

THE MAGIC OF MENTORING

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http://www.d25toastmasters.org/members/mentor_program.htm

It was once said, give a man a fish and feed him for a day, but teach a man to fish and feed him for a lifetime." Thus could be said for the concept of Mentorship. The concept has been around for centuries, although no one knew early on that it was to be called Mentorship.

Would Plato have become a philosopher without Socrates? Well... who knows the answers to those thought provoking questions, but there is one thing we do know. Mentorship is a good thing, especially in Toastmasters. The mere act of mentorship helps us transcend selfishness. We can learn humility and patience by allowing people time and space to make mistakes, to suffer and to learn, as we did. We can let people develop in their own time and we can offer our support.

The most important lesson here: It's not about a mentoring relationship. It's about a mentoring mentality. "You don't need a single mentor who you keep throughout your Toastmaster career. You should have many, but for newer members, one mentor can make all the difference in the world. What you need is a mind-set that allows you to learn from those around you, no matter who they are and no matter where you are in the process.

Studies have shown that in business, a well-planned orientation can effectively contribute to the length of employment. In our clubs, this principle may contribute to greater member retention when a mentorship program is part of the process. So, how can you make mentoring a rewarding experience? Let's think about Mentoring New Members.

Begin by being organized and enthusiastic. When the prospective member presents an application for membership, conduct an induction ceremony. The ceremony may include escorting all non-members from the room by the Sergeant At Arms, while the membership discusses and votes on the motion to accept the application. After the vote has been taken, the applicant is escorted back into the room and informed of the results of the vote.

The vote is nearly always affirmative which may seem to some, that the vote redundant. Voting is an important aspect because in the event that this member becomes a destructive influence to the club, he or she can also be voted out of the club. The new member stands with the Club officers who take a moment to congratulate him or her.

The Vice President of Membership then presents him or her with a Toastmaster pin. The new member is reminded to wear this at Toastmasters functions and elsewhere. The Vice President Education gives a copy of the Icebreaker Speech to the new member in order to begin practicing for his or her first presentation. He or she is given a Toastmasters International card, indicating their membership and reads the "Toastmaster's Promise" on the reverse side. This information is all available in the "New Member Orientation Kit For Clubs" #1162. The new member should then be introduced to the member who has volunteered to serve as a mentor. This is the person who will be responsible for guiding the

new member through the “sometimes difficult” transition period while he or she learns about the organization and prepares for involvement in their club. Just as the new member is given the tools to begin their transition in the Toastmasters experience, the mentor is perfecting the art of being an outstanding mentor. The outcome should be an outstanding protégé and a very proud mentor. This process needs to be rehearsed in order to be organized, and should end with applause to welcome the new member into the club.

SELECTING THE MENTOR

Who can and should be a mentor? Everyone knows what an old-style mentor looked like: someone who had a little gray hair and an air of wisdom - a seasoned executive who was several promotions ahead of you. In the new world of mentoring, however, the ideal mentor is impossible to visualize - it could be anyone from anywhere inside or outside of your club. Peers can serve as handy mentors when you have no obvious senior role models to look to.

A mentor is a friendly, experienced Toastmaster who helps the new member. The VP Education or Mentor Committee Chair will assign each new member a mentor by the first club meeting after the member joins. Mentors should take the initiative to contact the new member and always be positive, friendly and helpful. What does a mentor look like? The person who volunteers must want to be a mentor. Not everyone is born a mentor, but everyone can develop the skills to successfully mentor. The successful mentor should possess certain values.

1. Clarity- Their sense of their purpose and its' focus is completely understandable.
2. Supportive- The mentor is committed to being available when the protégé needs help.
3. Confidence builder- They will sustain the self-image of the new member.
4. Patient- The mentor understands that learning these new skills requires time.
5. Involved- A commitment to help the new member with tasks whether those tasks are speeches or assigned duties at regular meetings.
6. Confidentiality - Protects information of the members business.
7. Respect- A commitment to value and treasure the new member.

THE DUTIES OF A MENTOR

This involvement and interest in the new member is important because it helps to provide some measure of motivation for the new member. A lack of motivation by the protégé often reflects discouragement. When the new member joined, they should have completed a new member questionnaire. The VP Education should give a copy of this to the mentor. The purpose of sharing this information with the mentor is to have an idea of what the protégé expects from their membership in a Toastmasters club. Involvement will include constructive feedback and support and praise from the mentor. Some opportunities for this may be upon the successful completion of the basic manual, or

competition in a speech contest or other speaking events outside of the club. The mentor also provides feedback when assignments don't turn out as planned. They should provide an honest evaluation of what went wrong, a discussion of what was flawed and to decide what to do differently.

