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VENUE

Location, Location, Location!

Your date has been chosen, and now it’s time to find a venue. Look for one centrally located, large enough and with ample parking is paramount. The location for the Open House can be the club’s typical meeting location or can be held offsite. Either way, there are essential requirements:

ROOM CAPACITY

The room for the event must have space large enough to accommodate seating for the current club members plus an average of two guests per member. Example: 5 members + 10 guests = 15 attendees. *The idea is to encourage club members to bring one or two guests each.* Some venues have chairs and tables available for use. At the minimum you will need chairs for everyone. Be sure to allow for a seating area for guests who are handicapped. If a projector and projection screen is needed for the speakers, check to see if there is one on site for usage. Determine there is space with AC electrical plugs for the hospitality area.

PARKING

Ample parking spaces and designated areas for handicapped parking should be included in considering a location. If the Open House will be in the evening, consider visiting or driving by the location at night to determined ample lighting in parking areas.

USAGE & RESTRICTIONS

Compliance with restrictions for room usage makes the event pleasant to everyone. Some locations will have strict rules regarding serving food or drinks as well as limitations on any decorative items. Be sure to check the Rental Agreement, if applicable, for any specific regulations.

HANDICAP ACCESSIBLE

Most public locations will have already anticipated and prepared for handicap accessibility, however, there are some exceptions. Be sure to tour any venue and determine that there is a ramp, without stairs, for accessibility into the building as well as determining the feasibility for the meeting room and restroom usage.

RENTAL AGREEMENT & FEE

A rental agreement is typically only necessary if the Open House will be held offsite. *(If the event will be held at the club’s typical meeting site, ask if serving food & beverages are allowed.)* Be sure to mention Toastmasters International is a non-profit organization, the rental fee may be reduced or free usage of the room is possible! *Reserve a minimum of 2 hours to 3 hours for set up, meeting, and clean up. Read the rental agreement carefully before signing.* Book your venue a minimum of one month in advance of the event, if possible. Obtain a receipt for the rental fee to remit to the club’s treasurer.

**NOTE:** If the event is being conducted offsite, be sure to send a Thank You card to your site contact. Gratitude goes a long way toward building a relationship for future use of the venue.
The Open House is your club’s showcase event! It is an introduction to Toastmasters for the novice. Creating a solidly structured plan is critical for the success of your Open House. Details to cover:

**COMMITTEE SET UP**

Pull out your Competent Leadership manual because this is your opportunity to complete Project 6, “Organization and Delegation” or Project 10, “Team Building”. An Open House Chairperson (Project 10 role, “Club Special Event Chair”) will help lead other team members and keep track of the Open House project progression. Vital roles such as Hospitality, Publicity and Greeting coordinators can receive credit for their roles as well (Project 6, Help Organize a Club Special Event, PR Campaign, Membership Campaign or Assist the Club’s Webmaster).

**SET UP & ASSIGN ROLES**

Typical meeting format; prepared speeches, table topics, evaluations and functionary roles are applicable for Open House Events, too. You want to choose the members with the strongest skills as Grammarian, Ah Counter and Timer for your functionary roles. Remember, this is your showcase and the best performers will make a lasting impression regarding the benefits of being in your Toastmasters club.

**SPEAKERS**

Varying the level of experience for speakers shows how progression in the Toastmasters education system is beneficial for your prospective members. Layer your Open House event speakers based on skill level. Start with a beginner speaker, followed by a moderately experienced speaker and finally a DTM. If your club lacks a moderate to DTM level speaker, contact the District’s Open House Chairperson for a list of speakers who meet your needs. Special Note: Corporate Clubs (Closed Clubs) may like to invite a leader in their company to speak at the event regarding their corporate views on the Toastmasters educational system.

**TIPS FOR SUCCESS**

Allow for visitation with guests before and after the meeting by designating club members as “Floaters” to ensure guest’s questions are answered.

Table Topics Questions related to “How has Toastmasters added value to your work or life?” and other Toastmasters experience queries allow for guests to get additional credible testimony valuable for a decision to join your club.

Greeting guests with a sign in (contact sheet) will allow for a personalized “Thank you for attending” follow up message.
OPEN HOUSE CHAIR’S COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES CHECKLIST

The following is a list of guidelines as the Open House Chairperson for your team’s success blueprint. Use the check list as a follow up regarding projects for each group. As needed, assist in helping each member achieve objectives to insure the event runs smoothly.

