. Remember spouses are a key part of the linkage network too.
- Get involved with "all welcome" type events such as festivals or charity walks.
- Dream up a meeting theme that matches their interest and invite them to speak.
- Go up to them after they have done something public, say you are from Toastmasters and offer a genuine compliment. If they like the compliment they might ask you about how they could improve. Have that comment ready, but do not volunteer it unless they ask, and then have another positive ready to finish with. Give them your card.

Question 3 How do you get their support?

Recognize the fact that many people regard you as a Toastmaster as something special and will be pleased to have you on-board with their own projects.

The objective is to foster a feeling of mutual support – not charity.

Imagine that VIP you have been cultivating saying "Our town has a Toastmasters Club- you might have seen them at our... they are a great group, you should go and check them out" Ahhh *that's* a recommendation!

>>>> more

It will happen when you:

1. **Start small**

Offer to be involved in small ways. For example offer to put up a display at a festival, then next year you will be in a position to offer to provide emcees.

2. **Support their children**

Student Leadership courses are one of the best ways of all to build a community presence. At the end of the course, invite the parents and local dignitaries to come and listen to the students, present the awards etc. Make sure you get the photos in the paper. You can then offer to help judge school speech competitions. 4H, cadets, and Miss XYZ are other groups that have speaking components that need judges and / or training.

3. **Send “representatives”**

All groups are struggling for members and work in dread of poorly attended planning meetings. Many community groups would love to have an official representative from Toastmasters and will find you things to do that match your expertise.

Just call them up say TM would like to help and ask if they would like TM to send someone to their next meeting.

Go with your 20 second “Toastmasters is...” speech ready and you will impress them as being articulate and organized right from the start

4. **Ask for support**

This is the last idea because it should not happen until at least some of the preceding ideas have occurred.

If you have a specific project you need support for, decide exactly how they could help, ask for that, and try to set it up so they get something out of it too. (Publicity for them or their causes counts as something)

If it involves attending a meeting, ask but offer alternate dates in case your original date will not work for them.

5. **Thank them**

For public figures, make your thanks a public as well as a personal thanks. For example, a letter to the paper, a sign on your PR display, a letter to the organization that could be read out at their next meeting.

For businesses, certificates, letters and plaques they can hang up are great.

Many VIP's collect photographs. If you have a good one of them, send it to them with a note saying thanks. If the favour was a big one, get it framed with an inscription describing the event and saying thanks.

4. Work the local media.

Quesnel non-profit groups got together to find out how best to work with their local media. They invited them all to a meeting. This document is part of the result. Thanks to Curtis Harvie of Quesnel Toastmasters for sharing it.

Non Profit Public Relations Group of Quesnel

Media Listings:

Quesnel Cariboo Observer Newspaper -

188 Carson Avenue
Quesnel - B.C. - V2J- 2A2
(250) - 992-2121
E: Mail - www.quesnelobserver.com

Shaw Cable Ten -

156 Front Street
Quesnel - B. C. - V2J-2K1
(250) - 992-8363
E: Mail - www.shaw.ca

Coffee Break -

Quesnel - B.C.
(250)- 992-5317

Our Town Magazine -

4478 Hwy 97 North
Quesnel - B.C. - V2J-6W9
(250)-992-3560

Quesnel Advisor Newspaper -

262 Reid Street
Quesnel - B. C.- V2J-2M2
(250)- 992-5572
E: Mail - editorial@quesneladvisor.com

CKCO - Quesnel Radio -

160 Front Street
Quesnel - B. C. - V2J-2K1
(250)- 992-7046
E: Mail - news@caribooradio.ca

Bargain Hunter -

101 Marsh Drive
Quesnel - B.C. - V2J-3K3
(250) - 992-3525

Radical Press -

4633 Barkerville Hwy
Quesnel - B. C. - V2J-6T8
(250) - 992-3337

***** Picture Taking & Preparation *****

The following information was gleaned from many sources; eg: - discussions with photographers - talks with editors - personal knowledge and feed back after submissions etc.--- It has found to be useful but are only suggestions:

The saying goes that a picture is worth a thousand words. A good picture increases your chance to have your submission published. Most newspapers and magazines use submitted articles as a filler. If you can make yours stand out with a good picture then you have a better chance of having your groups article published. Most people notice an article that has a photo with it thereby the greater chance of being noticed by the public if your article is published .You must remember there are no guarantees though.

