

# Club Coach Weekly

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Our mission is to prevent isolation, present ideas and provide inspiration to club coaches throughout the world.

## Editor's Note

The groove is a moment when a group of musicians play together so that the music transcends the individual. With a little creativity, it is easy to conduct a groovy experiment. Gather some percussion instruments: real drums are ideal, home-made drums will do, even the hand clapping is a form of percussion. Group the drums by sound and ask each group to play together. The big drums beat a regular, uniform rhythm, other groups play a slightly

different, but complimentary beat. The whistles, sticks add a overall sound. start playing. groove? Look a key element



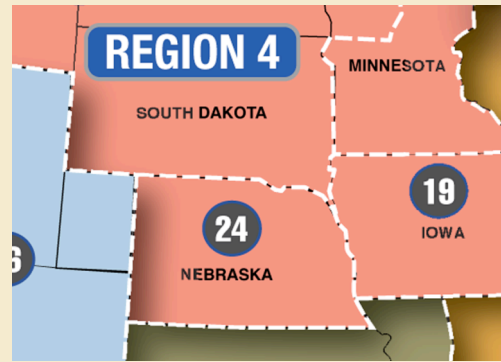
complimentary tambourines, triangles and rain flourish to the After the plan, Do you feel the for smiles, that's of the groove.

Coached clubs can also find their groove. It is a moment when the individual members work together so that their collective efforts take them to levels that they could not achieve alone. The coaches of the Prime Time Toastmasters used a hands-on approach to hit the groove. The two coaches were like the big drums – they demonstrated the fundamentals of a quality Toastmaster program. The efforts of the remaining members complimented and strengthened the actions of the coaches. Special meetings and desserts added a unique flourish. After these basic, but necessary improvements, the first new member joined the club. Then the club hit its groove. This story is important because it tells you how to be a successful coach. The sooner you implement these ideas the sooner you'll be a successful coach.

*"Ah music. A magic beyond all we do here."  
J. K. Rowling*

## Ready for Prime Time

I was just starting work for my Advanced Leader Silver Award when our Lt. Gov. Marketing announced that she was looking for club coaches for several clubs - a handful of which were in my division. Ever the ambitious Toastmaster, I volunteered to be a club coach for a club about 45 minutes away from my home. My fellow Toastmaster and co-coach, Sharon Brown, ACB, ALB, and I began working with Prime Time Toastmasters Club #8111, in October of 2010. Prime Time is a good example of how one toxic member can decimate a club. While I do not think one person is ultimately responsible for the decline of a Toastmasters club, I will say that when one of your members has a difficult personality, does not work well with others, and creates conflict, it can be a turn-off for members and guests alike. This once flourishing club had dwindled to just 10 members, with only six attending regularly. Fortunately for the club, this member was no longer attending meetings.



Prime Time Toastmasters Club #8111  
District 24 Region 4

Prime Time is also a club that had some long-standing, dedicated members. Most years they were able to get their officers trained, pay dues on time, and earn a couple awards. However, they were short of the membership numbers they needed to participate in the Distinguished Club Program (DCP), and had been for some time.

Two positive changes occurred just before we became club coaches, although the benefits had yet to be realized from those changes. The Norfolk, Nebraska, club had recently moved from its former meeting location at the Nebraska Veteran's Home to an attractive meeting space at Northeast Community College, which was just across the street. Also, the club had recently consolidated its two meeting times into one evening meeting, which was held on the first and third Mondays of the month.

## Dealing with Toxic Members

Toxic members can adversely affect a Toastmasters club. The reasons for removing a member may be found in Article II, Section 7 of the Club Constitution or in Policy 3.0: Ethics and Conduct 3. Harassment found in the Governing Documents of Toastmasters International modified April 1, 2011. <http://www.toastmasters.org/policyprotocol>

The first step in this situation is to discuss the problem with the member and seek his or her agreement to change the behavior or actions causing the problem. If this does not resolve the conflict, then the club may use the process outlined in Protocol 3.0: Ethics and Conduct Section 2 Club Procedure to Discipline a Member. For further assistance, contact TI.