OPEN HOUSE CHAIR & COMMITTEE

☐ Set a Goal for how many guests & members (Think Big)
☐ Every member is responsible for bringing minimum 2 guests
☐ Determine Location, Date & Time to accommodate your goal
☐ Notify via email your District Open House Chair of the time and place for your event
☐ Book your Guest Speaker and schedule additional speakers (at least two speakers)
☐ Confirm Toastmaster of the Day & Assign Roles
☐ Assemble Team (include volunteers for SET UP and CLEAN UP)
☐ Create & distribute a Contact List for ALL team members & leaders for event
☐ Open House Chair gives a Motivational Talk to club to gain commitment
☐ Schedule & follow up with team regarding status (at 2 weeks prior and 1 week prior to event).
☐ Remind members to bring their manuals to get credit for participating.
☐ Send a Thank You card to the venue contact
☐ Complete Post Event Questionnaire & remit to District Open House Chair

PUBLICITY CHAIR, CLUB WEBMASTER & TEAM

☐ Brainstorm a list of every possible place to publicize. (Social media, websites, cable outlets, community & corporate newsletters, emails, blogs, etc.)
☐ Print and distribute 10 flyers for each member to distribute & post
☐ Press Releases (Create two, send 1 & 2 weeks prior to event)
☐ Follow up press release on club webpage and social media with action photos
☐ Post pictures of the Open House Event on District 50’s Facebook Page

HOSPITALITY CHAIR & TEAM

☐ Donations from Restaurants (obtain pick up time & contact person)
☐ Designate volunteer(s) to pick up donations from Restaurants
☐ Hospitality Chair maintains list of donation items pending for best usage of donation funds.
☐ For Potluck Donations, send reminders 1 DAY BEFORE the event to members bringing items.
☐ Food (cookies, fruit, veggies, cheese & crackers, punch, coffee etc.)
☐ Decorations (check for venue restrictions in rental agreement)
☐ Conduct walk through of venue after clean up
OPEN HOUSE CHAIR’S COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES CHECKLIST continued

GREETERS & TEAM

☐ Creates & sets out Signs to direct attendees to meeting room
☐ Greeters to welcome every guest at the door before the event
☐ Floaters to network and answer questions after the event
☐ Insures Guest Cards from Toastmasters International, or create your own are filled out
☐ Bowl for guests to drop information cards to win door prizes at the end of the event
☐ Name Badges & pens

TOASTMASTER FOR THE EVENT

☐ 1-minute “Toastamonials” (need 2 or 3 to speak during the meeting about how TM helps)
☐ Door Prize Winners Announcement
☐ Prepares & prints Agendas

CLUB VP MEMBERSHIP & TEAM

☐ Have New Membership Packets for those guests who join the club at the event
☐ Have Visitor Packets with Membership Applications
☐ Follow up with Greeters and Floaters regarding interest levels for guests.
☐ Follow up letters or email to guests
☐ Gather any extra packets left over from event, retain for future use
PUBLICITY – Community Clubs

(Provide this copy to the Publicity Chairperson, Assistant Webmaster & Committee)

With the date and location already set, it’s now time to invite the masses! Timing is EVERYTHING, so begin to advertise no sooner than TWO WEEKS PRIOR to your Open House Event. Most people can plan accordingly to attend if they are aware of your event within this time frame. Heralding the event via word of mouth, flyers and social media are best methods for notifying the public. Using your resources effectively start with:

MATERIALS

Creating a flyer or an announcement is as easy as a visit to www.toastmasters.org. From the main page:

Choose the tab, “Leadership Central” then go to “Customizable Marketing Materials” with a final click on “Open House Flier” and you are ready to fill in your Open House Information.

ADVERTISING 101

With your flyers in hand, you are ready to announce your club’s event. Asking local businesses to allow you to place a flyer in their window or in their designating customer waiting area are good options. Examples of prime businesses are Public Libraries, Employment Agencies, Temporary Employment Agencies, School District Administrative Offices, Starbuck’s and just about any place where people wait for services.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media is choice for getting the word out. First, announce event via the banner on your club’s free toast website (see your Club’s Public Relations Officer for announcing the event on your webpage and Facebook page if you do not have administrative access to these sites). Other Social Media sites to announce the event: MeetUp.com, Nextdoor.com, and Facebook.

