



Mansion Toastmasters

Newsletter

September 2008

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Soaring With Our Strengths!

A Message from President

Welcome back, Fellow Toastmasters! Did you have a restful, rejuvenating summer? Did you miss our weekly meetings? I did! While I appreciate the summer break, I also appreciate the benefits of Toastmasters. I am more organized, I think more clearly and I speak more clearly when I engage in the discipline of weekly meetings!

As I was pondering what theme to set for this year, I was reflecting on the Toastmasters program and why I stay engaged with it. I once described a club meeting as an island of calm in a sea of chaos. It was a comment that tried to evoke what a club meeting offered to me – a positive, safe, refreshing, enjoyable haven where I could be assured of laughter and positive feedback while having the experience of learning something new – all within two hours. Here people share: we share our experiences, our expertise, our outlook on life, our successes and the not-so-successful experiences that brought us to where we are today. We focus on the best that people have to offer.

This year our theme is “Soaring With Our Strengths”! Some of you may be familiar with the “Strengths Movement”. It’s been around for a while, brought to public attention

several years ago by Donald O. Clifton, Ph.D – the “father of strengths-based psychology”. Well before the “Strengths Movement” was formally identified, Toastmasters has been promoting similar ideas. Here at Mansion Toastmasters, guided by the Toastmasters International program, we focus on supporting each other in the development of our strengths while we learn to manage our weaknesses.

What is a strength? Donald O. Clifton, in his book “Soar With Your Strengths” provides two definitions. A simplistic definition is that a strength is something you do well. At a deeper, more comprehensive level, he defines a strength “as a pattern of behaviour, thoughts and feelings that produces a high degree of satisfaction and pride; generates both psychic and/or financial reward; and presents measurable progress toward excellence.” Notice that this definition includes behaviour, thoughts and feelings. This definition of a strength includes what we might call a talent, but also includes the motivations and drives that takes talent to a level that results in deep satisfaction.

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Event	Location	Date
First Meeting	Mansion	Sept. 10, 2008
Mansion Table Topics & Humorous Speech Contest	Mansion	Oct. 01, 2008
Area 52 Table Topics & Humorous Speech Contests	Mansion	Oct. 08, 2008
Division L Table Topics & Humorous Speech Contests	TBA	Oct. 17, 2008
Last Meeting 2008	Mansion	Dec. 10, 2008
First Meeting 2009	Mansion	Jan. 07, 2009
Last Meeting 2009	Mansion	Jun. 10, 2009

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Here are five suggestions on how you can discover your strengths:

1. Listen for your yearnings – a yearning is a pull or attraction you have for one activity over another
2. Watch for satisfactions – satisfaction is the outcome of what are our intrinsic motivations
3. Watch for rapid learning – a strength is always characterized by initial, rapid learning and then the learning continues through your lifetime
4. Glimpses of excellence – each time you succeed understand what that success looks like so you can do more of, and improve on, what made you successful
5. Total performance of excellence – a strength underlies those moments when there are no conscious steps in your mind during your performance, and you continually improve over time.

This year I'd like everyone to focus on discovering, or acknowledging, their own strengths, and to help their fellow members discover and acknowledge their strengths. Can you name your own strengths? Can you see the strengths of others?

If you're interested in exploring the ideas of the "Strength Movement", here are two great books to get you started:

"Soar with your Strengths" by Donald O. Clifton & Paula Nelson

"Now, Discover Your Strengths" by Marcus Buckingham & Donald O. Clifton

There's so much more to understanding strengths, and how to manage our weaknesses. Over the course of this year my goal is to explore the idea of being "strength focused". I can't think of a better place to do this than as a member of Mansion Toastmasters.

Janice P.
President

Go for the 'Goal'd'

Eight gold medals. A little golden statue named Oscar. A golden ticket to a chocolate factory. A golden key to your own home. Goals mean different things to different people, however, goals are key components for success.

A goal is defined as: a final purpose or aim; the end to which a design tends or which a person aims to reach or attain. In order to achieve personal goals we need to ask ourselves two main questions: 1) what do you want to do and 2) how do you want to achieve it. It may seem impossible at first to know how to answer these questions so we all need to be 'SMART':

S-specific: a specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal

M-measurable: establish criteria for measuring progress for attainment of each goal set

A-attainable: development of attitudes, abilities and skills will be allow goals to be reached

R-realistic: an objective in which you are willing and able to work toward

T-timely: without a time frame there is no sense of urgency to complete the goal



Whether you are striving to improve your self-confidence, speaking skills or leadership skills, Mansion Toastmasters provides all of us with a venue to achieve our personal goals. As part of the bigger picture our personal goals also help to achieve goals at the club level.

The 'Distinguished Club' Award is an annual program where points are given for specific goals achieved. There are three levels to the 'Distinguished Club' Award:

- 1) 'Distinguished Club' (5 of the 10 goals achieved)
- 2) 'Select Distinguished Club' (7 of the 10 goals achieved) and
- 3) 'President's Distinguished Club' (9 of the 10 goals achieved).

Mansion Toastmasters aims high achieving the 'President's Distinguished Club' Award for the past five years. This achievement is dependent on all of us setting our personal goals. Be persistent. Strive to complete your goals. Have a long term vision with short term motivation.

"Let me tell you the secret that has led me to my goal. My strength lies solely in my tenacity."

– Louis Pasteur

Melissa K.
VP Membership

Call for Participation

Welcome back Toastmasters... and so begins the first of the contests. Ewww... Well, not so fast. Contests are a great way to prove to yourself just how far you have come in your own development, and have a lot of fun at the same time.