A few suggestions when submitting a photo for the media are -

- Generally the press want a four inch by six inch (10 c.m. by 15 c.m.) high gloss photo as these scan better.
- Where ever possible submit two pictures from different angles and different poses. This allows the media person to determine which photo best fits their format for the day.
- Some press will accept digital photographic pictures or Internet sent pictures. It is best to check with the media you are using at the time to see their desire. They too have staff change over so be sure to recheck on occassion as to how they wish to receive your photo and under what format.

- Be sure that you have a caption and name of person(s) in photo on back of photo - Preferably typed – You should have the photo and activity listed on your article but putting information on the back of the photo helps the press should your article and the photo be separated. It also helps them should they desire to re-use the picture for an other article on you or your group. Remember once you give them the picture you are also giving them permission to use or re-use:

A few suggestions when taking photographs for the media are -

- Always take two or three pictures to get the one you desire. There is a high probability that if you only take the one picture some one will have their head turned or eyes closed or mouth open.
- Try to make your picture an action shot. Standing still head and shoulder shots are dull, uninteresting - You can be presenting an award or cheque. You can be playing an instrument or striking an action pose. You can be participating in a sport. Try to show something that represents your group. People do not always have to be looking into the camera all the time as long as they can be and are identified.
- Try taking pictures from different angles. Instead of straight on photos try taking a picture from a lower angle or higher angle. Take photos from the sides.
- When taking pictures consider reflection factors. Be aware of mirrors, windows and pictures. If you are taking a picture and your subject is wearing glasses, ask if that person can take them off. If not consider the following. If there is a chance of reflection as from plaques; glasses, high gloss certificates, badges and alike, take your picture from a bit of an angle. That way the reflection, especially with a flash, will be away from you. Have your subject turn themselves or the item they are holding at a bit of an angle. Watch for mirrors or windows behind or beside subjects.
- Consider other light sources and shadows. If you are taking a picture during the day by a window is there back lighting to one side which may make the picture brighter on one side then the other. Is the lighting too dull or too bright. Inside or out are there shadows over your subjects. Is there a lamp in your picture which is turned on causing a bright spot. Is your flash going to work. Always carry extra batteries
- Group picture taking is also an art. There are many ways in which you can do this. Consider that some pictures you may have seen with groups don't show the whole group. There is always some ones head that is partly blocked behind another person. Or they are not looking. You can have the group if small standing side by side and close together. Then take the picture from the side at about a 45 degree angle to the group. This allows for the whole group to be in the picture. You can have some kneeling or sitting in front. Some can be standing on stairs.
- Vary your back ground. If your group has a banner or large sign and you are constantly taking pictures in front of it, your pictures will seem to be repetitive. Try different back grounds but be sure the majority of your picture is the subjects you want. Do not make your back ground more important than your subjects. As little background as appropriate. If the back ground is required try to make it as subject specific as you can. (Eg. donating time to a soccer group - soccer fields in the background etc.):
- You need to remember that the media will, if they feel it appropriate, chop your pictures to fit the need. If you have too much back ground or distracting material in your picture they will trim. Try to keep as much of your subject in the picture. You may make the submission but it is their paper or magazine.

(CLH)

***** Article Submissions *****

The following suggestions seemed to have shown some promise and abilities in having articles submitted to the press published.

Again you must remember that these are only suggestions and that they are not the only way to submit an article to the press:

- It is important to realize that your group is not the only group trying for a place in the media spot light. To keep your name in front of the public, time and effort will be needed. Not every submission you put in will be used. Don't be discouraged, use all media to get your message out.
- The more concise yet informative your submission, the better. Write, read, re-write and re-read until you're satisfied then have someone proof read. Try not to be wordy or use too much jargon. You may know what your acronyms mean but does the public. Use simple wording - Answer the Who - What - Where - When - Why and How questions in as simple and precise statements as quickly as you can.
- Make sure that if you can submit one or two pictures. Along with listing on the back of the pictures be sure to make note on the bottom of the article that there are pictures enclosed and what they are – This helps in case the pictures and article are separated.
- I have found it best to TITLE your article. The media may change the title but at least it gives them an idea and also helps grab their attention. Make your title relevant but interesting
- Another point to remember is that, unless the date has something to do with an upcoming event, I suggest **NEVER** include a date in your article. (**EG:** "On August 23rd, a meeting of the ABC club"---) This limits the press as to when they can use it. I have seen articles used three months after they have been originally released to the press. Instead of dating consider a generic approach. (**EG:** "At a recent meeting of the ABC club) - This allows the press to use this article as a filler yet gets your club recognized.
- It is also important to realize that the media may make adjustments to your submissions. They know what they want and will adjust your submission to fill those requirements.
- It is a suggestion that you take the time to know the people and representatives in the media that you are planning to use. Also take the time to know a bit about that medium; be it the press, the radio or television, the more you know about what they want the better you will be prepared to deliver it.
- If you are submitting the same article to two or more media sources change the wording and lay out a bit along with giving each a different title. Make each submission to that media special for them.
- Make your article worth printing. Submission for minor activities will possibly cause the media to just put you on the back burner as they become bored with your group. Make your submissions count Quality and importance of what you have to say not necessarily the amount of times you say it.
- Avoid vague statements and be sure to mention your group name, meeting place, time and date or at least the contact names and numbers.
- Generally whether you are delivering, E: mailing or just mailing, a good rule of thumb is to type your piece and at least 1 1/2 spacing in a minimum of 11 or 12 font. Make it easy for them to read.
- Remember that if you have a specific item for a specific date to get it into the media in lots of time for them to prepare it for release. The more lead time you have the better. Check with the media you what to use for the lead time for your specific requirement.