## Steps to Accomplish Our Goal

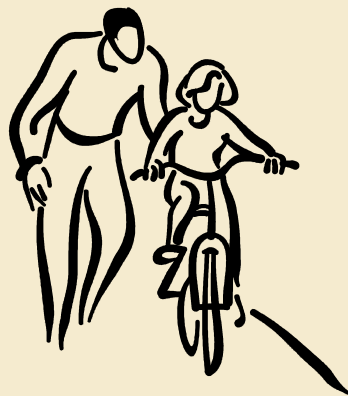
Sharon and I never developed a formal plan for returning the club to Distinguished status, but we did take several steps to accomplish that goal. Our first point of order was to join the club and start attending meetings regularly. The second step was to get the officers meeting regularly and working on the DCP goals. The officers were a group of motivated folks who genuinely cared about the success of their club, but lacked structure and needed encouragement. Once they began to meet regularly, it was easy to provide them with suggestions for publicity ideas, attracting guests, and growing their membership. The final, and probably most important, step we took was to push them out of their comfort zone. We asked them to come up with new ideas for publicizing the club. We encouraged members to speak from manual speeches so they could earn educational awards, and we challenged them to finish their Competent Leader manuals. We asked them to host a "bring a guest" meeting. Once they gained five new members and became DCP eligible, we asked them to throw a party at their meeting to celebrate their success. The club had unintentionally fallen into a rut, our aim was to lift them up and out.

## 'Hands On' Coaching

I would describe our coaching style as 'hands on' as we participated in each activity as members. We found this to be highly effective, because the members viewed us as equals and appreciated efforts we made to help our club. The focus was never on Sharon and me earning our advanced leadership award - in fact, it was never discussed. At first, we worried that we were being heavy handed with the officers because we were supplying all the momentum, but it wasn't long before others caught on.

We customized Toastmasters International's marketing materials and circulated color copies at the college, on bulletin boards around town, and at various offices. The Club President got the college's electronic billboard, which was right outside of our meeting facility, to list our meeting location and time. She also contacted the college newspaper and got our organization listed on the calendar. There is a lot more we could have done to publicize the club. In my own Toastmasters club, for example, we sent information to the community calendar of the local newspaper, submitted meetings minutes for publication, and had even made radio appearances. However, because this club was basically starting with no publicity, we wanted to start simple and build from there.

Progress was slow. I think low-member clubs have a tendency to get stuck in a rut, and it takes a lot of energy to change course. As in years past, officers were trained, dues were paid, awards were earned, and the club actually had five DCP points by February. And there, without any additional members, we sat. There were many times when Sharon and I did not think we would be successful.



## Hands-On Coaching, continued...

However, we found that attending meetings regularly, giving speeches, and having duties ourselves encouraged all the members and made the experience more pleasant for guests. I'm wise enough to know that it wasn't my stellar speaking skills, but the increased number of participants, that made the meetings successful and brought guests back for more. The extra touches, such as the special meetings and deserts members brought helped to create a welcoming environment. More members started to attend regularly, and volunteered to speak more often.

It took several months before we got our first new member, but once we did it was as if a dam had burst and they came rolling in the door. Members felt more comfortable inviting guests and often asked themselves: "who do I know who could benefit from Toastmasters?" They became excited when they realized others were interested in the club, and they realized they could help make a difference in those people's lives. The Club President signed up both her daughter and future son-in-law because she wanted them to benefit from the Toastmasters experience as she had. Members also became more willing to challenge themselves. The International Speech Contest is a good example - as one of the club's new, transfer members ended up being a District finalist! It has been remarkable to see the members' confidence grow, and to witness the affect that has had on the club's energy.

I'm thrilled to share that Prime Time finished the year as a Select Distinguished Club, meeting seven out of 10 goals! They now have 20 members, and earned a Beat the Clock ribbon



Prime Time officers (L to R) Jeff Ratliff, Kay Francavilla, Anne Weber, Carol Sullivan, and Jason Kriekemeier pose with their new banner.

in the last membership contest of the 2010-2011 Toastmasters year. Attendance is up to about 10-12 members per meeting, they have leads on two more potential members, and one former member plans to rejoin. They have a nice location - equipped with all the technology speakers could need and plenty of space to grow. They have a great slate of officers and received a '7 for 7' training ribbon at the last round of TLIs. Even though they no longer need a club coach, I have continued my membership just to see what exciting things are in store for this terrific club!

