

## What's Fun Got to Do With It?

Presented by Lisa Burnside

Lisa began with a regular meeting agenda for everyone to follow. She walked through the normal opening of a Toastmasters meeting—only doing it in a really boring fashion. Then she started to break down the elements of a Toastmasters meeting and how to make it more exciting.

Would you rather go to a meeting or a party? When you invite people to your meetings, tell them about the fun, variety, clapping, smiling, laughter, and so on—and invite them to the party!

One key point was “bring them in.” Think about the importance of a website. What is on the club’s website?

Does it invite people to come and visit the club? Are the pictures of the members in color? Is there a little story about each member to let people interested in your club know a little about who they might meet if they do visit? You must clear any personal information (such as address, phone, and displaying their picture) with the member before posting on the website.

Is there a picture of the entire club, nicely dressed and looking like people you would want to meet? View the club’s website through the perspective of someone who is just learning about Toastmasters. Does it give the meeting location, dates, and times? If you have to change your meeting date, time, or location, do you immediately update your website so people don’t come to the usual meeting place and not find anyone there?

Do you advertise your speech contests on your website, explaining what each contest is? Go out and look at your website as a prospective member. Is it boring, is it eye-catching? Be sure you have a map and directions to your meeting place as well.

Lisa talked about how to draw people to your club. Is your newsletter long and boring, or is it newsy? Have you considered placing some newsletters at nearby coffee houses, the library, grocery stores, or doctors’ and dentists’ offices? Be sure your meeting information and a contact person are listed prominently on the newsletter. Provide both a phone number and an email address, as some people may not feel comfortable calling a stranger. Also list three benefits to a prospective member.

You can get free brochures from Toastmasters International and place them around with your club’s information. You can also download business cards from TI. Advertise your club on Facebook and LinkedIn, or link to articles that will draw people in. Video some of your club meetings or special speakers (with permission) and put them on YouTube or Yahoo Videos or other assorted video sharing sites.

About the meetings: It is important to use protocol. Every member has a duty to bring guests. If you like your club and enjoy the meetings, wouldn’t you want to share them? Try rearranging

your meeting room occasionally, but let the speakers know first so they can get accustomed to the new layout.

Send out the agenda early to get the members excited about attending the meeting. Use themes to enhance your meetings. You can lay out themes in advance, for a month or even a year if you want. You can Google “this date in history” and use that as your theme. You could have book reviews for one or two meetings. Try an “all Table Topics” meeting or a Jeopardy theme, picking your category and a dollar amount. Try a reverse meeting—with a little advanced planning, you start at the end of the meeting and do everything in reverse order until you open the meeting. This means evaluators give the evaluation before the speakers even speak. Or you could have people draw for what position they will hold at the meeting as they walk in the door (except the speakers). You can use decorations to enhance your meetings. When someone uses the “word of the day,” you could toss them a piece of candy. You could try changing the “word of the day” halfway through the meeting just to change things up a bit.

The most important thing to do is to have fun. Enjoy the socialization. If you are having fun, so will your guests.

*Notes by Kathy Neumiller, DTM*