(CLH)

SHAW CABLE & VIDEO SUBMISSIONS

Brent from Shaw Cable requests that any groups wishing coverage by Shaw Cable contact him at 992-8363 and discuss their needs. Please allow for lead time in case a camera person is required. Also be aware that there is a scroll on channel ten that can be used to publish your group. Contact Shaw at the numbers suggested on Screen.

CARIBOO RADIO - CKCQ

It is suggested that you consider keeping the radio station in the loop. If you have an article that may only be published by the press consider sending a copy to them. This way when there is an activity that you have happening they will be up to date. When you do have an activity or awards that you wish them to cover or they might be interested in, it is very important to give them enough lead time. They can not guarantee what will happen as news events may supercede but being knowledgeable of your event will only help.

The radio station also has Community Announcements which are provided free of charge to Not for Profit Groups. You must go to the radio station and pick up a form and fill it in. There is certain criteria that has to be met and the radio station reserves the right of refusal. They also provide a list of considerations as to what and when items may be aired. It is best to drop in and pick up a form at the front desk.

(CLH)

QUESNEL ADVISOR

As a not for profit group you will find yourself needing the right promotional tools to help deliver information, create excitement, interest and plant your agency's name and image in the public's mind. Utilizing publicity materials will help the public to understand your agency and the work that you do. If you have a letterhead then use it especially if you have a logo as this can be used in your press release if you do not have a picture.

A picture is great but remember this is not a picture for your photo album. Try taking the shot of the heads of people with a plain or solid background that is easy to reproduce in any medium, or one that will not distract from the people in the picture. If you have an award try turning it on a bit of an angle so that it does not reflect the flash. Take several pictures with the principle people and the reason for the picture (the award or whatever the reason for the publicity) clearly framed in the picture. Try and get your subjects to relax and smile or face the camera as much as possible. The other idea is to get people to be on an angle to the camera making it a tighter shot (people closer together). This makes it easier to resize the photo without losing people. Also provide a caption for the picture that tells the story, just in case that you only get the picture in and not the story in the paper. If you are sending it by email then use a jpeg. file format. If you have biographical information about the people in the picture then please enclose it. If you are hoping to get in the paper on a regular basis then a bio plus a professional taken 8 x 10 picture in B&W glossy is the best. When writing be specific about what you want to be put in the paper. Don't forget Who, What, Why, when, and Where, a contact number, email, etc. and what we can and cannot use in the paper. If you have some posters, flyers, postcards, stickers, or other material please enclose a copy. If you are submitting to another media please tell us what you have submitted to them so that we will not use the same material or take the same slant. If you submit a good copy to the Quesnel Advisor we are more likely to use what you have sent to us as we only have one editor/writer and will not likely rewrite...

Please remember that our deadline is Friday at five but if the information has to be retyped or anything done to it the more time we have the better. Also there are no guarantees that if you give us information it will get in the paper, it might be delayed a week or not used at all. There is always the "what's happening in Quesnel section or our free classifieds that you may want to try.

Ken Cross Editor, Quesnel Advisor,
Phone 992-5572 Fax 992-6044 email: editorial@quesneladvisor.com

QUESNEL OBSERVER

In order to best maximize your visibility in the local media, the best thing to do is to call me and arrange for an interview. Failing this, you can also drop off press releases at the office. If you decide to take this route, your best bet is to either include a good, clear photograph, or arrange for one of our reporters to take said photo. When taking a photograph, try to make it interesting, but not silly. Keep it on topic and, if possible, avoid the " Grip and Grin " format, wherein people hold a cheque and smile

Giving press releases every time someone in your group or organization wins some minor award becomes tedious and lessens the possibility of getting exposure when you actually have something of importance to say. Think of the " Boy who cried wolf ". Remember our mandate is not to promote your particular group, but rather to provide a good, interesting read to our readership. With this in mind, keep it brief, and ideally, let a real reporter do the write up when ever possible.

