

Best Practices in Running an Open House

Either Type of Open House

- Do a Moments of Truth. Clean House before having an Open House.
- Plan, plan, plan ahead! Allow plenty of time for marketing and publicity. Arrange for good speakers on appropriate topics and have the right room with nice refreshments.
- Make sure your website is engaging first...then make sure your Open House is prominently displayed on it.
- When putting up flyers all over town...do it as a team. It takes a chore and makes it fun.
- Demonstrate the power of the Toastmasters program by having your club's best evaluators evaluate the speeches. This demonstrates how we help each other grow.
- Make sure all members have applications, know the cost of joining and can explain the dues structure to any guest.
- Have a supply of guest packets and give to all guests.
- Capture each guest's name and contact info at the door. Contact them within 48 hours, and invite them back to the next meeting.
- When talking with guests:
 - Ask them what they want out of Toastmasters. Sell them on how your club can help them meet their goals.
 - Ask for the sale during the meeting. You actually have to say the words "Would you like to join?"
- Allow time for networking by having a longer than usual break in the middle of the meeting.
- Have food. It certainly draws a lot of people. One club likes to hold an "Ice Cream Social" during the break in the meeting. With about eight weeks lead time, you might get the ice cream donated by a local supplier, so there is no cost to the club.
- Members should "adopt" a guest during the meeting and make sure that they get their questions answered.

Speaker Event Open House

- "The problem with most open houses is they are publicized as an introduction to Toastmasters. 99% of the general public has no interest in joining Toastmasters, even if they do know what it is. The best run open houses use a theme that all speeches relate to. In other words, you are hosting an event to inform/help the community." - Tom Nosal
- Choose a theme directed at a particular group...business people, seniors, members of a minority group, etc. Targeting your publicity at this group should be more effective in

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bringing in prospective members. Focus the meeting and the talks on the needs of this group.

- “My home club in Greenville, Ohio put on an Open House 3 years ago and had nearly 100 people in attendance. 6 joined on the spot, another 6 joined over the next 2-3 meetings and within 3 months our club doubled in size to over 40 members. We did it by following a very specific plan that included throwing out any "old" concept of what an Open House is, and redefined it by having a keynote speaker and 3 "Toastimonials". It was an event filled with energy and in no way resembled your normal Toastmaster meeting. But, it drew in a crowd, created a lot of interest within the community and resulted in nearly 20 new members.” - Jamey French
- “The number 1 club in our District holds three Open Houses a year. They habitually get between 5 and 15 new members at each one. They usually try to get a polished speaker from outside the community, but in Toastmasters, as the headliner. They try to get a Contest winner so they have something to shout about in their press releases and publicity campaign and advertising for the event. They have food and at least an hour for socializing (and closing the sale) after the conclusion of the program.”

Toastmaster-Focused Open House

- Display a span of skill levels. Have three speakers do manual speeches:
 - Speaker 1 is the newbie, doing one of the early speeches from the CC manual. The guests will relate to Speaker 1 and say, "That's ME!"
 - Speaker 2 is half way or more through their CC. They will give a much better speech. The guests will want to reach Speaker 2's level. They'll say, "I can see myself getting at least that good."
 - Speaker 3 is a highly skilled presenter working from an advanced manual. The guests dream that they could one day be at Speaker 3's level and say, "Wow, if I could ever get that good, it would be fantastic!"
- Ensure that some of the speakers are talking about the benefits of being a member.
- The Toastmaster should be diligent in explaining each segment of the program and what skills it teaches.

After either type of the Open House

- Our VP-PR sent a hand written note or personal email to each guest thanking them for attending and inviting them to the next meeting.