

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

Club Coach Weekly



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Advanced Club sets high standards

Excelsior Toastmasters is an advanced club that accepts members who have



earned a minimum of the Competent Communicator award. Their website states that Excelsior is Latin for higher, loftier and more distinguished. This is a noble ambition, however, low membership plagues advanced clubs. To overcome this problem, the members of Excelsior promoted the unique advantages of their

club such as outstanding evaluations, mentoring for advanced Toastmasters and a culture of achievement. Then, they asked outstanding Toastmasters to visit. High standards of excellence and personal invitations worked for Excelsior and it will work for your club too.



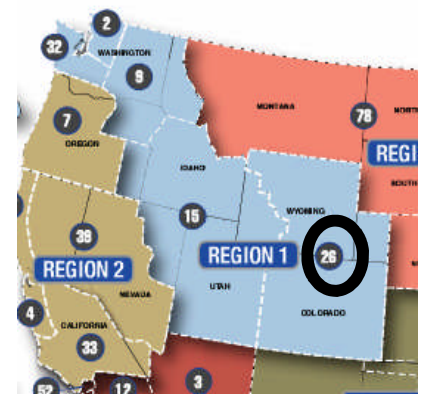
Excelsior Toastmasters Club #3247– District 26

Excelsior Toastmasters is an advanced club which meets once a month on a Saturday morning in a suburb of Denver, Colorado. The club was chartered in June 2000. One of the club's founders had recently moved to the Denver area from District 56 in Houston and wanted to have ready access to an advanced club, as she had been part of such a club in Houston. The club was chartered in just a few weeks.

At the outset, the charter membership included a

number of members with DTMs, current and former district leaders, and others with substantial Toastmasters experience. This profile of members has continued to be the case all through the club's history. Within a few years after the club chartered, its membership number dropped a bit along with its energy. For most of the 2000-2010 decade, the club's membership and energy has ebbed and flowed. In some years it would get back

to 20 members. In other years it would drop back to 15-16 members.



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What is the problem?

“ By June 2009, the club membership had shrunk to 12 members “

Assessment

By June 2009, the club membership had shrunk to 12 members, making it coach-eligible. Just a handful of members had joined over the previous two years, and some of the longer term members had exited the club. During those years, the club leaders conducted “Moments of Truth” discussions, adapting

from the module in the *Successful Club Series*. They also implemented other kinds of club assessment processes to determine where the club could improve and to validate what was working well. At its July 2009 meeting the club’s membership voted to request that the District Governor assign

the club a club coach. Two individuals had already been identified as possible club coaches. Both of them attended that club meeting as well as the club officer meeting that was held immediately afterwards. The District Governor appointed them as club coaches a few days later.

Planning and Implementation

At the club officers meeting in July, the club officers, assisted by the club coaches, had a wide ranging discussion of what was going well at the club and where improvements could be made. Since this club meets just monthly, they noted that there are special considerations that would not be faced by a club that meets weekly or bi-monthly. The leadership determined that the club must showcase itself in the best possible manner at each meeting as the club has just 12 times a year to offer its product to potential members.

They set a goal of three speeches at each meeting and agreed to have hip pocket speeches available for last-minute speaker cancellations. To help build camaraderie between meetings, one of the club coaches came up with the idea of encouraging members to select another member to be the mentor

for the upcoming speech project and to connect with that person offline. Once the leaders found ways to tweak the club’s operation, they sought ways to let more Toastmasters know about Excelsior and the value of an advanced club. Club coach, Mary Mirabile, suggested having club business cards printed and helped with the design and content of the cards. Both coaches worked with the club’s leadership to develop a club motto: *Excelsior Invites You to Excel*. This motto was featured on the business cards and used in invitations to 2 special membership-building open house meetings. Club members also distributed the business cards at a demonstration meeting club members conducted after the January Toastmasters Leadership Institute (TLI) with 17 guests

at that meeting. Providing free food was a big draw. At that same TLI, 2 club members helped conduct a session that was dubbed *Speech Boot Camp*. Each presenter spoke about how to research, write and deliver an informative, entertaining, inspirational, or persuasive speech. Also, all those who attended received a handout providing additional ideas for advanced manuals that tied into these four types of speeches. The impetus for this session was that Toastmasters who are close to completing their Competent Communication manual might be looking for ideas for those last few CC speeches as well as information on the advanced manuals. The hope was that these pre-CC Toastmasters would then consider joining an advanced club once they completed their CC.