Remember also there are no guarantees in the editorial department. There are guarantees in the advertising department but it costs money. The best bet you ensure you get into the paper is; (1) Buy an ad. This is 100 % (2) Have something interesting to say.

Neil Horner, Editor , Quesnel Cariboo Observer

CARIBOO RADIO CKCQ

For news purposes we would like all the information and then we have the option of deciding whic events to attend. It is hard to set any standards for news coverage because there are so many different things we have to look at when setting up our shift schedules. For example; one week we may have staff to attend a function but the next week they may be assigned elsewhere.

If we get the information well in advance there is a better chance it can be covered if there is any news value to being there. So my suggestion would be to use the advertising venues available as well as pass the information along to the news room. Our E: mail address is **news@caribooradio.ca.**

Heather Gagnon, Cariboo Radio news Director

5. FUN

The single requirement for having fun is to give yourself permission to have fun. Small children can get a whole day's worth of fun out of a cardboard box. They can do it because they use their imagination and do not worry about outside distractions. They focus on just what they are doing. There is a quote by Wayne Dyer that says "It's never too late to have a happy childhood."

Consider this by Bernie DeKoven...

Work must be fun, too.

I don't mean the kind of fun that you get from arranging pizza parties or giving people Nerf guns or by having dress-up and dress-down days - though these all have proven to have a positive effect on the overall sense of fun in the workplace. I mean the fun of the work itself, the actual joy of working.

Let's call this kind of fun "Working Fun." Working Fun comes from two sources: from the workplace community, and from the work itself.

When the task is interesting, engaging, and involving, when it is the kind of job that you can get utterly absorbed by, then the work is fun.

Likewise, when you work with people you like and who like you, when they recognize each other's competence, and when there is a sense of genuine caring for each person as a whole person (not just as someone at work), then work is really fun.

Setting the Bar for Success

When a task is engaging, it challenges you to perform. When people have fun, there is always some kind of challenge that engages their abilities. Whether they are rock climbers or rock dancers, surgeons or assembly line workers, when things are really fun, people are really involved. In any occupation, when it's really fun, it's really occupying.

What most often makes work seem more like work than fun is the nature of the challenge itself. If the challenge is beneath people, if it doesn't engage enough of their skills, if it doesn't interest them enough, work gets just plain boring. Similarly, if the challenge is more than they can handle, if it's something they just don't think they're good enough to do, they get anxious. In either event, boredom or anxiety, it's not fun.

When setting the bar for success, for an individual or an enterprise, we all too often find ourselves taking the fun out of work. Regardless of how realistic we try to be, for some people the bar is too high, for others, too low.

To recover the fun of work, we need a different kind of high bar - one that creates challenges that are individually and collectively negotiable. The key is to frame the challenge in a way that invites individuals or organizations to challenge themselves according to their constantly changing perception of their abilities. Making a fundraising goal of \$10 million can frustrate even the most skilled of fundraisers. Asking people to make a gentlemen's bet about how much funds they will raise that day, and then seeing how accurate they were at the end of the day, can turn fundraising into "fun"-raising.

Slanting the high bar, we create the opportunity for success, for growth, and for fun.

The same principals about making work fun apply to making meetings fun. Note that slapstick comedy is not an essential ingredient in fun.

1. Make each task interesting and engaging
2. Have challenging tasks that everyone can set their own bar for
3. Care for each other
4. Involve everyone.

To these, I would add one more:

5. Relax- Toastmasters needs to be a place to de-stress not stress-out.

Let's try an example. How might these principals apply to making the Chairman's job fun?

1. Find out interesting things no one knows to introduce each person.
Pick a theme that matches your personal interests
2. Write a poem about each person
Think up some clever alliteration
Use something from the previous speaker to introduce the next one
3. Find out what challenges each speaker is facing and do something to make it easier for them. (Caring for others)
Tell the General Evaluator what you are working on and ask for assistance (Being cared for)
4. Clearly the Chairman is already involved. They are in a great spot to make sure everyone else has a meaningful part too.
5. Leave spare time in the agenda so you know you can adlib a bit if you feel like it.. Lack of time is a number one stress-raiser.

How about Speech Evaluator?

