

Back to School with Educational Vice-Presidents

Introducing Your Club's CEO: Chief *Educational* Officer!

By Craig Harrison DTM

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Because Toastmasters is an educational non-profit, its success is based upon the educational achievements of its members. Predominantly, education and training occurs at the club level, both during and between meetings. As such, your club's vice president of education (often abbreviated as EVP) is key to the success of your club. In essence your EVP is the CEO of your club: its chief *educational* officer. Congratulations! You are now on a first-name basis with a CEO!

As educational vice-president, your CEO is responsible for all aspects of education for club members. It's a mighty responsibility for a servant leader. Yet it's also a rewarding experience. The good news: there is an array of tools available to assist EVPs as they assist you!

Educational Environment

It's said a shark must keep swimming in order to breathe. As a learning organism, your club and its members must keep learning in order to grow. That's job one for an educational vice-president. Create an environment that promotes continuing education for all.

Group Learning: Good for the Heart, Soul and the Brain

Did you know we as humans learn well in groups? According to Marianne Gunther-Murphy CTM, Marriage and Family Therapist and Certified Group Therapist in private practice in Oakland, California: "We are herd animals. We are hard-wired to be in a group, and thus we learn more and learn better in a group."

And a group whose focus in on education provides support and accountability on the way to member and club achievement. Gunther-Murphy continues: "In group work, we see models of success which spark new thoughts and ideas. That, in turn, activates our own creativity. The supportive group setting of Toastmasters is also an antidote for fear and embarrassment."

Welcome to the Toastmasters Learning Laboratory

So how does one transform a club meeting into a learning lab? It's not as hard as it sounds. Here are some of the ways EVPs can create a culture of learning in clubs:

Every speech a manual speech: Give priority to manual speeches, and use copies of the appropriate speech evaluation form for each speech. Also, allow for oral and written evaluations for every speech. And cite the manuals and speech assignments being delivered so all can become familiar with the manuals.

Educational programming: mix in modules from the *Successful Club Series*, *Better Speaker Series* by your more experienced members or those looking for a growth opportunity, and for beginning speakers to get "up to speed" as speakers.

Schedule the *Moments of Truth* module using existing materials that a club member can customize to each club's particulars. By tapping a veteran member to deliver this engaging program it helps clubs improve their climate and effectiveness.

Success-leadership and *success-communication* modules provide educational programming in everything from conducting effective meetings to creativity to effective leadership. Delivery of these modules strengthen the club and its cohesion.

Acknowledge and reward educational achievements. When members reach a milestone the club's EVP can give them public recognition for their achievement. It rewards them and reinforces the Toastmasters value of educational achievement. You can publicly present them with ribbons, pins, plaques, trophies or other tangible symbols of success.

Promote advanced manuals. Every club should have a complete set of the fifteen advanced manuals to share with members matriculating through Toastmasters. The formula: familiarization leading to engagement and culminating in completion of the Toastmasters curricula. Periodically the EVP or another member of the team can speak about the different manuals. (Don't forget to keep replenishing them.)

Weekly Educational Moment! Using one minute each meeting to share an educational nugget related to Toastmasters programs and materials. Topics abound. The EVP can discuss the Supply Catalog, educational tracks, a particular advanced manual, educational value of contests, explain Speechcrafts, or something else entirely.

Create a club library of resources. In addition to copies of the C&L and advanced manuals, keep copies of past magazines, DVDs, VHS tapes and other educational materials from Toastmasters that you can loan out to members. Booklets and tapes on evaluating to motivate, the magic of mentoring and other aspects of education are a boon to club members intent on learning.

QuickTime™ and a
decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Create a Wall of Fame. Post your club's Member Achievement Wall Chart for a visible reminder so all can track the educational progress members are making.

The Supply Catalog: Your Silent Partner in Success

The Toastmasters Supply Catalog is laden with items to assist and EVP in educational responsibilities. There is literally something in it for everybody!

For new members, there are pamphlets, booklets and other resources to help with everything from finding topics to speak about to speech openings to overcoming nervousness.

For members seeking new challenges there are modules from the Leadership Excellence series, complete with scripts and PowerPoint slides.

For advanced members there are modules on transitioning from speaker to trainer, improving one's management skills and how to conduct productive meetings.

Motivating the UTMs, LTMs, BTMs and JTM

As you peruse your club roster you see acronyms next to members' names such as DTM, CTM, CC and AL. Your club may also have an LTM or UTM, JTM or BTM. I am referring to a *lackadaisical, uncommitted, jaded or bored* Toastmaster in need of motivation. As CEO, an EVP's job is to appeal to these members' needs, desires and motivations (or lack thereof) and find something in the Toastmasters curriculum to engage them. For some it's the fun and challenge of contests, for others it's an officer role with the club or district or an invitation to lead a Youth Leadership program. And for others it's participation in the club's mentoring program — as mentor or mentee (or both!). Remember, leave no Toastmaster behind!

To Contest We Shall Go

Semi-annual club speech contests are an educational opportunity for all. For some it's the thrill of competition and an opportunity to perform under a different kind of pressure; for others it's the opportunity to judge others' performance in an impartial manner; for some it's a leadership opportunity to be a contest Toastmaster, vote-counter, timer or even be a test or target speaker for their club or another one. Each is a growth opportunity. The EVP enrolls the entire club in the planning and staging of contests. Thus, there is individual and group growth. EVPs make sure *everyone* wins through the positive experience of participation.

The Distinguished Club Program

While every club is different, each earns points in Toastmasters' Distinguished Club Program (DCP). EVPs learn and teach this system to their clubs so all can contribute to helping your club become a president's distinguished club through educational excellence. A blend of teaching and cheerleading can motivate members to achieve points for completing manuals, voting, delivering educational modules and more, coupled with retention and growth milestones.

Character Recognition For All

As CEO, you already know that what gets measured and rewarded is what often gets done. In place of carrots, the catalog offers many items for recognition and gifts for high

achievers. There are wonderful pens, pins, mugs, frames, medallions, flutes for champagne toasts, leather portfolios and much, much more. And remember, the fanfare that comes with publicly recognizing members is itself an educational opportunity.

Master the art of giving praise, recognition, awards and rewards. Make sure certificates are signed, and present them facing outward to the recipient for all to see. Remove items from their plastic protectors before presenting them to recipients. Don't just hand someone their pin wrapped in plastic. With their permission, affix it through a button hole of their jacket. Shake hands with the recipient as ambassadors shake hands with heads of state — long enough for photographers to capture the moment!

So let's toast our EVPs for all they do for clubs, and help them as we help ourselves through educational development. Here's to our CEOs!

Professional speaker Craig Harrison DTM is a past District Governor and principal of Expressions of Excellence. He is the author of *Cultivating the Leader in You!*, a pocketbook on leadership for emerging and aspiring leaders. Visit www.CultivateTheLeaderInYou.com or www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com for additional resources for speakers and leaders.