

# District 73 Leadership Forum

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On the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2018, a workshop was conducted on *Delivering Dynamic Launch Meetings*. Workshop participants were from a cross-section of district roles including District Directors, Division Directors, Area Directors and club members. This ensured a wide range of perspectives into workshop outputs.

**Launch Meeting (Definition):** A meeting that reflects the structure and feel of a regular Toastmaster meeting with the aim of starting a new club or signing on new members to an area/division.

**Launch Meeting** is the new term for a Demonstration Meeting. This is because the emphasis is now on 'launching' a sustainable club quickly, or signing members on-the-spot, rather than a protracted process that may take up to a year for a club to become viable.

To enable a successful Launch Meeting the workshop tasked participants to become 'Launch Designers'. The following framework was used to guide the design process.

## Launch Meeting Framework:



Using the framework, the 'Launch Designers' identified the following ideas and actions under Promotion, Experience and Conversion that would contribute to a successful Launch Meeting.

## PROMOTION

**How to promote a Launch Meeting to ensure high attendance.**  
*(You want to make sure people in the community/corporation are aware of the meeting and it sounds attractive enough for them to turn up.)*



- Ensure the location for the meeting is a good one eg. Convenient, easy access, well-signed.
- Use social media channels (both print and sound bites where appropriate):
  - Meetup
  - Facebook Event (other community Facebook pages)
  - Instagram
  - Personal invitation email
- Noticeboards in the local community (eg coffee shops and libraries) and universities.
- Articles/Ads in Local Community Newspaper.
- Invite Toastmasters in the area.
- Conduct a local radio interview.
- Place flyers in:
  - Workplace
  - Libraries
  - Letterbox drop
- Create promotional podcasts.
- Use D73 website and Facebook page (for members to bring friends who are interested).
- What's On publications through local councils.
- Connect with local community groups:
  - Lyons
  - Apex
  - Rotary
  - Other local business groups
- Use testimonials in both print and video form to create buzz and enthusiasm from existing members.
- Have a BBQ meeting on the beach to generate interest with people passing.
- Do presentations in the community and inform about upcoming Launch Meeting.
- Promotion in local cinemas (although the funding of this would need to be addressed at District level).
- For a corporate club:
  - Get high-level buy-in with corporate heads.
  - Information posted at water coolers.
  - Hold lunch-time forums promoting the Launch Meeting.
  - Publish on corporate intranet.
- Ensure that any written copy, soundbite, testimonial or presentation makes the Launch Meeting seem compelling and exciting. Briefly outline the value and benefits so that it is attractive to prospective members.

## EXPERIENCE



**How to ensure a Launch Meeting is dynamic and compelling.**  
*(You want to make sure that you deliver what you promised in your promotional campaign and that the meeting is a great experience.)*

- Employ high quality presenters for the meeting.
- Reinforce ‘What’s in it for you?’ to the people in the room.
- Every meeting is a Launch Meeting! This philosophy should be applied across the board so that it is second nature for a Launch Meeting.
- Make sure there is a written agenda that is professionally presented (with logo).
- While you want to showcase the best of Toastmasters, you also don’t want to scare people away who may think it is above them. So have a variety of skill levels in the meeting to reflect that there are learners as well. This can be easily done with the selection of speakers. Have two speakers – one with less experience and a more experienced one.
- Reflect diversity in membership by having that apparent in the meeting makeup of speakers, evaluators and support roles.
- Make sure that people know their roles and the meeting is well prepared. Preparation is key!
- Have good evaluators that provide excellent, insightful evaluations. Guests are coming to learn to be better speakers and if they hear well-constructed feedback with valuable learning content, they will see that the club can provide the learning they desire.
- The Toastmaster of the meeting will set the standard and tone. Make sure they are dynamic, energetic, enthusiastic, humorous (helps people feel more comfortable) and welcoming.
- Have a meeting theme that is compelling. Don’t choose one that is too heavy, but have one that everyone can relate to.
- Ensure that Table Topics is run by a Topics Master who is warm, friendly and humorous. Impromptu speaking can be very scary for a guest, so you want to counter that by having someone that can create the right, safe environment.
- Have 3 or 4 questions for Table Topics and make sure that the topics/questions are not too heavy.
- Ensure that the meeting is professionally approached, but has a friendly, relaxed and safe atmosphere.
- Know the type/demographic of the target audience who will be attending the meeting and match the Toastmaster people who will be involved.
- Must welcome guests at the beginning of the meeting.
- The level of enthusiasm from all Toastmaster participants must be high. They must be the brand.
- There needs to be a knowledgeable, skilled narrator at the Launch Meeting who can give a good, but concise explanation of what is happening.
- Explain and have a written mission statement and the values of being a Toastmaster.

