

The Joy of Coaching



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Area-23 Governor, Division H

"The deepest joy of belonging comes as one learns to cooperate, contribute and help..."

-- Dr. Ralph C. Smedley, Founder, Toastmasters International

Is there anyone in this world who has not gone through difficult times in his life? Is there any organization that has not seen bad times? A Toastmasters Club is not an exception. There may not be a single club that has no concerns at all. The most common concern of many clubs revolves around membership. Having recognised this concern well, Toastmasters International has set up the Club Coach program to assist clubs that need attention in membership building and raising their standards.

While a membership level of minimum 20 is considered an indication of a healthy club, it requires at least 6 registered members for the club to meet the minimum required criteria for survival. In between this green and red tags, lie two categories as listed below:

- * Membership level between 6 to 12 – The club needs a coach
- * Membership level between 13 to 19 - The club may soon need a coach

At the beginning of the current Toastmasters year, the registered membership level of Abu Dhabi ICAI Toastmasters Club under Area -23 was 14 and consequently it fell under the second category.

Club Background:

The Abu Dhabi ICAI Toastmasters club was chartered on 15th Feb 2006. Though initially the club was open only for members of ICAI (The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India), the club opened its membership to the public, as the members became busy with their jobs. Though the membership was completely sponsored by ICAI, the membership level still hovered around the figure 20. During the 2010-11 toastmasters year, October and April dues were submitted for 14 members by a club officer, even though ICAI stopped financial sponsorship for the club. Meetings were called off regularly due to low attendance and the club was on the verge of a collapse due to scarcity of active members to fill meeting roles or even executive positions.

Developing Reality Based Plans:

One of the Area Goals this year was to ensure a healthy status for each club. Plans were made to re-start club activities – after an interval of six months. During the first quarter of the year, focus was on studying the situation, formulating strategies and charting out detailed plans. The club leaders were contacted and the club roster was obtained. Each one of the 14 members was contacted individually and a detailed survey was carried out, with particular emphasis on the members' interest level. The survey revealed interesting results. There were just two members who retained their enthusiasm for the program, another two cited their willingness to support any future club activities, while the rest had a wait and watch approach saying they would consider their activities in the club based on the developments.

The only way to bring back the lackadaisical members was to re-start regular quality club meetings without further delay, building upon the enthusiasm and support from the four enthusiastic members.

Rebuilding Infrastructure:

Earlier, the club used to meet at a hall provided by a restaurant where food for a minimum number of attendees had to be ordered. As the club was on a negative cash flow, it was important to find a new meeting venue which was affordable, especially considering the low number of active members. When OUR College was exploring the possibilities of utilizing Toastmasters Education program for the benefit of their students, it opened up a new door for ICAI Club. It was a win-win situation. The college agreed to provide a meeting room for ICAI Toastmasters Club while the club, in return, agreed to take the lead in providing educational sessions based on Toastmaster International program to the college students.

Initial Spark:

Having finalized a free venue, it was then time to arrange the first club meeting of the year. As there was a delay of 8 months since last regular meeting, it was important to provide the right impetus to their enthusiasm. The club was also due for the October membership renewal payment within three weeks. To create the much wanted initial spark, one of the appreciation awards announced by the District was utilized. The excerpts of a mail that was sent to all past members is reproduced below. And the result – within couple of hours, eight members confirmed their commitment to renew the membership. The club was back on track!!!! The first meeting on October 3rd was a stupendous success.

The Joy of Coaching (*Cont.*)

Motivation:

The glass IS always half FULL. If we look around, we can find many positive points on which we will be able to build a strong foundation. High-impact experienced leaders don't get discouraged in bad times; rather, they see bad times as an opportunity to go in, fix, repair and adjust. One enthusiastic leader can make all the difference to a group, and in this case, we had TWO. In the first meeting, the new club officers were selected to replace the officers temporarily registered with TMI. Each member present mapped out their personal goals for next few months – that was the beginning of the club's commitment towards Distinguished Club Program.

When a person achieves his set of personal goals, he feels encouraged and motivated. The club members decided to assist each other in achieving their personal goals. The second quarter of the year witnessed the smooth conduct of meetings, focusing on individuals' goals. As a result, by December 31st, the club stands proud garnering a total of 7 DCP goals.

Tackling Low Attendance During Meetings:

As the club membership was initially thin, meetings were often expected to have low attendance. Though Area leaders were made available to take up any meeting role, the club followed a strategy -

If only two members turned up for a meeting, one would be the speaker while the other became the evaluator. Both would then have a beneficial session and would leave the meeting with a full heart.

If three members were present, the third one would be Toastmaster of the Day!

If there were four, the fourth one would be the General evaluator.

And so on and so forth.

This way, it was ensured that any member who attends a meeting would benefit, meetings would be filled with positive atmosphere and members would always want to return back.

Near Future Goals:

Having set the foundation for the club's growth, Club Officers are all set to bring home the President's Distinguished Status to their club this year. By arranging a showcase event to celebrate this success, club can attract more members.

Lessons Learnt:

Never cancel a meeting. You can have a wonderful meeting even with two members present!! Don't spend time worrying about who's not there; work on your goals together with who is there.

Be positive, promote positive energy. You can always find traces of light even when the room is dark.

Never dwell on your club's weakness during regular meetings. The club Ex-com is the forum to brainstorm those points.

It takes just one enthusiastic leader's determination to make all the difference.

Good results are a direct result of action taken during bad times.

To let a club go is the easy way out, but working with them to continue on is a most rewarding experience. Don't miss that JOY OF COACHING!!

From: Sunil D Kottarathil [mailto:dksunil@eim.ae]
Sent: 15 September, 2011 11:13 AM
Subject: Let us re-start ICAI club activities with a BANG!!!

Dear ICAI Club Leaders,
Nothing is impossible when we set a clear goal and move forward with determination to achieve it...
As we are determined to restart the club activities soon in full spirit, here is a chance to get a District Appreciation for the club.. Why don't we aim for that too? Let us re-start the club activities with a BANG!!!!

What we need to do is simple. Collect Dhs 200 from each member against the TMI renewal fee for next 6 months period (October-March) and renew them (minimum 6 members) online TODAY...

A positive response from you by return mail can make a big impact on the club - an appreciation certificate from District to boost our confidence and an event to celebrate when we start the club regular meetings very soon...

Best regards,
Sunil Kottarathil, Area-23 Governor

----- Original Message -----
From: Vicky Mustafa
To: District 20 Google Group
Date: Wed, 14 Sep 2011 22:15:55 -0700
Subject: Appreciation

Dear Proactive Leaders,
I would like to thank the Clubs who have worked to pay their dues before September 15! We have one more day to go so that the clubs can receive the LGM certificate for the first 50 clubs who will pay on or before September 15.

I am sure all of us are excited in welcoming new clubs in District 20! We have 15 days left for the Golden Quarter Award. Waiting for more good news....

Best regards,
Vicky
Maria Victoria Ferrer, DTM
Lt Governor for Marketing 2011-2012
District 20, Toastmasters International

Photo Gallery

Toastmasters from UAE



Area 23 — Division H