The mentor should be aware of what the protégé is assigned to do at the next meeting. If the club VP Education does not set assignments ahead of time this may be a good time to begin doing that. The protégé will learn more from performing a task correctly the first time when their mentor has described some of the nuances of that assignment in advance.

This does not require a colossal amount of time. A minute or two taken to contact the protégé to ask how preparations are coming and to answer any questions are all it takes. It can make an enormous difference in what the new member gets out of the club and what he or she will eventually give back. The mentor should also know about the structure of the Toastmasters organization and understand what the requirements are in attaining one's Competent Toastmaster, and beyond.

The mentor's duties begin at the first meeting and are as follows:

1. Sit with the new member and explain the various parts of the meeting as they happen, such as the business session, Table Topics, prepared speeches, and evaluations. Answer any questions.
2. Orient the new member to Club customs and procedures.
3. Explain how to sign up. Ask the VP Education to schedule the new member's Ice Breaker speech as soon as possible and encourage the new member to serve on a Club Committee. Also advise the new member what to do and whom to contact if he or she is unable to fulfill a scheduled meeting role.
4. Help with the Ice Breaker. Discuss speech ideas with the new member and offer suggestions if necessary. Listen to the new member practice the speech and offer feedback

By the second meeting, a mentor should:

1. Make the member aware of resources. Point out material in The Toastmaster magazine. Also discuss Contests and District Conferences. Explain the roles of the Club officers and the information they can provide.
2. Provide positive feedback. The first few weeks of membership are critical. New members must feel they are already benefiting from the Toastmasters experience. Compliment them on their progress.
3. Explain responsibilities. Membership requires more than just giving speeches and receiving evaluations. It also means a commitment to helping the Club and its members are successful. Review "A Toastmaster's Promise" with the new member.
4. Help with speeches and other assignments. As you work with the new member on speeches, be sure evaluation feedback is used to improve the next speech, and then offer your own feedback. When the new member is assigned other meeting roles, explain the roles and offer tips for fulfilling them.

Eventually, mentors should:

1. Tell how you have benefited from the Toastmasters program. You are proof that they can achieve their own goals.
2. Invite the new member to other events. Toastmasters' speech contests, conferences, and other Clubs' meetings all offer new members the opportunity to extend their learning and participation.
3. Acknowledge progress. Ask for time during a Club meeting to mention the new member's progress in the program. Such recognition shows that the Club cares about the new member's progress, and motivates the new member to continue.
4. Explain officer's duties. Describe how the new member can develop leadership skills by serving as a Club officer. Help the new member select a Club office in which to serve and discuss when to serve. Be sure these goals are reasonable.
5. Explain speech contests. Discuss the purpose of speech contests, the types of contests conducted by the Club, and how some contests progress to Area, Division, District, and sometimes Regional and International levels. Help the new member assess readiness to participate in contests.
6. Describe the TI organization. Acquaint the new member with Toastmasters International's structure, including the Area, Division, District, Region, and International levels, and the purpose of each. Help the new member understand how the organization works, the new member's role in the organization, and the leadership opportunities available beyond the Club.

THE ESSENTIALS OF THE PROGRAM

1. After a completed application for membership has been submitted to a club officer, an experienced member is asked to volunteer as a mentor.
2. Following an affirmative vote on acceptance of the application, the new member is introduced to his or her mentor.
3. The mentor is committed to helping with a minimum number of speeches from the Communication and Leadership manual.
4. The VP Education, to better understand what his or her expectations and goals are, gives the mentor a copy of the protégé's profile.
5. The mentor keeps track of the protégé's progress and discusses his or her scheduled assignments in advance.
6. The mentor and protégé work toward his or her goals until they feel that those goals have been met.

The litmus test for the mentor's efforts is how effective his or her mentoring was. The outcome of effective mentoring can take shape in many ways. The protégé will become active in his or her approaches to assigned tasks. This includes duties as a participant at club meetings, as well the role of a club officer. Because the mentors spent the necessary time to nurture confidence within the new members, they show an eagerness to learn more. As they progress in developing Toastmasters skills,

they become experienced members who are asked for assistance by other members. Eventually, protégés become advocates of mentoring by becoming mentors themselves.

Mentoring is not the solitary answer for increasing member retention and keeping members who are active in their club. The mutual respect which the mentor and the protégé share will make the club stronger by a shared commitment to make their club better. A strong mentoring program designed and implemented by the VP Education could be the fish that feeds a man for a lifetime.

Sources

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