## CONVERSION

**How to convert a guest into a member at the Launch Meeting.**  
*(You want to make sure you can start the guest on their journey to being a great communicator as soon as possible so they meet their goals.)*



- Make sure you have the contact details of all people who attend the meeting. The attendance list should include names and email addresses at the very least.
- Sell the benefits of being a Toastmaster and the possibilities it can provide. Note that although the word 'sell' is used, this is not code for 'hard' sell.
- Have the copies of the membership/registration/payment paperwork at the meeting.
- Prefill forms so the guest just has to sign name, or provide limited details.
- Always invite people to join. If you don't ask, you don't get!
- Have a promotional offer. For instance a membership discount if you sign-up at the meeting. However, this must follow due process and be at club level as Toastmasters International does not offer membership discounts on their fees.
- Be able to explain how Toastmasters can answer a guests 'why' or WIIFM – What's in it for me! This may be a silent WIIFM, as the guest may not just come and say it, so be prepared to have a conversation with guests to find out about them.
- Buddy-Up guests with Toastmasters so they do not feel they are sitting alone in the meeting.
- Have a Guest Kit ready to go that you can give to guests. This can contain price schedules, membership forms, TMI brochures, club newsletters, etc.
- Have verbal calls to action by the Toastmaster during the meeting and at the end of the meeting.
- Make sure that the 'pitch' that is done at the end to a guest matches a community or corporate approach. The 'why' of guests may be different depending on the club type.
- Do a questionnaire for guests asking what they want to achieve and their objectives.
- For a corporate club, have a high profile manager in attendance who is on-board with Toastmasters and who will help to positively influence corporate guests.
- Always follow up with guests who have not signed-up at the Launch Meeting.
- Talk about Toastmaster success stories to illustrate real-life possibilities Toastmasters can provide. Ben, the recent District International Speech Contest Winner, is a good example.
- Provide food and drink (not alcohol) like a normal meeting to showcase the social side of Toastmasters.
- Learn how to say a guests name if it an unusual one to pronounce. It will show you care and have taken the time to get it right.
- Ask for feedback from guests so that you can learn what they thought of the meeting.
- Give a small reward to all guest that turn up. For instance, a Toastmasters book mark or sticker, which can also act as a promotional device.

## Measurement Matters

Promoting, organising and conducting a Launch Meeting takes a lot of work. You want to know what works and what is not working so that you know where to put your effort into next time. It will also give information to District Leaders on what is working in the district.

A review of how you used the Launch Meeting process should be done after it been completed. Do you think the promotion could have been done better? In what way? What worked in the actual meeting? What didn't?

Here are some suggestions on measurements you can use:

- **Channel Strength:** Which promotional channel did you get the most enquires/guests from? Ask guests how they heard about the meeting and take note. If MeetUp has brought in 10 guests and a flyer 2, you can see which channel is stronger.
- **Guest Conversion:** How many people who attended the meeting become members? This is easily done by doing a percentage of the number of people who attended and the number of people who signed-up. The best case scenario is 100% because you have wowed the guests with such a dynamic meeting. However, 80% is a very good outcome, while 10% is not. If it is a low percentage, then something needs to be changed with how you are doing the Launch Meeting because it has not worked.
- **Post-Conversion:** How many people have converted to members after the meeting? Follow-up with guests as you would with any visitor to a Toastmasters meeting and see if people would like a second visit or have now decided to join. Once again, you can monitor your success rate through a percentage.

Using measurements will help improve your management of the Launch Meeting Process.

## Sustainability

Remember that you are building a sustainable club environment. This means that going forward every meeting should have the same standard as a Launch Meeting. Preparedness, professionalism, quality of learning, and supportive atmosphere will all contribute to retaining the people who have become members and will keep the club healthy.

You can continue an ongoing pipeline using the Launch Meeting Process or you can use it if you need to run another membership drive.

Putting some of the ideas into practise that have been outlined here by the workshop 'Launch Designers', and ensuring that Launch Meetings are dynamic, should greatly increase your potential to create a strong and healthy club.