1. Find out what the speaker is working on and focus on thinking up innovative ways to help them with it.
2. Offer to count habits (such as coughing or scratching nose) and to increase the challenge, keep track of the circumstances when each one occurred.
3. Decide what would motivate the speaker for their next speech and work that into the evaluation (Caring for others)
Ask someone else to help you with a particular part of the evaluation (Being cared for)
4. Ask the audience for their opinion on an aspect of the speech
5. If you run out of time, don't apologize, just say "and I am looking forward to the break where I will share the rest of these ideas with ...")

The preceding ideas focused on having fun as an individual within your role. There is also scope for the club to have fun via themes and special meetings. At an intermediate level is the TableTopic Master who is always in a position to inspire fun.

There are oodles of ideas that you will have heard of. To step a little further away from the obvious, Improv theatre offers an incredible selection of possibilities.

This list is culled from hundreds at
<http://www.ericmeyer.net/actorsresource.html>
Give one a try... and be relaxed about the results!

A to Z

Number of actors: 2

Audience Participation: Get a letter of the alphabet, and either a location or a relationship.

How it works: A scene is performed where each actor's sentence must start with successive letters of the alphabet, starting and ending with the letter chosen by the audience. Say, if the first actor's sentence starts with the letter b, then the other actor's next sentence must start with the letter c.

Tips: You'd be surprised at how hard it is for some people to remember their alphabet. Try to keep the scene very tight with short back and forth dialogue; if sentences run-on for too long the other actor is likely to forget what the next letter is. You obviously don't want any scene to drag, and in this game long lines just compound the fact. If you can, try to set-up your partner for his next letter. Also, for hard letters like x, you can fudge things, like using eXactly, also c for k switches work (albeit you'll get boos from the audience, but that's usually the fun of it). I'd say use relationship instead of setting, because if you have a good relationship, characters, and conflict set-up early, A to Z is great and it really flies, even when its bad though it seems to come off ok.

Call-in-radio show

Expert and talk-show host, and funny characters call in and ask questions.

Chain-Murder (P.O.W.)

Send out two people and one audience member. Fourth person remains and gets place, occupation, and murder weapon from the audience. First troupe member returns, original person must explain the three things to them in gibberish mime, when they get each thing they hi-fi, when the murder weapon is gotten, the audience yells, "die", and they do so. Then the three things are explained to the

audience member, and then to the last troupe member. Then we find out if the three things have changed from person to person.

Character Offer

Start off by getting location and wacky character name, that character starts off scene, introduces next character with a wacky name that relates to the current scene, they interact for a bit, then the first person leaves, then the second person, introduces next character, and so forth. The scene usually ends when a prescribed number of actors have entered and left the scene.

Crime-scene

Cop interrogating witness. Get from audience location and object not related to that location. Distraught witness re-tells murder they saw committed with that object at the crime scene about two friends of theirs (use improvers real names) and improvers in question that he describes act the scene out as it happens. Then cop corrects him and re-tells the scene differently. Storytellers should make actors do a lot of physical action.

Dating Game (Love Connection)

Get audience member, three troupe members are the bachelors, imitate either dating game or Love connection style, get traits/occupations for bachelors, audience member is picked at beginning of show and writes their questions ahead of time.

Every-day Olympics

Get every-day activity from audience, have two sportscasters, two competitors, and two on-the-field reporters.

Fairy-tale Creation

Get made-up fairy-tale name, one person tells that fairy tale, and then other actors act it out

Fairy-tale newscast

One newscasters, set-up crime scene of fairy-tale, reporter out in the field, with fairy-tale, character, then have studio expert.

First line/last line

Two person scene, other players can support. Get a first line of dialogue and a last line of dialogue for the scene, players fill in the rest of the dialogue.

Foreign Expert

Get made-up foreign language, and a topic from the audience, have a host, an interpreter and the expert who speaks in the foreign language and then ask questions of the audience for the expert; can do the experts national anthem at the end.

Four ways to die

Number of actors: 4

Audience Participation: The audience gives a location and four ways a person could die.

How it works: The scene starts (with usually not everyone on stage), and through the course of the action, each actor must die by one of the 4 ways given. No one is assigned any of the 4 ways, the actors figure out who will die by what way as the scene evolves.

Jail-Bird

One person goes away, audience gives silly crime that they did, a silly crime and then also usually a famous person. Guard goes out and brings new inmate into the cell where other two actors are two inmates already there, new inmate has to guess crime he did, from clues by the other in-mates and other troupe members who come into the scene. Person should milk it if they know it, saying "you know how tough I am, It took 100 cops to bring me in, I ..." and should always keep using same clue if got one right so far.

