





Toastmasters International recognizes the efforts and words of the many Toastmasters who have contributed to the creation of this manual.

# HOW TO REBUILD A **TOASTMASTERS CLUB**

## A Step-by-step Guide

### **TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL**

P.O. Box 9052 • Mission Viejo, CA 92690 • USA

Phone: +1 949-858-8255 • Fax: +1 949-858-1207

[www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org)

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**WHERE LEADERS  
ARE MADE**



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# INTRODUCTION

If you're reading this, you have made a commitment to help rebuild a Toastmasters club, or you are considering it. Walking into a club-in-need without preparation can be a difficult experience. You need the desire, knowledge, tools, team, acceptance, and support of the club members.

This manual will take you step by step through the stages of rebuilding a club:

- ▶ Understanding why clubs are rebuilt
- ▶ Determining when a club needs to be rebuilt
- ▶ Identifying who will do the work
- ▶ Building the club rescue team
- ▶ Determining available resources
- ▶ Developing an action plan

By following these recommendations, virtually any experienced Toastmaster can help a club rebuild itself. Not all possible solutions are listed in this manual – each club is different and, therefore, has different needs. The members of some clubs desperately want to keep the club going, but don't know how. Some clubs may not meet any more, and you may need to track down the last members of the club and motivate them to continue with the club.

The task before you is challenging – probably the most challenging Toastmasters activity that you will undertake. Prepare yourself by studying this guide and the materials that are available to you.

*Good Luck!*

## WHY ARE CLUBS REBUILT?

A Toastmasters club needs to be rebuilt when, for some reason, its existence is in jeopardy. This may occur because the club has lost its leadership base to natural attrition or other circumstances. In many clubs, one member is the key behind a club's success. If he or she leaves the club, a motivation, organization, and leadership vacuum occurs. The community or company where the club is located needed and supported the club at one time. It is likely that the need still exists. Sometimes, the need no longer exists, as when a company closes a production site, population dwindles, or the demographics of a community changes dramatically.

One reason many Toastmasters choose to serve as a club coach is to satisfy a requirement for Advanced Leader Silver (ALS) recognition. The experience that you will gain while serving as a club coach is invaluable. You will have the opportunity to use all the communication and leadership skills you have learned as a Toastmaster. You will be recognized as a person who gets things done.

# WHEN DOES A CLUB NEED TO BE REBUILT?

Most Toastmasters clubs experience a life cycle. The club's level of educational productivity generally follows a bell-shaped curve.

The first phase in a club's life occurs during and just after it is organized. The club's educational program is expanding and improving. The members are motivated and their enthusiasm generally makes up for their lack of experience. As the educational program improves, productivity increases and the club moves toward the peak of the curve.

As the club matures into the second phase, the educational program reaches a high level of productivity and successfully meets members' needs. The original club members are now relatively experienced Toastmasters. New members join the club and quickly become assimilated into the club's culture. The length of time spent at the top of the curve varies from club to club.

At the beginning of the third phase, members become content with the status quo and resist change and new influences. Guests are greeted, but the club's internal cliques are sometimes difficult to break into. New members have a hard time fitting in and don't stay long. Productivity declines, and the club slips from the top of the curve and begins a downward slide. Attendance drops, the educational program falls apart, and guests do not join the club. Members may be more concerned with socializing than learning.

If the club continues its downward slide and nears the bottom of the curve, something must be done to keep the club from dissolving. In many cases a club coach is appointed to help the members revitalize their club. If the effort is successful, the club's productivity will increase, and a new life cycle will begin.

## THE CLUB COACH

The club coach is a Toastmaster who is not a member of the club and not (yet) familiar with the club or its members. This perspective allows the coach to objectively view the club. The coach is a counselor, a source of knowledge and a fountain of ideas. To be successful as a coach you will need all of your speaking, thinking and listening skills – as well as hard work, determination and patience.

