

OUR MISSION IS TO PREVENT ISOLATION, PRESENT IDEAS AND PROVIDE INSPIRATION TO CLUB COACHES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

# Club Coach Weekly



Volume I, No. 26

December 25 - 26, 2010

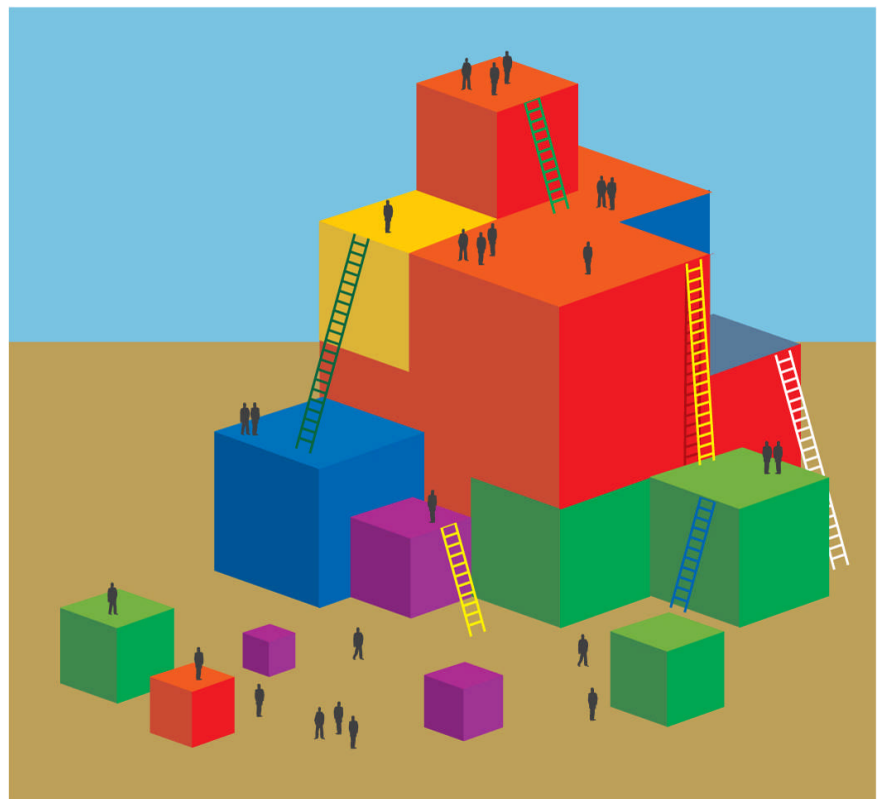
## A Lasting Legacy: A Club Coach's Guide to Club Officer Development by Joyce Feustel



### Inside this issue:

Ralph Smedley Placed Value on Leadership	2
Establish a Tradition of Club Success	3
Foster Club Camaraderie & Accountability	4
Involve Members in Club Leadership and Mentor Them	5
Encourage Participation Beyond the Club and Implement	6
Conclusions	8

From July 2007 through December 2009, I served as the District 26 Club Coaching Chair. In that capacity I tracked the membership status of all the clubs in our district, identified clubs that had 12 or fewer members, and asked these clubs if they wanted a club coach. With time, I noticed two disturbing trends. First, some struggling clubs had difficulty recruiting members, especially the newer members, into leadership roles. Second, some coached clubs enjoyed temporary success with the coach, yet when the coach left,



the membership and leadership issues returned. What are ways that Toastmasters clubs can develop and maintain strong leaders? This article provides a long overdue answer to this question. My research

of Ralph Smedley's writings and my correspondence with Toastmasters from over 40 Districts will answer the question. In short, I will tell you how to rebuild a club so that it continues to thrive long after your coaching assignment