Joyce encourages growth

Hi Joyce,

I joined Excelsior because I was participating in a Table Topics contest last year, and Judy Lloyd and you suggested Excelsior to me. I was very flattered, but concerned because I was in the process of completing my Competent Communicator manual. You both said that I didn't need to have it completed for me to attend a club meeting. Well, due to scheduling issues, it was several months before I finally attended

a meeting. When I did attend, I happened to sit next to Judy, who handed me a membership packet. I was impressed by the people in the club, the in-depth evaluations, and of course, coming in first for Table Topics didn't hurt my ego, either! I've decided to be a member in Excelsior for several reasons. Meeting once a month is not too difficult a task for a busy schedule. The in-depth evaluations and feedback that I get from presenting excerpts of

material for my shows is truly encouraging, and most of all, the friendship of its wonderful members is why I stay. I would definitely recommend, for Toastmasters everywhere, an advanced club in addition to a home club for further development of speaking and leadership skills, as well as the wonderful relationships that are shared among members.

Thank you, Joyce

Hillary Saffran
VP Membership

Results

Excelsior became a Distinguished club, because the membership rose from 12 to 17 members by the end of the Toastmaster 2009-2010 year, and the club achieved five of the ten Distinguished Club Program goals. Club coach Mary Mirabile received her coach credit toward the Advanced Leader – Silver award.

People joined Excelsior during the 2009-2010 Toastmasters year for a variety of reasons. One member is a professional entertainer who was drawn to the club because she knew she would get

feedback of a more robust nature than she gets at her home club. Another new member joined because he has a special interest in presenting talks related to American history and wanted to get ideas for which manuals to use for these talks. In addition, he appreciates the higher level of critique he gets in an advanced club.

Two of the newest members came from corporate clubs. One of them was the founding member of a relatively new corporate club. As the most experienced speaker in her club, she wanted to have another venue to give her advanced speeches and allow the newer members

in her home club to have more speaking time. The other member who belongs to a corporate club joined to find speech mentors who have more experience with advanced manuals than do many of the members of her home club.

Two of the other new members had job changes that caused them to leave their previous home clubs. Both of them wanted to be in a club that fit into their schedule and not demand as much of them as a weekly or twice a month club would demand.



Joyce Feustel

Advanced clubs offer:

More insightful evaluations

Opportunities to present longer speeches

Mentors for Toastmasters wishing to pursue excellence

Networking opportunities

Higher standards of excellence

Culture of achievement

Continued learning and growth

Chance to share knowledge with more inexperienced members

**Excelsior
invites you to
excel.**

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

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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.



Results (continued)

Finally, one new member had wanted to join Excelsior for some time, but her work schedule presented a conflict. Once she retired, she had the time and the flexibility to join the club, and she, like many others, appreciates the types of evaluations she receives.

Lessons Learned

The demo meeting and the educational session on the four types of speeches were both very well received, but none of the members who joined this year found out about our club from coming to those sessions. That said, those sessions created a “top of mind” factor for Denver area Toastmasters who will get their CC sometime in the near future and seek an advanced club. It never hurts to plant seeds about the value of advanced clubs, and it is always a good idea to be of service to fellow Toastmasters.

Promoting the club name and the advanced club concept in every possible way added momentum to the club’s growth. The Excelsior demo meeting was listed in the TLI program, and there were signs posted promoting the meeting throughout the facility where the TLI was held. As was mentioned earlier, the club conducted two special guest meetings over the course of the year. Prior to those meetings, the club coaches sent out District-wide email an-

nouncements. The buzz created from these promotions facilitated additional one-on-one dialogue about advanced clubs.

For the most part, the new members who joined Excelsior had heard about the club through personal contact with a current club member. Some of these individuals had been interested in the club but their schedule had not permitted them to join in the past. Others had not heard of an advanced club until a member approached them at their club meeting or at an area or division contest or other district activity and suggested they see if Excelsior might be a good fit for them.

Most of the membership recruitment efforts were done by the club president and by club coach Mary Mirabile. There was not as much recruitment done by other members as would have been desirable. The second club coach, Windarto Suseno, did coordinate

a well-attended membership-building open house meeting in October, and some members did come about as a result of that meeting. However, he became very focused on his business by the middle of the Toastmasters year and eventually asked to be removed as a club coach. In retrospect, it would have been better if someone who had more time to devote to club coaching had been appointed as the second club coach. The club coaches and the president learned a lot of patience over the course of the year, as at times months would go by without anyone joining the club. They were reminded in this experience that most people who look into joining advanced clubs do not typically join the first time they visit the club. Often it takes two or more visits before the Toastmaster feels that there is sufficient value in being part of the club to make joining it worth their while.