Lines from a Hat

Number of actors: 2

Audience Participation: During an

intermission or before the show, the audience write lines of dialogue on pieces of paper and puts them into a hat. When scene starts a location is given.

How it works: The two actors do a simple scene, but must pull lines intermittently from the hat, read them immediately and incorporate them into the scene.

Wackiness ensues.

MacGyver

Like the show, two actor's (MacGyver and little Jimmy) must save a life-threatening situation or catastrophe, but only have three-objects told to the actors by the audience.

Magazine panel

Get magazine titles, each improver comes up with character that works for that magazine, introduces themselves, then director gets questions from audience members to ask of each person on that panel, or general topic for each person to talk about, special issues, or articles coming up about a topic, closing words, etc.

Our town

Get non-geographical place, and wacky occurrence, line of improvers, each comes out as a wacky character from the town, and tells the story, have give and take and relationships between the different characters, and a bit of physicality when the story dictates it, but the actors never touch each other, even when interacting.

Return-a-product

One improver leaves, and get an object from the audience and something wrong with it that normally wouldn't think would be wrong with it, person comes in returning it but has no clue and must figure out what it is, clerk doesn't help that much, but other improvers come in and help out.

Sibling Rivalry

Get from the audience a relationship for two actors and something the people would argue about. Actors start the scene

and go into the audience tapping people on the shoulders to fill in words of their sentences. Audience is encouraged to come up with words to say before the person come up to them so they don't necessarily fit well into the logic of the sentence.

What happens next

Number of actors: starts with two or three (others added as need be) and a director

How it works: Director asks for a setting, two actors start a simple scene, director will freeze the scene sporadically, and ask the audience, "What happens next" and the actors must do that. Usually the scene takes a turn for the worst.

World's Worst

Get occupations and places to meet someone, and improvers give quick character sketches of that worst person, famous people-impersonations are sometimes funny, running gags through all the topics (i.e. same person is that worst person for each category),

One word story:

(4-5) Have you people line up on stage facing the audience and get a title suggestion for a story from the group or audience. The game begins as the title suggests, proceeding down the line and back, the story is told one word at a time. If one of the performers repeats a word, says more than one word, or says a word that makes absolutely no sense they must leave the game. Continue until only one person remains, or the last two remaining people are so good that they are able to finish the story!

TIPS FOR PLAYING

BEGINNING - Setting up a scene is very important. Be very clear, even if it takes a little time.

BUILD OFF EACH OTHER AND ADD SOMETHING EXTRA using the **WHERE**

EMOTIONS: Another way of infusing life into a scene (if it isn't already (**INTENSIFY EMOTIONS**)) is to pick a strong emotion and allow it to color your response. The basic emotions are **HAPPY, SAD, FEAR, and ANGER.** Everything else is a variation. Pick an emotion and justify it.

PROJECTION: See your fellow player as someone or something that evokes a strong response

WHAT: Always start the scene with an activity.

ALWAYS STAY WITH WHATEVER IS OFFERED TO YOU Because...what else is there? There is where you find the gold.. **DROP WHATEVER IT IS THAT YOU'RE PLANNING** and only deal with what your fellow player has offered you and go from there.

TRY TO START THE SCENE IN THE MIDDLE Try to avoid, "Hello, how are you?"

THERE ARE NO MISTAKES Everything that happens on stage happens for a reason . It only helps the scene. It is an opportunity. If someone isn't "doing what you want them to do" it's because it's an opportunity for you to say, "You're not doing what I want you to do!" in the context of the scene. If you screw up it's for a reason. One of the funniest things I ever saw improvised was when Jim Stahl in the middle of a scene, in order to get out of some situation, said he was from Germany except he didn't speak with a German accent and the other player asked "If you're from Germany, how come you speak with an American accent?" Jim Stahl answered, "I'm drunk."

6 How to Network — Tips from Margaret Hope

Lions Gate Training Ltd. www.lionsgatetrainig.com Margaret F. Hope, DTM mhope@lionsgate.ca (604) 320—7613

You'll want to introduce yourself so others hear and remember your name. These simple techniques should help:

