

DCP VIGOUR AWARD



The Desert Divas met on 4th September for the first session of the year 2016-2017, after a two month hiatus. The spacious hall of the Dubai Public Library came alive and the energy was palpable. The camaraderie was evident in the way members greeted and interacted with each other. In the midst of the 25 odd familiar faces, there were a few new faces; 7 guests who had come to attend our club meeting at the behest of existing members. The meeting got underway just like every other meeting of ours; warm welcomes, speeches, stories, evaluations, trivia and lots of encouraging applause. We had it all, not to mention tantalizing food for both the mind and body.

When the meeting concluded that afternoon, Desert Divas TM Club was richer by 6 members. 6 of our 7 guests had converted to members and we became eligible for our first DCP point for getting 4 new members on board. At our next meeting on 18th Sep, another 5 guests attended. 3 of them converted to members on Oct 13th and we became eligible for our next DCP point. The icing on the cake was the coveted Smedley award.

When we (the Excom) sat down to analyze and pen down the secret of our success for this article, we were at a loss to pinpoint that one person or that one act that was instrumental in bringing us this victory. An amalgamation of positive actions, untiring efforts, consistent quality in meetings, a well thought out system in place and more importantly lots and lots of little things are what are taking Desert Divas forward. We asked ourselves some questions and the honest answers to those very questions are here to highlight the reasons for our success.

Why do guests choose to visit our club in the first place?

The infectious enthusiasm and conviction of our existing members towards the toastmasters program prompts their friends to visit and the cordial invite of the VPM influences them to attend. Our VPPR ensures that timely updates are projected on social media and our webmaster effectively manages our website, keeping it both informative and interesting

(<http://desertdivas.toastmastersclubs.org/>) Our Facebook page in particular carries colourful and well covered pictures of our meetings where members' enthusiasm is evident. We are thus very much visible to anyone who is looking for a suitable club to visit. Often times toastmasters of other clubs recommend us to new aspirants.

More specifically Desert Divas TM Club has a unique distinctive feature that sets us apart from all other clubs - we are an exclusive ladies club that meets in the mornings. That is a USP for us as it appeals to several homemakers and freelancers.

Why do some of those guests come back again for the next meeting?

We welcome our guests with warmth and give them a sense of importance. A specially assigned greet master invites them and introduces them to a few members at least. To enhance the guests' level of comfort, we started since last year, the practice of getting an existing member to sit beside each guest to guide them through the proceedings of the meeting. (This is a practice that the excom of 2015-2016 decided to adopt after attending a COT last June).

Quality and variety are the hallmarks of our meetings. We explore themes from cartoons to travel and our project speeches range from ice-breakers to advanced manuals. An opportunity to overcome stage fear with ample scope for intellectual growth in a setting that is both stimulating and encouraging brings guests back asking for more.

What made the members join?

There are several 'maybes' that may influence a guest to attend a meeting but there are a handful of large and a lot of little things that convince them to join. Among the large or major factors are the quality of our meetings and our professionalism.

We maintain a perfect balance between being persuasive and being pushy. We firmly believe that guests should join our club out of interest and not be coerced into becoming members. So we keep them informed of our upcoming meetings and encourage them to attend up to 3 meetings as guests before pressing them to take a decision.

Among the little things are the honesty, the understanding and support that we offer. For example while assigning mentors we look into the comfort factor of both the mentor and mentee so that both parties thrive in the relationship.

Elaborating specifically about our present achievement :

- 3 of the guests had attended meetings in May-June and were genuinely impressed with our meetings and members. Yet they were hesitant to join because of the upcoming 2 month summer break during which Desert Divas do not hold meetings. Though we could have pushed them into joining us right then and won the "Beat the Clock Award" in the bargain, we expressed our understanding and refrained from cajoling them. Instead our VPM just kept in touch with them and ensured that their interest did not wane. In the very first meeting of September they joined as members without any further push.
- When 2 of the guests expressed diffidence on account of their language skills, a couple of senior toastmasters volunteered to assist them and the VPE promised to assign to them mentors who they would be comfortable with.
- Last but not the least credit goes to our VPM Sujatha Bhat who has been meticulous in her approach. She sends invites on time, takes a feedback right after the meeting to gauge their interest and initiates suitable follow up promptly.

President : TM Sowmya Rangarajan

VPE : TM Radha Hari Iyer

VPM : TM Sujatha Bhat

VPPR : TM Reena Sujil Bose

Secr.: TM Sonal Anjanvatikar

Treas. : TM Sailaja Perumalla

SAA : TM Nisha Sawhney

Success to us is not just about increasing member strength or achieving DCP goals, but ensuring that we respect and adhere to the core values of toastmasters and keep the interest of our members sustained at all times.

DESERT DIVAS

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DIVISION : J**

**Area Director : TM GK Lakshmi
Division Director : DTM Nelson Menezes**