The following is a summary of what a coach must do:

- ▶ Build a rapport with the club's leaders and members.
- ▶ Assess the environment ... observe, analyze, and recommend solutions.
- ▶ Develop a plan with goals for improvement.
- ▶ Implement the plan and ensure that the changes are performed by the officers and members as much as possible.
- ▶ Instill enthusiasm, loyalty, and a sense of responsibility for the club's future.

These simple statements quickly summarize a large amount of time and dedication. Each of them is discussed in detail later in this manual.

## CLUB COACH PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

A club coach is appointed by the district director or club growth director to assist a club that is experiencing difficulties building and maintaining membership. The coach's goal is to help the club become a Distinguished Club. Up to two coaches may be appointed to each club. The appointment lasts to June 30 of the current club year if the club becomes a Distinguished Club or better by that date, or to June 30 of the following year if Distinguished Club recognition or better is not reached in the current club year.

The coach may not be a member of the club at the time of appointment, but may join the club after being assigned. The club must have 12 or fewer individuals who have paid for membership at the time of the appointment. A coach receives a pin upon assignment and a certificate upon successful completion of the assignment. A successful coach also receives credit toward the Advanced Leader Silver award.

## THE DISTINGUISHED CLUB PROGRAM

The Distinguished Club Program is an annual program, running from July 1 through June 30. The program consists of 10 goals a club must achieve during the year. World Headquarters tracks the club's progress and at year-end recognizes the club based on the number of goals achieved and the number of members it has.

To be considered for recognition, your club must either have 20 members or a **net growth** of at least five new members as of June 30. Following are the goals your club should strive to achieve during the year:

1. Two CCs
2. Two more CCs
3. One ACB, ACS, or ACG
4. One more ACB, ACS, or ACG
5. One CL, ALB, ALS, or DTM
6. One more CL, ALB, ALS, or DTM
7. Four new members
8. Four more new members
9. Minimum of four club officers trained during each of two training periods
10. On-time payment of membership-renewal dues accompanied by the names of renewing members for one period and on-time submission of one club officer list

Clubs that meet the membership requirement and achieve the specified number of goals below are eligible for Toastmasters International recognition at year-end:

	RECOGNITION ACHIEVED
Achieve five of 10 goals	Distinguished Club
Achieve seven of 10 goals	Select Distinguished Club
Achieve nine of 10 goals	President's Distinguished Club

If the club earns one of these three awards during your assignment, you are a successful club coach and will receive a certificate and credit toward the Advanced Leader Silver award.

Like any award program, the Distinguished Club Program has rules. Be familiar with all of them to ensure you and the club are not disappointed at year-end. Program rules are available on the Toastmasters International website, [www.toastmasters.org/1111dcp](http://www.toastmasters.org/1111dcp).

## WHO IS GOING TO DO THE WORK?

Not just you! That's the good news. To be successful, you'll need some help. The club's officers and members, the club coaches, the area director, and other district leaders make up the Club Rescue Team, and they must work together if the venture is to be successful. In most cases, the club coaches will coordinate the actions that are to be taken.

Ensure that the changes are performed by the officers and members as much as possible. Remember, you will not be in this position forever. You want to be sure that when you leave, the club will be able to carry on in your spirit. If you do it all, the club will have learned little and may return to its former state.

## BUILDING THE CLUB RESCUE TEAM

Build a personal rapport with the club leadership and members. It is important that you establish this relationship early. Visit the club and become acquainted with the officers and members. Gain their respect and trust by actively participating in the club and setting a good example. Don't formally join the club until after you have been appointed by your district director or club growth director and the appointment is recognized by World Headquarters.

Upon appointment by the district director or the club growth director, contact the club president and arrange for a meeting with the club's executive committee. During this meeting you should:

- ▶ Discuss with the officers the purpose of the club coach program, review the role of the coach in their club, offer your assistance as a coach and ask for their support;
- ▶ Discuss with the club's leadership their perceptions of the club's strengths and weaknesses; and
- ▶ Formulate an action plan, following the guidelines in this manual, and set up a continuous review of the progress being made.