## Ralph Smedley Placed Value on Leadership

Most people join Toastmasters to improve their speaking abilities. Relatively few new members see the potential for developing themselves as a leader. Yet, when Ralph Smedley, founder of Toastmasters, envisioned how Toastmasters would work, he always saw leadership hand-in-hand with the speaking side of the experience. In 1930, Smedley wrote: "Speechmaking in itself is not an end, but merely one step, and a very important one, in the direction of preparing for service and leadership." [1]

In his book, *The Story of Toastmasters*, Smedley related what prompted him at age 27 as the relatively new education director of the Bloomington, Illinois YMCA to create a Toastmasters Club, which had its first meeting on March 24, 1905: "We had a number of special interest clubs and groups among the boys and young men in the Association, in which there was evident need for training in speech. Since the need was there, it seemed proper for us to meet it." [2] He went on to describe the format of the first meetings of this first Toastmasters club: "There was a rotation of duties, with the members taking turns at presiding and speaking. Short speeches were the rule, of course, the usual limit being five or six minutes. The subjects chosen were the type which would appeal to the young chaps. Criticism was given by us older men, who sat in to help and guide, and there were critical discussions by the other members, who expressed their inexpert opinions." [3]

How did this Toastmasters experience impact these young men? Smedley goes on to write: "We were able to note a prompt improvement in the speech of the members, and as a result of *improved leadership* (emphasis mine), we saw similar improvement in the clubs with which these young men were associated." [4]

In 1907, Smedley moved to Freeport, Illinois to accept a position as the General Secretary (similar to what we now call the Executive Director) of the Freeport YMCA. Again, he created a Toastmasters club for the young men involved with that community's YMCA. But this time the local businessmen insisted that they be allowed to join, so the membership was broadened to include them as well.

Here are some reflections by Smedley on that club: "The men realized that there were important educational values involved, and they liked the informal social situation. I believe that it was the feeling of fellowship, added to the definite interest in the programs, and general participation by members, which assured the success of this club." [5] He again tied leadership with speaking when he wrote: "For me, the club was an effective means of bringing men into places of leadership, both in the YMCA and in other activities. I had already hit upon the great truth that ability to speak is the mark of a *great leader* (emphasis mine) and that training in self-expression through speech is one of the best ways of discovering and developing hidden talents." [6]

Although Toastmasters as an organization is now nearly 90 years old, the official start date being October 22, 1924, it is only recently that Toastmasters International has begun to put more emphasis on the leadership side. This development, in my opinion, is long overdue, because effective leaders can help struggling clubs rebuild, as well as maintain the health of strong clubs.

Here are four themes that will help club coaches establish a healthy, self-sustaining Toastmaster club:

- Establish a tradition of club success
- Foster club camaraderie and accountability
- Involve members in club leadership and mentor them
- Encourage participation outside the club and implement new ideas.

## Establish a Tradition of Club Success

In reviewing the Distinguished Club Program status of clubs within my District, I noticed that certain clubs were consistently Presidents Distinguished. These clubs epitomize the common quote: "attitude determines altitude." Members of these clubs expect success and make choices that lead to the success of both the member and the club.

District 27 Governor Paul White summed up this approach when he wrote: "I do believe that success traditions drive the best clubs and assure that they continue to be successful year and year, officers group after officers group. We should spend more time thinking about how to create 'winning traditions' at the club level."

Two former club coaches in District 26, each of whom coached their respective club to success, echoed Paul's remarks. Ken Beazer had this to say: "Clubs establish a clear identity that shows and reminds members of who they are as members and what the club is about. Leaders lead by example, take pride in the club and how it conducts business. Clubs create a tradition of success that is bigger than any one individual. Each leader knows they will be trained and supported.... (there is) mutual respect and camaraderie that makes members want to be a part of club leadership." John Gies, another successful club coach, wrote: "Members see current leaders in action and think – I can do that. Current leaders need to talk about Toastmasters on a regular basis to reinforce that there is more to Toastmasters than just talking. The club has to have an expectation that its leaders will lead, not just serve as placeholders."