Notes on websites:

MeetUp.com will send a broadcast message a few days before your event to Meetup member’s email addresses. (This is also a great way to advertise your usual meeting information).

Nextdoor.com will post your event on their main page. Be sure to post in their “Events” tab which will show case your Open House. Anyone who marks they intend to come will receive a notice one day in advance of the event as a reminder. You can also track how many people will be expected to come.

Facebook has capability to create an event. It will track the people who will come as well. However, post each week a “teaser” post to keep people visiting your club’s site.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

☐ Brainstorm a list of every possible place to publicize. (Social media, websites, cable outlets, community & corporate newsletters, emails, blogs, etc.)
☐ Print and distribute 10 flyers for each member to distribute & post
☐ Press Releases (Create two, send 1 & 2 weeks prior to event)
☐ Follow up press release on club webpage and social media with action photos
☐ Post pictures of the Open House Event on District 50’s Facebook Page
PUBLICITY – Corporate Clubs

(Provide this copy to the Publicity Chairperson, Assistant Webmaster & Committee)

With the date and location already set, it’s now time to invite the masses! Timing is EVERYTHING, so begin to advertise no sooner than TWO WEEKS PRIOR to your Open House Event. Most people can plan accordingly to attend if they are aware of your event within this time frame. Heralding the event via word of mouth, flyers and the company’s intranet are best methods for notifying prospective members. Using your resources effectively start with:

MATERIALS

Creating a flyer or an announcement is as easy as a visit to www.toastmasters.org. From the main page:

Choose the tab, “Leadership Central” then go to “Customizable Marketing Materials” with a final click on “Open House Flier” and you are ready to fill in your Open House Information.

ADVERTISING 101

With your flyers in hand, you are ready to announce your club’s event. Place flyers in break rooms and designating waiting areas as well as the Human Resources Department are good options. Obtain permission to post any announcements prior to printing your flyers.

MEDIA

Social Media is choice for getting the word out. First, announce event via the banner on your club’s free toast website (see your Club’s Public Relations Officer for announcing the event on your webpage and Facebook page if you do not have administrative access to these sites). Ask for permission to advertise the event in the company newsletter and on the internal intranet. Be sure to highlight the personal benefits to coworkers and the advantages of effective communication and leadership to management team leaders. Also, don’t forget the District’s Facebook webpage, www.d50toastmasters.org. The district webpage is a valuable resource for prospective members, and allows for them to acknowledge they are part of a larger community beyond the confines of the office.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Brainstorm a list of every possible place to publicize. (Social media, websites, cable outlets, community & corporate newsletters, emails, blogs, etc.)
- Print and distribute 10 flyers for each member to distribute & post
- Press Releases (Create two, send 1 & 2 weeks prior to event)
- Follow up press release on club webpage and social media with action photos
- Post pictures of the Open House Event on District 50’s Facebook Page
A lagniappe is a small gift given to a customer (such as a 13th doughnut when buying a dozen), or more broadly, “something given or obtained gratuitously or by way of good measure”. The Open House event is the opportunity to extend a warm greeting and a little extra incentive for those who join your club. Setting the tone of the meeting with a sincere welcome starts with:

**BASICS**

The time of day of your event will indicate the type of hors d'oeuvres to serve as appropriate refreshments. Meal times (breakfast, lunch or dinner) would indicate a “heavy” menu and any other time of day a “lighter” offering of snacks would be the gold standard. It is a known fact; it’s hard to focus when you’re hungry...so treat your guests!

**DONATIONS**

Gathering donations for the party is one of the primary functions for the Hospitality Team. First impressions are everything! Dress professionally and be courteous when asking for donations. In exchange for donations, offer recognition in the Open House program by listing the business name and location. Here are two primary methods for gathering goodies:

- **Grocery Stores & Restaurants**

  Many local grocery stores offer gift cards to purchase items for your event. However, most require 2 months for processing a donation request. Restaurants may not require as much notice but don’t wait to the last minute to ask. Keep a list of the contact information and send thank you cards for donations.

- **Potluck Donations**

  A “Sign Up Sheet” with items needed for treats can be created and passed around during the meeting for members to choose what they will bring to the event. This requires less notice.