The area director and all other members of the team should attend this meeting. This will demonstrate your commitment to the club, and will take the club one member closer to its goal. You should continue to be an active, participating member and not simply a counselor or critic.

Remember, you are there to help them rebuild their club. All team members must support the rebuilding effort. Be careful not to alienate them. Avoid "telling" them what to do or criticizing them. Gently guide them toward achieving club excellence. Be optimistic, friendly, and positive.

All the individuals on the team have something at stake: the club officers and members have the time and money they have invested in the club, the area director is working to achieve Distinguished Area recognition, and the club coaches are probably motivated to take on this task in order to achieve Advanced Leader and Distinguished Toastmaster recognition.



## AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Your experience as a member of a successful Toastmasters club is your greatest asset. The first time you attend a meeting of the troubled club, you will probably be able to determine at least one reason why the club is having problems.

Many promotional and educational materials are available from Toastmasters International. Visit the Toastmasters online store at [www.toastmasters.org/shop](http://www.toastmasters.org/shop). You may also wish to look through your old copies of the *Toastmaster* magazine. Each issue is full of suggestions and ideas regarding club and membership building, meeting planning, and educational programming. Share these with the members of your Club Rescue Team.

Another valuable resource is the marketing department at World Headquarters. The staff will assist you by suggesting materials and tactics to use in rebuilding your club.

## ACTION PLAN

### ASSESSMENT

To fully understand the problems of a troubled club, you must first know the characteristics of a successful one. The mission of a Toastmasters club is to provide a supportive and positive learning experience in which members are empowered to develop communication and leadership skills, resulting in greater self-confidence and personal growth. To do this, a club should hold weekly meetings with a friendly atmosphere and encourage members to give manual speeches in a well-planned educational program. This may seem easier said than done, but surely you have belonged to or visited a club that meets these simple criteria.

As a specific tool, use the Club Coach's Troubleshooting Guide (available online at [www.toastmasters.org/clubcoachguide](http://www.toastmasters.org/clubcoachguide)) to assess the club's success in meeting the needs of its members. Observe two or three meetings to determine the true nature of the club before you attempt this analysis. As you consider each portion of the assessment, objectively rate the performance on the scale. Don't be too negative or too positive; just be as realistic as possible.

### USING THE ASSESSMENT TOOL

Examine the results of the club assessment. How does the club rate? What areas need improvement? Your next step is to plan ways of solving the club's most serious problems by recommending actions to take. Summarize these possible solutions and rate each with a "1," "2" or "3" based on urgency. Your immediate objective should be to reduce the urgency of all items to a "3" or higher.

### WRITING THE ACTION PLAN

Working with the executive committee, develop an action plan and include a set of goals designed to bring the club to excellence. Remember, membership decline is only a symptom of the problem. What needs improvement is the quality and attractiveness of the meetings so that the people who visit the club as guests will want to join. Help develop a well-run, fun, and educational club meeting. Be sure all officers have a copy of the plan.

The plan should include:

- ▶ A statement of goals that identify levels of growth and a timetable;
- ▶ Specific actions and programs to be undertaken, including a timetable, along with persons responsible.

Establish a special relationship with the club officers, especially the president. Encourage optimism. Let them know their efforts are valued and appreciated. Encourage club officers to ask questions and try new ideas. Get them involved in area and district meetings (conferences, speech contests, etc.). It is vital that the officers attend the officer training sessions conducted by the district.

## INTERNAL ACTIONS

### MEETING TIME, PLACE, AND LOCATION

Does the club meet downtown in the late evening? In the morning in a suburbs? Is the building easily accessible? Is the parking lot well-lit? Too many steps? Bad neighborhood? Too noisy? Often changing the meeting time, place, and/or location has a major positive impact on the club's rebuilding efforts.