- Plan ahead —When attending a function think who may be there and plan to hunt them out. Ask your acquaintances to introduce you to others they know. Look for opportunities beyond the workplace — at the hockey rink, on an airplane etc. Always carry your cards and if applicable keep other marketing materials handy.
- Getting Started -
It's easiest to talk to those who'd appreciate your attention so seek others who are on their own. If it seems everyone else is already engaged in conversation watch the door for new arrivals, cruise near the refreshment area (loners often start there,) move into the meeting area towards those who are already seated alone, or move into a group where their body language suggests a loose affiliation. Begin with your name (say it clearly so they can hear and understand it) and offer your hand (firm handshake, make eye contact, smile.) DO NOT START SELLING ANYTHING. Build relationship by asking questions and offering a little information.
- Converse —Seek connections. After the introductions and handshakes try asking comfortable questions. One easy starting point: ask about their interest in the event you are attending. Listen to their answers and do ask for clarification or examples if they will help you understand and remember the other person. Smile, make eye contact and give non—verbal feedback that encourages them to continue speaking. They'll likely reciprocate with questions about you or at least give you a chance to comment about yourself. (more on what to say about yourself in the next section)
- Don't try to do business —“*You should join Toastmasters*” or “*Why don't you do business with me?*” seem abrupt and potentially damage the relationship. “*I'd love to invite you to my Toastmaster club,*” is appropriate if the conversation moved in that direction but if not, simply build enough of a relationship to determine if further contact is desirable. If it is, you can suggest coffee or a further phone call without making it seem like a sales pitch. Networking is not about doing business. It is about making acquaintances and building relationships that let us work productively together.
- Mix-
After meeting a new person try moving about a third of the way around the room so you'll make more contacts. Otherwise you may be tempted to stay and discuss childrearing, politics or great books (to escape with) with the first person you've met
- Renew Acquaintances —When you do bump into another Toastmaster, an existing client or someone from the past, use the networking opportunity to find out what is new in their life.
- Business Cards / Contact Cards —Whether for business or Toastmasters, have your cards handy and pass them individually to those you meet.. Invite them to contact you for a specific purpose. “*Call me if you'd like to join me at ... I'd really value your company*”

Talking About What You Do / About Toastmasters

How do you introduce yourself in a way that is attractive to others? By listening, determining connections and describing your business in a way that is specific to your contact.

- **Listen** —If possible, ask them questions first. Most of us are delighted to have someone else interested in what we do, feel, and think. This shouldn't be an interrogation but should seem easy and conversational. Paraphrase their comments, ask clarifying questions, seek additional detail and constantly be on the lookout for information that gives you a connection. Observe body language to determine their ease. If you find your questioning is making them uneasy there's no sense in continuing.
- **Determine Connections** —As you ask for details try to determine what you might have in common. Perhaps they have children similar in age to yours. (Connection — how are they feeling about education or some other concern shared by parents?) Perhaps they recently spoke at a conference. (Connection — how did you cope with your nervousness?) While you're determining the connections and pursuing their interests, you are building rapport. Somewhere along the way it will seem sensible to briefly introduce what you do.
- **"what I do is..."** —Whether talking Toastmasters or about your work, try the following two suggestions:
 - Describe how your work (TM membership) helps or serves people just like them. and Use examples — tell a story to illustrate what you do and what results you achieve.
- **Be an Enthusiastic speaker** —Enthusiastic, not bombastic. When you're talking to one or two people much of your enthusiasm comes from eye contact, a lively facial expression and voice. Don't overdo the large gestures, avoid standing too close and don't speak so loudly your listener is uncomfortable.
- **And if they ask first...** —give a brief description of your work and then ask them about their world. In this way you won't blabber on realizing later they have no knowledge of your business and no reason to be interested.

A Few Final Thoughts

- **Attend conferences and meetings related to your business. Go prepared to network and** talk about what you do. Without bragging, speak positively about yourself and your work.
- **Attend** community functions that draw a wide range of people. Seek unfamiliar faces. You'll get more value from your networking if you are meeting new people.
- **Look for** speaking opportunities because its an easy way to find others who value what we've gained in Toastmasters. Offer to speak at events in your community, introduce speakers at conferences, serve on the executive of your organizations. Then when the audience walks up and says how did you learn to do this so well, you can proudly tell them how Toastmasters helped you perfect your style and offer them a chance to attend.
- **Act as a Host; not a Guest:**
No matter how nervous or awkward you feel, you have the power to make others like and respect you. If you are timid about introducing yourself to others, think how grateful you'd be to someone else who broke the ice and helped you feel comfortable. Now become that person who helps others. At first it will be an act but soon it will become a habit; a pleasant and natural way to help others.

7. Two's Company But Three's a Meeting

Tips for conducting productive meetings with five or fewer members.

Gary Schmidt International Director

Imagine that you have recruited and encouraged three guests to attend your club meeting. You arrive at the location and discover that only two members (including yourself) are present. Realizing the poor impression this makes on your potential members, you become discouraged and sadly cancel the meeting. Right?