**CHECKLISTS**

Attached are checklist options for prospective items needed for your hospitality table, from the minimal to the more lavish events. Whichever you choose, as indicated by the time of your event, make your guests feel special. Even a plate of homemade cookies and freshly brewed coffee with nice napkins will be remembered by your guests. The list of items, on the checklist attached, cover a variety of situations and allow for a beautifully organized event.

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” - Maya Angelou

Make your event unforgettable!
HOSPITALITY RESPONSIBILITIES & CHECKLIST

RESPONSIBILITIES:

☐ Donations from Restaurants (obtain pick up time & contact person)
☐ Designate volunteer(s) to pick up donations from Restaurants
☐ Hospitality Chair maintains list of donation items pending
☐ Potluck Donations, send reminders to volunteer donors 1 DAY BEFORE the event
☐ Food (cookies, fruit, veggies, cheese & crackers, punch, coffee etc.)
☐ Decorations (check for venue restrictions in rental agreement)
☐ Conduct walk through of venue after clean up

The List – Events Between Recognized Meal Times

☐ Napkins, Plates, Cups (insulated for hot beverages)
☐ Water, Coffee, Tea, Juice and/or Sodas
☐ Ice, for serving and for a cooler
☐ Cooler (to keep items chilled)
☐ Coffee, Creamer, Sugar, Artificial Sweetner
☐ Forks & Spoons
☐ Coffee Pot, Coffee, Filters, 2 Gallons Water
☐ Extension Cord, for Coffee pot
☐ Platter for Cookies, Brownies (or other sweets)
☐ Platter with a healthy option (seasonal fruit)
☐ Serving tongs, enough for each platter
☐ Waste basket & liners, if not provided at site
☐ Zip Lock bags for packaging any leftover treats
☐ Paper towels
☐ Disinfecting wipes & extra trash bags
☐ Table cloth, for easy cleanup of service area
☐ Decorations

Events at Recognized Meal Times - add the following:

☐ Vegetable Platter
☐ Cubed Cheese Platter
☐ Bread and Crackers
☐ Entrée Platter (example: sliced Summer Sausage, Swedish Meatballs, etc.)
☐ Restaurant donation**, in lieu of Entrée Platter

** For Restaurant Donations:

☐ Schedule and confirm a pick up time for the donation.
☐ Obtain the contact name & phone number at Restaurant
☐ Assign a volunteer to pick up the item and deliver it to the Open House Event.
MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

(Provide this copy to the VP of Membership & Committee)

The membership committee is comprised of the VP of Membership, Club Webmaster, Greeters & Floaters for the Open House. Greeters are needed to welcome guests upon arrival and Floaters are to visit with guests after the event and answer questions. Documentation and a list of responsibilities are:

VISITOR PACKETS

Don’t leave your guests empty handed! Give them a visitor packet with information they can read at their leisure regarding the Toastmasters experience. Include a Visitors Card, “Confidence The Voice of Leadership” brochure (Item 101), “Find Your Voice” brochure (Item 99), “Clear Communication, Your Organization Needs It” (Item 103) and a copy of the Toastmaster Magazine (can be recycled copies from current members). Put a club label with meeting day & time, website and Facebook page on all materials. All the printed materials can be found on the www.toastmasters.org website.

MEMBERSHIP PACKETS

Your guests have seen the show and they are ready to join TODAY!! Have membership packets at the Open House for them. Everything you need is found in the New Member Orientation Kits purchasable on www.toastmasters.org website and be sure to print the Ice Breaker pdf form to include in their take home folder. In addition, it is nice to include a gift such as a thesaurus for writing those speeches, a Starbucks gift card or one of the many gifts available on the toastmasters.org webpage.

VP OF MEMBERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES:

☐ Have New Membership Packets for those guests who join the club at the event
☐ Have Visitor Packets with Membership Applications
☐ Assist Open House Chair with gathering volunteers for Greeters & Floaters
☐ Follow up with Greeters and Floaters after event regarding interest levels for guests.
☐ Follow up letters or email to guests
☐ Gather any extra packets left over from event, retain for future use

GREETERS & FLOATERS RESPONSIBILITIES:

☐ Creates & sets out Signs to direct attendees to meeting room
☐ Greeters to welcome every guest at the door before the event
☐ Floaters to network and answer questions after the event
☐ Insures Guest Cards from Toastmasters International, or create your own are filled out
☐ Bowl for guests to drop information cards to win door prizes at the end of the event
☐ Name Badges & pens