Prime Time's success this past year was thanks to the officers, especially the Club President, Carol

Sullivan. I cannot say enough wonderful things about Carol; a lady who has taken the confidence and skills she has learned from Toastmasters and turned it in to personal and professional success. The past year she hardly ever missed a meeting, arranged for all the accommodations, and kept everyone in the loop. Carol always followed up to make sure tasks were completed, and went out of her way provide extra touches for the meetings. She inspired me - because it never occurred to me, in spite having served a term as VP of PR, to leave copies of the Toastmaster magazine with the club contact information on it at my local doctor's office! I said earlier that one person can't destroy a club, but one person can certainly be the impetus for positive change. Sharon and I may have helped Prime Time get back on track, but Carol truly made a positive difference.

## Lessons Learned

If I again serve as a club coach, I will be sure to make better use of the tools Toastmasters International has available. An assessment or survey would have been helpful to engage the members from the start and give them more ownership in the DCP process. Those tools would be helpful to have when developing a coaching plan. Also, I do not think there is a one size fits all approach to successful club coaching, because each club is unique and has different goals, but coaches would benefit from being more prepared as begin their roles. I would definitely advocate for club coach training in my district.

We have a lot of lessons learned, obviously, but here are some of the highlights.

1. Never forget the importance of location! In my opinion, this is the most important change Prime Time made, and has allowed them to attract guests and new members more readily.
2. Work the program! Embrace the structure Toastmasters provides for your club members and officers, and DCP success won't be far behind.
3. Keep it simple! Start with small goals and activities that can be reasonably achieved. You might notice that nothing we suggested the club try was particularly unique or difficult.

By Lisa McFarland, ACS, ALS. Lisa has been a Toastmaster since February of 2007. She has served as a club officer, Division Governor, and currently serves as Public Relations Officer for District 24. Interested in learning more about Lisa's approach to club coaching, she may be reached at [immcfar@nppd.com](mailto:immcfar@nppd.com) or (402) 563-5299.

## Letter of Praise

I am writing this letter of praise on behalf of Prime Time Toastmasters Club 8111 ( Norfolk) to express appreciation to Lisa McFarland, and Sharon Brown for coaching our Toastmasters club from July 2010 to June 2011.

The day I became President of the Prime Time Toastmasters Club. I was very new in this role of being a leader. But, your kind and timely support, and friendly behavior helped me to understand the organizational chart of the Distinguished Club Program. You encouraged communication and leadership development with our members through your dedication, and providing example guideline sheets for each responsibility/activity of being at our meetings during the time you were coaches.

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to coach our Toastmasters club, ( I know you both had full schedules to begin with. With your effective roles you have driven our club to new heights and have set an example for other members as well.

I sincerely appreciate the time you spent reviewing our goals and the recommendations, strategies for achieving them. Especially increasing our membership. Your advice was very helpful and gave me a new perspective on available opportunities.

## Letter of Praise, continued...

Thank you so much for your efforts Lisa, and Sharon. I also appreciate your offers to connect us to others in your network.

Lisa McFarland, and Sharon Brown you have shown your dedication to Toastmasters by your outstanding coaching of our club to greater strides and in the process have filled us all with dedication in showing up to the meetings-prepared in our roles, to make things run smoothly, and more enjoyable. " Fun....."

Today our Prime Time Toastmasters Club has reached " Select Distinguished Award, and grew from 10 members into 20 members - with your help we have achieved unbelievable targets with your endeavors.

Lisa McFarland, and Sharon Brown I would like to say keep it up, with your outstanding performance. I am wishing you all the best for future years in this organization. Again thank you so much for your help. I greatly appreciate the assistance you have provided to our club.

Best Regards:

Carol Sullivan, Past President 2010-2011 Prime Time Toastmasters Club 8111, District 24

## Resources for Club Coaches

Club coaches are helpful, capable Toastmasters. More than anything, however, the coach must have a desire to learn. Here are some invaluable resources for club coaches (available with a Google search).



1) *How to Rebuild a Toastmasters Club* Toastmasters International mails each new coach this manual at the beginning of the coaching appointment. It provides crucial information for the new coach.

2) *Club Coach Playbook* Bill Jacky, District 33, and others wrote this playbook in 2003. It suggests that the coach facilitates improvements in the club while it is the responsibility of the club's members to do the work. The remainder of the document contains information that will greatly improve the coach's chances of success.

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