



Fifteen Ways to Rejuvenate Your Small Club

Resource Guide – 9

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If your club is like most, you lose 30 per cent of your membership each year. Some clubs lose more members than they gain and therefore have fewer members each year. No magic formula exists to bring small clubs back to charter strength. Here are some ideas that might help.

1. Consider hosting a Speechcraft program

A healthy [Speechcraft](#) workshop series can be a fast and stimulating method for boosting attendance. It's ideal for low member clubs because only a few leaders are needed to plan and direct the meetings.

Leading or participating in a speech craft course is also an excellent learning and leadership experience for club members. Speechcrafters also are easily assimilated into the club's smaller numbers and bring welcome new blood and enthusiasm to the club.

2. Ask for help

A 'burned out' club desperately needed a lightened load. Ask for temporary assistance from area and nearby clubs until charter-level membership is regained. Remember to talk to your District Governor about requesting help. Two Toastmasters (TM) from these outside clubs could be eligible to receive Club Specialist credit and must be assigned by the District Governor.

Consider joint meetings with other clubs to gain new ideas. There may also be other clubs in similar circumstances to your own whose venue and meeting times are also similar or nearby. Amalgamation of two ailing clubs will revitalize one of them at least and help keep district membership and continue to provide the TM experience to those who want and/or need it.

3. Re-assess meeting times and place

Ask your executive and current membership if the current meeting time and place best contributes to the future development of the club. Is there a better meeting location, perhaps one more accessible? Bear in mind that changing the venue is always risky and changing the meeting times/days can be fatal—but change is also sometimes necessary for survival.

4. Tailor your meeting format

If seven members show up, consider having a panel discussion or extended the table topic session. If three members show up, take your meeting to a nearby restaurant for refreshments and have a brainstorming session. Set goals for the next meeting. For low membership, consider reducing the number of speakers on the program. Instead, try to emphasize quality. Manual speeches should be the rule.

5. Recognize club members

Recognition is vitally important. Use innovative ways to stir member enthusiasm and energy.

Have an official greeter so that anyone walking through the door is immediately made welcome and assigned to a member to help them understand the program. A friendly greeting will help bring visitors back. Remember, we need them more than they need us.

6. Emphasize quality meetings

Seek variety and fun at every meeting. Challenge members to be creative, productive, and especially sensitive to time restrictions on every assignment. Emphasize Competent Communicator manual speeches, quality evaluations, variety in Table Topics and educational sessions. Use the Competent Leadership manual to help provide feedback.

One very experienced Toastmaster gives this recipe for success: Start on time, finish on time. Have a stimulating agenda with good speeches and strong evaluations. Maintain a high energy pace at the meeting and have fun!

"Helping others helps ourselves grow and succeed!"

7. Invite guest speakers

With shortened programs (such as in [#4 above](#)), another possibility is to invite Toastmasters who are working on advanced manuals to fill the extra time. This gives advanced speakers additional opportunities and provides variety for the low member clubs. And while you have them, ask them to be a General Evaluator.

8. Expand your local promotion

A key to attracting new people is to promote the club within the community, from shopping centers to corporations. Use all forms of publicity: print and electronic media, signs, as well as personal contact.

9. Hold open houses or special workshops

Spreading word in the community of special opportunities can bring guests out that may have been too shy previously.

10. Special invitations

Send out special notes with three free visits to your Toastmasters club to individuals that you think might be interested in becoming a member.

11. Distinguished Club Program (DCP)

Use the [Distinguished Club](#) success planning section. Identify the club's main objectives by "walking through" the work plan. Keep in mind that the accomplishment of a few goals at this stage will bring much greater reward than setting many goals and reaching few of them.

Some clubs pursue the DCP for the sake of the ribbon on their banner but if you actually do the things on the DCP as ends in themselves, the success will show in the club and the ribbon on the banner is a just a bonus.

12. Train officers

Most low member clubs start slipping downward because of inadequate leadership. The district or area can help by providing special sessions for untrained club officers. Just stressing the basics can often produce wonders. Area Governors could schedule several training sessions to review important training points. Post-meeting evaluations by a District Officer, probably the Area Governor, also can be especially helpful because events of the meetings are still fresh in the minds of the attendees.

If your division runs regular club officer training sessions, and opens them to the general membership with extra training sessions for things other than club officer business, the positive spin-off is very beneficial to club, area and division.

13. Year-round meetings

Experience and statistics show that clubs which meet weekly or regularly **throughout the year** are in general stronger, healthier, more productive clubs. Productive in terms of meeting more of its members educational needs. In other words, the long summer break can end up as a permanent break. Not everyone wants or needs the family time and it's very easy to get out of the TM schedule and find another activity to take the place of the TM weekly meeting slot.

14. Survey members

Employ a member interest survey periodically to help design effective club programming. What do they want? Are they getting it? If not, why not?

15. Never lose your pride

Be proud of yourself, your club and Toastmasters. Be so proud that you can't bear to go to a Toastmasters meeting without bringing a guest or without doing your best on the program.

Remember, rebuilding is a challenge. By using these tips along with energetic leadership, your club will likely achieve a high level of success. You can do it!

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