A tradition of success depends not only on high expectations, but also on the fulfillment of the member's needs. Rochelle Williams, an Area Governor in District 33 and club coach to a club in rural North Dakota, stressed the importance of meeting the needs of members: She wrote: "If members' needs are met, everything will fall into place. Are we taking time to assess ourselves as a club and check in with our members? Are they getting their needs met? Are we encouraging members to take the next big step? Are we creating an atmosphere where people want to be at our meetings?"

Brenda Smull, New Club Coordinator as well as an Area Governor in District 26, believes that strong club officers are caring leaders, taking a servant leader approach to their service to the club and its members. They focus on creating and meeting common goals, fostering collaboration, and being accountable to each other and all the members in the club.

### Questions to Consider:

***Does the club have expectations of success? Who is checking in with the members to determine if their needs are being met? Does the club's leadership understand the goals and aspirations of the members? Who is responsible for determining if the needs are being met?***

### Joyce Feustel, DTM

is the Immediate Past District 26 Club Coaching Chair. She was very successful during her two years of service. In her first year, there were 16 clubs with club coaches, and 50% of those clubs became Distinguished or better, with 13 club coaches receiving their leadership credit toward their Advanced Leader Silver award. In the second year, there were 14 clubs with coaches, of which 5 became Distinguished or better, with 8 coaches receiving their leadership credit. She has written many articles about club coaching and is a frequent contributor to the Toastmaster International Members Group on *LinkedIn*.



## Foster Club Camaraderie and Accountability

**clubs  
appealed  
to ... sense  
of  
fellowship  
that was  
fostered in  
the  
meetings**

One of the reasons that Toastmasters clubs appealed to the young men of the YMCA and to the businessmen affiliated with the Y was that sense of fellowship that was fostered in the meetings. That sense of fellowship or camaraderie is the foundation of all successful Toastmasters clubs. Yet, fellowship without accountability, can lead to a casual gathering of members characterized by a lack of progress towards one's goals.

Dilip Abayasekara, Past President, Toastmasters International, resides in the Harrisburg, Pennsylvania area in District 38 and continues to be active in Toastmasters. He stressed the importance of camaraderie and accountability when he wrote: "Club officers hold each other accountable and form an accountability group. Build a sense of appreciation and camaraderie among club officers and members of the club."

Amy Krug, a club coach and an Area Governor in District 26, was the driving force behind the creation of her home club. Here is Amy's description of the approach used by the current president of this corporate club: "He set his expectations at the beginning of his term – that each officer understand his role, completes it to the best of his or her ability, and lets the rest of us know what they are doing. We have a whole club of individuals who understand their accountability."

A critical time to foster accountability and camaraderie among club members is at the beginning of the Toastmasters year. Many clubs have a meeting of the club's executive committee shortly after the TM year starts. This meeting is critical for building connections and expectations among the club's leaders that emanate to the rest of the club.

Marilyn Jess, former district officer, District 53 made these observations: "The best success happens when officers bond at the start of the year, regular officer meetings happen (phone meetings work well), and they attend training. Bonding happens best when the club holds a planning meeting in the summer, with all the members invited, and a meal is shared at someone's home. The goal of this is to make a club calendar for the year. The bonding shows commitment to a successful year. Things don't tend to fall between the cracks when leaders are all focused on the same goals."

### **Questions to Consider:**

***How does your home club and your coached club foster both camaraderie and accountability among its members and its leaders? How can club members and leaders bond mid-year if there were no efforts to build strong connections early in the Toastmasters year?***