### CLUB PROGRAMMING

In a successful club meeting:

- ▶ Club officers are responsible, dedicated, and effective.
- ▶ The meeting begins and ends on time.
- ▶ Club programs are well-planned and well-executed.
- ▶ All meeting participants arrive on time and are prepared.
- ▶ Members and guests alike are greeted as they arrive and are made to feel welcome.
- ▶ The program is fast-paced, interesting, and fun.
- ▶ Transitions between segments are smooth.
- ▶ All members present have an opportunity to participate.
- ▶ Evaluations are helpful, constructive, and contribute to members' personal growth and improvement.
- ▶ The club places high emphasis on educational development (i.e. CC, ACB, ACS, ACG, CL, ALB, ALS, or DTM awards).
- ▶ Members are enthusiastic and you can tell they are enjoying themselves.
- ▶ Meetings are varied, dynamic, and fun.
- ▶ Members receive positive support and recognition.
- ▶ Members are encouraged to get involved in Toastmasters activities outside the club.

Consult the *Master Your Meetings* (Item 1312) handbook. This contains the information needed to conduct a good club meeting. In it, you will find:

- ▶ How to create the right environment
- ▶ The elements of a club meeting
- ▶ The roles of club officers
- ▶ The roles of program participants
- ▶ Program ideas

## GUESTS

Make guests feel welcome! The first steps of your action plan will bring prospective members to your club, but getting them to the club meeting is only the first step. If they are to return and join the club, they must receive personal attention. You should:

- ▶ Greet them enthusiastically, being sure to repeat their name and to welcome them to your meeting.
- ▶ Introduce the visitor to an experienced member who will explain Toastmasters International and the meeting program.
- ▶ If guests arrive late, introduce and welcome them at the earliest break.
- ▶ Give each visitor a Guest Packet (Item 387) to ensure they have all the information they need about Toastmasters and your club.
- ▶ Have the guests sign your club's guest book.
- ▶ Ask the guests for comments at the end of the meeting.
- ▶ Write to or call the guests and thank them for attending your meeting. Invite them back to the next meeting.

Remember: Today's guest is tomorrow's member! Recall how you felt at your first meeting. Make sure each guest's visit is enjoyable!

## OFFICER PREPAREDNESS

Encourage the use of the *Club Leadership Handbook* (Item 1310), and other manuals to solve problems. Be sure the club officers are thoroughly familiar with all educational and promotional materials and that they understand the proper handling of important administration tasks, such as semiannual reports, club officers lists, etc., that must be completed and submitted to World Headquarters on time.

## DISTINGUISHED CLUB PROGRAM

Encourage the club officers to use the *Distinguished Club Program and Club Success Plan* (Item 1111) as a guide for planning and goal setting. If the club isn't presently using the Distinguished Club Program, explain how it works as a planning tool and offer assistance in setting goals, identifying strategies and achieving results, and monitoring progress toward goal attainment. The *Distinguished Club Program and Club Success Plan* (Item 1111) manual is available from World Headquarters and on the Toastmasters International online store at [www.toastmasters.org/1111](http://www.toastmasters.org/1111). You also can conduct *How to Be a Distinguished Club* (Item 299), part of *The Successful Club Series* program for the club. It explains the program and the benefits it offers.

## MEETING PARTICIPANTS

**Toastmaster** – The Toastmaster of the meeting acts as a genial host and conducts the entire educational portion of the program. He or she enthusiastically introduces the speakers and other participants and creates a pleasant atmosphere. This role requires much preparation.

**Speaker** – Most of each meeting revolves around the speaking program. Three or more members present prepared speeches based on projects from *Competent Communication* (Item 225) or the manuals in the *Advanced Communication Series*. Each speech from the *Competent Communication* (Item 225) manual lasts from five to seven minutes, those in the *Advanced Communication Series* last five or more minutes, depending upon the assignment. Each speaker should present manual speeches, giving them in numerical order.