The first contest of the 2008-2009 will be happening on September 24, 2008, and as always, will start with the Humorous Speech Contest and the Table Topics Contest. Not only is it a great opportunity to sharpen your own skills, it is always a lot of fun to watch. The Humorous speeches are 5-7 minutes long, and must be wholly original content. You can even do a manual speech at the same time, and move yourself that much closer to your next goal.

The Table Topics are 1-2 minutes long, and are an easy, no preparation required challenge. The Table Topics competition is unique in that it allows you to practice speaking your mind on a topic that you probably didn't know you had an opinion about. You will be surprised how worked about you can get about a word as simple as "leaves."

If you are not up to competing this year, consider preparing yourself for next year by acting as a judge, timer or counter. It allows you to see exactly what is needed to create a great speech, and you get the benefit of laughing out loud at the same time. If you have any questions, please give me a call.

*Adam M.
Past President*

Contests are Fun

The Humorous Speech & Table Topics contests are a treat in September. I participated last year in the speech contest and talked about my husband and our trips together. My husband really isn't a funny guy, and I think that may have been entertaining.

I want to encourage everyone to participate this year. Don't look at it like a contest, it's just another speech. And it's a fun experience. I know here at Mansion Toastmasters there are some interesting stories you all could tell. I've enjoyed all your speeches last year, and I'm sure you've heard me laughing and giving a round of applause.

To encourage you, here are two tips that helped me:

1. Keeping it simple; simple can be funniest of all or just entertaining. The contest isn't about doing a stand-up routine.
2. Being yourself and letting your audience relish in your personalized delivery.

Do you have a pet, a hobby or how about an experience? How about a sailing experience? My husband and I went out on a friend's sailboat in August. We didn't really sail to anywhere; we just sailed around the lake. That was the enjoyment: feeling the nice breeze blowing from the lake, looking out onto the crisp, blue water and enjoying the day. I could give a speech about that and compare it to the rough seas at work or with driving anywhere in the summer. Or there's a court experience I could talk about.



What's my point? Well, if I were to continue; give it as my speech, my point would be to inform: Have you ever been sailing or to court? Let me tell you what you're in for. What will your point be, to persuade, to inspire or to entertain?

3. When telling a story or giving a 2-minute table topic (it applies to both), you need to make it clear why you're delivering it. Have a message that rings loud & clear.

To recap: Tell a story or a few, make your point clear, and be yourself (applies to both contests). Do it in your own special way. The best delivery will come when you loosen from expectations of how you should do it. Your audience will enjoy your presentation, your style, if you just let us. What could be easier?

O.K. You may not win the contest, but like fulfilling a goal, you'll enjoy the calm and peace that follows. You may even say, "Hurray for me; I did it!"

I did, last year, when they put my name on the plaque. You can do it, too; I encourage you to partake. Just get out of your way and have the best experience ever! What is life if not a series of experiences, anyway?

Good luck to all!

*Diane C.
Newsletter Editor*

Going for the Goals...

So, you want to become a better speaker and improve your self-confidence? Well then, you defiantly joined the right club! Toastmasters International has been around for many years, not only helping people set goals, but to reach them as well! Your fellow club members are here for you... use their expertise to your advantage.

There are three key steps in reaching your goals. These steps apply for any goals you set, not just within your club.

Firstly, you want to put your goals down on paper. By writing your goals out, you are making your intentions know to the universe and thus, saying 'I'm ready to achieve this goal with your help!' You will be setting a target and become laser focused on reaching your results! The key here is to be as specific as possible. Set a date for when you want to achieve your goal and state exactly what your goal is. For example your goal might be: to be paid at least \$100 for delivering a speech by January 1, 2010.



Secondly, break down big goals into small ones. Quite often, people will set goals that they feel are too big to reach and end up quitting on their dreams before they even get started. Don't be intimidated by your own goals. By breaking your goals down into smaller reachable tasks, you will find that reaching your bigger goals are really no problem at all! Keep in mind, that the smaller goals you've broken down need to be just as specific as your higher, ultimate goals. Smaller steps of the above goal might include: join a local Toastmasters club by the first of next month...get myself a mentor in the club within my second week of joining...complete my Competent Communicator manual by my next birthday...compete in a Toastmasters contest by June 2009...etc.

The third step of reaching your goal is to build a support team around you. You want to have people that believe in your dreams, and support you in reaching you goals. Your best bet to achieving your goals is to study and follow someone who has 'been there, done that'. Do you have yourself a mentor in your Toastmasters club yet? A mentor has already travelled the path you want to take. A mentor is one of your biggest fans cheering you on and guiding you. If you have questions about your Toastmasters club or certain aspects of your speech, chances are pretty good that your mentor will have an answer for you. At the very least, they will be able to point you in the right direction to someone that can help you.

Select your mentor today if you don't yet have one. Consider your Toastmasters club as a nurturing and loving mother bird; supporting your dreams and hoping for the very best for you. And like a proud parent, beaming with pride once you finally reach your goals! If you would like more information on reaching your goals or the mentoring program, contact your VP Education. Remember, we are here for you!

Paul T.
VP Education

Thank You...

for reading this newsletter. And for those who have contributed content for the newsletter.

My goal for this year is to utilize my strengths and resources to raise the profile of our club. As one of our communication tools, the newsletter is a place where we can share our thoughts, educational information to help us improve our leadership and communication skills, and inspiring successful stories. If there is anything interesting that you'd like to share with our fellow Toastmasters and other potential audience, please fell free to write to me. I will compile the information for our upcoming newsletters.

Thank you in advance for your participation!

Lee Z.
VP PR