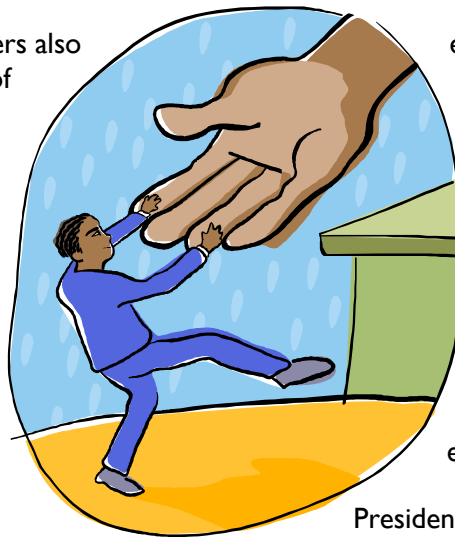


## Involve Members in Club Leadership and Mentor Them

There are three scenarios that highlight the importance of new leadership development. New clubs have the potential to collapse. They begin with lots of enthusiasm and 20+ members. However, many clubs rapidly lose members and fail to recruit new leaders.

Usually there are a handful of people who are the driving force behind the creation of a club. If these leaders fail to encourage leadership development among the members, then the next generation of leaders will fail to emerge, and the club will falter. I know about this phenomenon because these kinds of clubs often become coach-eligible within a year or two after chartering. To them, the concept of shared leadership is unfamiliar.

The failure to recruit new leaders also exists in more established clubs. There can be a handful of experienced members who dominate the leadership positions, sometimes due to a need for control. Sometimes certain club members don't perceive themselves as being capable of serving in a leadership position such as president or one of the vice presidents. Newer members may not perceive themselves holding any leadership position. All these members may need a major nudge so they will be more likely to step out of their comfort zone so they can step up to a post they had never pictured themselves holding.



exists in more established clubs. There can be a handful of experienced members who dominate the leadership positions, sometimes due to a need for control. Sometimes certain club members don't perceive themselves as being capable of serving in a leadership position such as president or one of the vice presidents. Newer members may not perceive themselves holding any leadership position. All these members may need a major nudge so they will be more likely to step out of their comfort zone so they can step up to a post they had never pictured themselves holding.

Let's hear what experienced members have to say about involving newer members in leadership and then supporting them in that endeavor.

Gary Schmidt, Immediate Past member of clubs in Portland, Oregon

"Identify and motivate others to step into leadership roles. Ask others to step up. Train them and be available to counsel and mentor, but do not do the job for them. Step out of the way and let them shine."

The District 26 Club Coaching Chair Betty Chavira, herself a successful club coach, offered these words of advice: "I advocate for relatively new members to be club officers, and then during executive committee meetings they can learn to efficiently run a club, as well as become familiar with the Distinguished Club Program."

Here is a helpful idea provided by Katy Porter, District 33 Past Club Coaching Chair: "Have past club presidents form a Presidents' Council and provide coaching for current club officers, provide stability in the club, and keep these past presidents active in the club."

Paul White, District 27, had this to say: "Ensure that club officers have gurus and guides to work with and seek advice and assistance from over a longer time frame and more in depth. The mentor relationship offers the possibility of bridging from one cohort to the next generation of officers, helping to build a stronger officers corps and Executive Committee."

Keep in mind that these "gurus" and "mentors" don't have to come from the ranks of the club, though often they do. The club's Area Governor could connect a club officer with an experienced club officer from a nearby club – or perhaps through District connections or even *LinkedIn* experience, a club officer finds a guru outside their club to help them along.

### Questions to Consider:

***How do the experienced leaders in your home club and in your coached club mentor the newer leaders? Consider ways in which current or past club officers from other clubs could be tapped to help mentor these newer leaders.***



## Encourage Participation Beyond the Club and Implement New Ideas

Statistics tell us that clubs with trained officers typically reach the level of Distinguished or higher. Often members in the struggling clubs tend to remain insular and not see the value in training or in other experiences beyond the club.

Rochelle Williams, District 33, stressed the value of attending club officer training: “Club officers need to be around other officers, gain some insight and engage with their peers. Training helps officers to better understand the reason for the manuals and protocols Toastmasters use.”