**Evaluator** – An evaluation, based on the project evaluation form provided in *Competent Communication* (Item 225) and *Competent Leadership* (Item 265), is given for every prepared speaker and for members serving in various meeting roles during the meeting. The evaluator completes the form, then presents a verbal evaluation in front of the club. In addition, the evaluator gives the speaker or meeting role participant a written evaluation. The evaluation includes positive comments and helpful suggestions about what could be done better. Good evaluations are critical and allow members to improve their speaking and leadership skills.

**Topicsmaster** – The Topicsmaster presides over the Table Topics™ portion of the club meeting. Table Topics™ provides those members not assigned a meeting role an opportunity to speak during the meeting. During Table Topics™, the Topicsmaster gives each member a subject, and the speaker gives a one- to two-minute impromptu talk on the subject. Table Topics™ helps members learn to think and speak “on their feet.”

**General Evaluator** – The General Evaluator evaluates everything that takes place during the meeting. In addition, the General Evaluator is responsible for the speech evaluators, making sure they know their responsibilities as evaluators, and for the timer, grammarian, and Ah-Counter. Normally an evaluator is assigned to each speaker; however, sometimes evaluations may be done by panels. The General Evaluator may set up any evaluation procedure desired, but must make sure each evaluation is brief yet complete.

**Timer** – One of the purposes of Toastmasters is to teach people to express thoughts within a specific time interval. The timer is responsible for monitoring time and emphasizing the importance of time to everyone. Each segment of the meeting is timed, and each speech is timed. The timer operates the timing device, which indicates to the speaker how long he or she has been talking.

**Grammarian** – Another purpose of Toastmasters is to help people improve their grammar and use of words. The grammarian introduces new words to members and encourages their use and comments on members’ language use during the meeting.

**Ah-Counter** – When speaking, people often use “crutch” words or fillers such as “ah,” “um,” “you know,” “well,” etc., or they repeat a word or phrase, saying, for example, “I, I said...” or “This means, this means...” These words and sounds can be annoying to listeners. The Ah-Counter notes these words and sounds and helps the speaker become aware of them.

For more information, please see *Master Your Meetings* (Item 1312) or the pamphlet *A Toastmaster Wears Many Hats* (Item 1167D).

## **ENCOURAGE AND RECOGNIZE ACCOMPLISHMENT**

Stimulate recognition for achievers. Encourage club members to deliver manual speeches and to work toward CC, AC, CL, AL, and DTM awards. Work with the club in building a solid educational program and an appropriate recognition system. Ensure that accomplishments are valid. Don’t let the club fall into the trap of pushing accomplishments and sacrificing the quality of the educational experience.

As you work with the club, keep your district leaders informed of your progress. If you have problems or questions, contact your district leaders or World Headquarters for assistance.

## EXTERNAL ACTIONS

### ATTRACTING NEW MEMBERS

All low-membership clubs share one thing – too few members! Part of your responsibility in rescuing these clubs is finding new members. Here are some ideas to help you attract the new members your club needs.

First, and most importantly, make sure your meeting location is suitable for a dynamic meeting. It should be convenient, have adequate space, and be free of distractions such as music and other noises. Place a Club Meeting Plaque (Item 384) in the entrance hall.

Get involved with other local clubs. Communicate frequently with the area and division governors. Attend area and division council meetings, district and regional conferences, and the International Convention. Invite other clubs to your meetings and attend other clubs. You may wish to encourage a “sister club” type of relationship with a strong club in the area.

### MEMBERSHIP PROGRAMS

Toastmasters International sponsors several programs each year that motivate members and clubs to build membership. For more information, go to [www.toastmasters.org/membershipprograms](http://www.toastmasters.org/membershipprograms).

In addition, each club should sponsor its own membership-building program. Successful club membership-building programs have the following items in common:

#### ▶ Objectives

Determine the club’s current membership level, then set a goal for the number of members the club must have by the end of the program.

#### ▶ Awards

Experience shows that providing some type of incentive to top performers enhances productivity. Some clubs give simple, inexpensive items. Others split the club into teams and the top team is treated to dinner by the others.

#### ▶ Calendar

To be measurable, the program must have specific time limitations. Short programs (three months) tend to be best for clubs.