Wrong! As long as at least two members are present, you can conduct productive meetings that improve the morale of your members and the growth of your club. As a past club specialist and member of clubs with as few as eight members, here are some ideas I have discovered to keep smaller clubs persisting until that day when membership –and attendance –tops 20.

There are two types of meetings – those with guests and those without. Meetings with guests must carry a different tone from those with only members present.

MEETINGS WITH GUESTS

The primary goal of a club meeting with fewer than five members is to demonstrate to guests why they should join this club. Key points to remember are:

- 1** Always conduct a meeting. Despite the inclination to cancel a meeting because of small turnout, demonstrate to guests why this club is special. They will most likely return if you show them you care enough to hold a meeting regardless of how many people attend.
- 2** Be positive. Show your guests that even though member attendance is low, you still enjoy the Toastmasters program and what it offers. Your enthusiasm and positive attitude will rub off on them.
- 3** Be flexible. If members are unable to attend the meeting at the last minute, be willing to shuffle the schedule and duties to meet the needs of those who are present.
- 4** Involve the guests. Let guests know that your club is temporarily facing low membership, but that club members are dedicated to rebuilding the club's strength. Ask for their suggestions on how to improve club participation. If guests are invited to participate in club activities and to help out, they feel a sense of ownership and might decide to become members.

With those principles in mind, here are some ideas for actual meetings when member turnout is low:

- Hold a mini demonstration meeting. If your guests outnumber your members, conduct a “hot-seat” demonstration of what transpires at a typical Toastmasters meeting. Gear your entire meeting to your visitors. Explain each duty in detail and describe how those tasks relate to real-world experiences. (For example, evaluations teach members to give honest and timely feedback to peers and family members.)
- Fill only key duties. When member attendance is low, fill only the essential roles: Toastmaster, Table Topics-master, Speaker, Speech Evaluator and Timer. Explain the duties for the benefit of

the guests, and offer them an opportunity to get involved. Timer is an example of a task that a savvy guest would be able to undertake.

- Have a sales meeting. Sell the benefits of Toastmasters and the benefits of your current club situation. Small clubs offer the perfect opportunity to speak often. Also, smaller numbers provide a less intimidating environment for practicing and improving communication skills. Find the silver lining to your cloudy condition.

MEETINGS WITHOUT GUESTS

A meeting without guests takes the pressure off of motivating prospective members to join the club. However, in order to inspire and retain current members, a sparsely attended meeting has a new set of challenges. The key points to remember in this situation are:

1 Always conduct a meeting. While the inclination **I** might be strong to cancel a meeting with five or fewer members, do not succumb to temptation.

2 Have fun. The greatest Toastmasters meetings are those that are fun to plan, fun to attend and fun to remember. Be outrageous! Try ideas that you have never tried before.

3 Be creative. What can you accomplish at a club meeting with few members? Develop exciting and entertaining meetings that take advantage of low attendance:

- Hot-seat speeches. Have an entire meeting filled with hot-seat speeches. This not only gives members an opportunity to practice impromptu communication skills, but it also facilitates completion of manual speeches, which in turn encourages greater educational accomplishment.

- Backwards meeting. This theme meeting fits well with low member turnout. Conduct the entire meeting backwards – evaluations before speeches, speeches before introductions, etc. This is a fun way to improve listening skills.

- Hot-seat meeting. We have hot-seat speeches, why not hot-seat meetings? Write meeting duties on paper, put them in a hat, and have members draw for tasks. This meeting will improve flexibility and creativity.

- Table Topics Extravaganza. Eliminate all other meeting duties and have an elongated Table Topics meeting:

- Hold a debate –either one member against another, or a team competition.
- Have a discussion. Appoint a discussion leader, a recorder, and break into small groups. Assign a specific topic, such as “how club attendance and membership can be improved.” This is an excellent opportunity to improve meeting and listening skills.
- Consider comedy and skits. Imitate celebrities such as comedians, actors from favorite TV shows, newscasters or politicians. Have members perform skits based on audience suggestions and comments.

By continuing to conduct meetings, regardless of attendance level, your club will actively work to improve member retention and attract new members. Most clubs have experienced a drought in membership at one time or another. With a positive attitude, flexibility, creativity and a sense of fun, club meetings can be productive and enjoyable and right on track toward achieving charter strength.

Gary Schmidt, DTM. is a member of three clubs in Portland, Oregon: Clackamas Stepping Stones 3697-7, Electric Toasters 3964-7 and Marylhurst 5588-7.