Paul White, District 27, stressed that simply attending the training isn’t enough – the value is in how the officer engages in the training and then applies the ideas learned once back at the club. “The mentor of a given officer might attend Toastmasters Leadership Institute (TLI) with the officer. After such shared trainings, they can jointly apply lessons learned at TLI in the club setting. Having this experience together can help the officer to raise questions during the training session and connect the dots between the training and the actions at the club level.”



**“clubs with trained officers ... reach the level of Distinguished or higher ”**

One of the advantages of this kind of participation for the club officer is finding out there are different ways to handle the operation of a club. Often the struggling clubs falter because of a handful of members have a “my way or the highway” approach to club operation. Coming back energized from a TLI or other district experience can help a leader bring fresh energy and ideas to the club. However, the key to implementing these ideas is that the others leaders allow themselves to be open to them.

Karen Hess, Dean of the District 18 Toastmasters Leadership Institute and a former Area Governor, had this to say about having an open mind to new ideas: “Leaders need to be willing to let someone else try something that has never been tried before or let someone else lead his or her way. This can be very difficult for some. Clubs with good leadership tend to be clubs whose members honor the diversity of each individual. Clubs with poor leadership tend to be clubs whose members place importance on being always right or having things done the ‘right way.’ Members must be open to growth and change. Each new member brings his/ her personality to the club. The other club members need to be able to embrace

this difference. The embrace is the catalyst. When held in this accepting embrace, people stretch beyond whatever is holding them back. The acceptance squashes the fear and allows the member to grow. The individual growth is what makes strong leaders.”

There are other ways besides attending training to become involved beyond the club. Former District 26 Area Governor Karen Kitzky advocates that club leaders become instructors at TLIs or present educational sessions at district conferences. District 26 Division Governor Tom Hobbs stresses the value of any kind of district activities for a club member. He has noticed that: “Constant connections with district resources brought back by members to their fellow members seem to be a powerful example of better leadership for the club.”

**Questions to consider:**

***What do you do if officers in your home club or in your coached club resist attending club officer training or other district activities? How are you handling situations where the experienced officers aren't open to new ideas? Resistance to learning and to change can be a death knell for a struggling club.***



OUR MISSION IS TO  
PREVENT  
ISOLATION,  
PRESENT IDEAS AND  
PROVIDE  
INSPIRATION TO  
CLUB COACHES  
THROUGHOUT THE  
WORLD.

john.murphy@dist8tm.org  
phill063@bellsouth.net

We're on the web!  
[www.dist8tm.org/  
clubcoach.html](http://www.dist8tm.org/clubcoach.html)

*Club Coach Weekly* is a combined effort of Dr. John Murphy, DTM, and Patricia Hill, DTM. John is the 2010-2011 Club Coach Chair for District 8 and is responsible for the Club Coach stories and letters of praise. Patricia is a Past District Governor from District 58. She is responsible for graphic design, editing and layout. Please contact them with any questions, comments or possible content.

## Conclusions

I have often shared with club coaches that serving as a club coach is more art than science. There are no set recipes for success. Yet, there are lessons we can review from those who have gone before us as well as from our contemporaries.

So much of what we know about leadership hasn't changed since Smedley first conceived Toastmasters. But nowadays we may be as likely to find those nuggets of wisdom and simple reminders via social media as well as in the printed word. Examples of places to learn about leadership in social media are in the *Official Toastmasters Member Group* on *LinkedIn*, the news feed of *Facebook* as Toastmasters post links to helpful websites, or via postings on *Twitter*.

When it comes right down to it, we simply need to:

- Listen to the members and respond to their needs
- Create a club atmosphere filled with positive energy and anticipation of success
- Challenge newer members to step forward, and then be there for them without interfering with them
- Reach out to others in the organization for training and other new ideas and be open to those ideas.

---

[1] Ralph Smedley, *Personally Speaking*, Toastmasters International, 1966, p. 31

2 Ralph Smedley *The Story of Toastmasters*, Toastmasters International, 1993, p. 8

3 Ibid

4[1]Ibid, p. 9

5 Ibid, p. 10

6 Ibid, p. 11