#### ▶ Promotion

If they’re going to participate, members must know about the program and understand its objectives. A simple one page flier and frequent reminders in club meetings can be very beneficial.

#### ▶ Success

Someone must set the example and make it happen. This demonstration of success will inspire others to participate and contribute.

### PUBLIC RELATIONS

Don’t forget the media! Send news releases to local newspapers and radio and television stations. Use the *Let the World Know Publicity and Promotion Handbook* (Item 1140) for materials, ideas, and formats for articles. Be consistent and persistent in submitting news releases. If your articles do not appear, keep submitting them. Eventually, your news will get out. Don’t forget your local “throw-away” papers. Many of these will run your news releases as a community service. You also may list your club in the free community calendar services in local newspapers and community websites. Don’t forget your local cable TV company. Many of these have a public access channel and will run a short advertisement for free!

List your club with the local chamber of commerce, public library, and other community service boards. Don't forget Craigslist.org and social networking sites such as Facebook!

Put Toastmasters International posters on bulletin boards at your business, the local shopping center, public libraries, and municipal halls. Make sure your club information is listed clearly and professionally displayed. Add a map to direct people to your club's location. List a telephone number and email address where potential members may contact you or a club officer for more information. Also display brochures at local stores, public libraries, and waiting rooms (after seeking permission). Be sure your club's name, location, and contact information are prominently displayed on the poster and brochures.

Leave your extra copies of the *Toastmaster* magazine in the waiting rooms of doctors, dentists, and company staff rooms. Note: *Additional issues of the Toastmaster magazine are available at no charge (except postage) from World Headquarters.* Put a label with your club's name, location, meeting time, and contact information on each magazine.

Take advantage of local events, trade shows or by hosting an information booth. Have both male and female members present to answer questions. You may wish to have a current member act as an inquirer, asking prearranged questions at the booth. Have plenty of brochures and fliers available for handouts. Visit [www.toastmasters.org/logos](http://www.toastmasters.org/logos), or [www.toastmasters.org/marketing](http://www.toastmasters.org/marketing) to download the materials.

## OTHER

- ▶ Conduct a Speechcraft program for community groups and companies in the area. Other modules in the *Success Leadership* and *Success Communication* series provide opportunities to participate in seminar-style events with subjects such as leadership, parliamentary procedure, and thinking.
- ▶ Invite a newspaper columnist or editor, local politician, or other noteworthy local personality as a special guest or speaker. Promote the visit to local publications.
- ▶ Give the Communication Achievement award (Item 1972C) to a local non-Toastmaster who has a high profile in your community. The Communication Achievement award brochure describes the guidelines for presenting the award. View it at [www.toastmasters.org/1972Abrochure](http://www.toastmasters.org/1972Abrochure)
- ▶ Put on a demonstration meeting for the community. Send out formal invitations to area businesses and community organizations. Promote the event to the local press and display posters and fliers in local businesses, libraries, and community service boards. Hold the demonstration meeting using your best motivational speakers. Invite your district leaders to attend and promote their attendance. Hand out brochures to everyone attending. Be sure all guests are greeted and warmly welcomed. Arrange time for socializing and refreshments so your members can meet all the guests.
- ▶ Judge a local school, college, or university debate. Or, host a community debate on an item of local interest – the candidates in a local election campaign, a proposed change in legislation that affects your community, or other community-related issues.

## THE CLUB'S NEW CLIMATE

Periodically, you should re-evaluate the club using the Club Coach Troubleshooting Guide (available online at [www.toastmasters.org/clubcoachguide](http://www.toastmasters.org/clubcoachguide)). Do this as objectively as possible. Compare the results to your original evaluation, and note improvements and areas still requiring work. After four to six months, the club should be functioning normally. The scores will be much improved.

Some of the club's veteran members may not think the changes being made are to the club's benefit. Change is difficult, especially when it is a required course of action. If drastic change wasn't required, you wouldn't have been needed in the first place.

# NOTES

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