

The Toastmaster Role

Prior To The Meeting

As “The Toastmaster” you drive the schedule organization prior to the meeting and act as the “master of ceremonies” (MC, or emcee) during the night of meeting. In many Toastmaster chapters the VP of Education assigns each of the pre-scheduled roles. Westside Toastmaster’s method is voluntary scheduling. This has effects both good and bad.

On the upside with voluntary role signups, each individual knows their schedule and availability best and are more likely to fulfill that meeting role. We would expect fewer people dropping out due to a tighter alignment of one’s personal and club schedule. On the flip side you could argue there is half-hearted commitment when people feel comfortable dropping out shortly before the meeting with a voluntary system.

Regardless, the Toastmaster is responsible for nailing down the scheduled roles – this is his / her show. Our club’s online schedule (an online Google Doc spreadsheet) which the VP of Education oversees is where you can monitor how the coming week’s meeting is shaping up; those signed up and who has confirmed their roles.

The VP of Education should continue to watch your back as a primary or backup resource in ensuring a full (or close to) schedule is developed. The Toastmaster or VP of Education can send out a broadcast email via our Westside Google Group as a primary avenue in soliciting members to fill out holes in the schedule.

We would expect members that have signed up for the more significant roles (i.e. Speakers, Table Topics Master, Evaluators) and then have to back out (for work, family, or whatever) in the days prior to the meeting, take responsibility and make a “good faith” effort to find a replacement. Those backing out of a role should send out an email to club members requesting someone else to fill the role, easing the Toastmaster’s burden.

It is very important to begin getting confirmations for scheduled roles sooner rather than later. Once you are reasonably confident the scheduled roles are as solid as they will get you have the foundation to create a printed agenda for the night of the meeting.

Another consideration is having a theme for the meeting. This is not a necessity, rather a nice touch that can add character to a meeting. Additionally, the Toastmaster may want to collaborate with the Table Topics Master on the definition of the theme. When the Table Topics session has a degree of alignment with the meeting theme it makes the meeting experience tighter and more solid.

Keep the General Evaluator apprised of changes in prepared speaker lineup. The General Evaluator is responsible for making Evaluator assignments to the prepared speakers.

Leading During The Meeting

On the evening of the meeting we recommend showing up early, at least 15 minutes prior to the meeting. Having a printed agenda that can be distributed around the room is strongly encouraged so the players, like the Timer and Table Topics Master know how to fulfill their roles during the evening.

Last minute surprises are always possible – the better to be on top of them with at least a small window to rectify them. Adaptation to circumstances is a constant in the Toastmaster experience. Remember, as the director, you're responsible for ensuring all of the meeting's players know their parts and hit their marks.

You will need to have an understanding of any physical changes required in the room during the course of the meeting. The lectern may need to be shifted around for a speaker or a digital projector may be planned for use in a presentation; technology setup can be unpredictable.

The meeting Toastmaster should generally have quick access to the front of the room, sitting closer to the front. Passing control to and from you as the emcee and other meeting participants is one concern. Good meeting etiquette in western culture usually involves yielding control in the front of the room via a handshake.

Have any introductory material for speakers at hand as soon as you can. If you have not obtained it all in the few days prior to the meeting, use the pre-meeting time to gather any last minute details from people in roles you introduce. For prepared presentations be sure to know which projects speakers are targeting, their title, and applicable timing constraints – this information should appear if possible in the meeting agenda.

After the meeting is opened by the Sergeant-At-Arms (SAA), the club President will conduct the front-end section pertaining to club business. As the club President introduces you during your approach to the front of the room you will want to begin establishing your presence and provide context for the audience as to how the meeting will flow. Our club most weeks will have outside guests in the room. Early on you will want to explain the overall format of the meeting to the guests.

You may have a topical theme that underlies the meeting and is explained in your introductory delivery. This thematic material can also be used potentially as filler material when the physical setup for a presenter is taking longer than anticipated or some other delay occurs.

Commonly, the Toastmaster will introduce the “functionaries” to explain their supporting roles. These would be the Timer, Grammarian, and the Filler Word Counter. We usually have a JokeMaster on the schedule that you would next introduce.

After these preliminaries you would introduce the Table Topics Master to conduct the impromptu speaking session. Depending on the lineup of prepared speakers and the length of their presentations, the Table Topics session can be adjusted to allow enough

time for the rest of the meeting to end on time. This is the Toastmaster's call; part of good on the spot planning. If we are short on prepared speakers then the rein can be held looser for Table Topics.

After the Table Topics session has concluded we typically have a meeting break. The length of the break can be adjusted too to keep the meeting on time.

Then we start the prepared speaking part of the program. Introduce each speaker in turn. Once the speaker has finished their presentation the Toastmaster would call upon members to provide written feedback on the evaluation forms that have been distributed around the room.

At the conclusion of the prepared speaking program the Toastmaster calls on the Timer for their timing report (did presenters speak within the time limits). The Toastmaster will then call on members to vote for who they consider the "Best Speaker" among the qualifying speakers. Votes will be collected from around the room.

The next section of the meeting, Evaluations, would then ensue. The Toastmaster, would introduce the General Evaluator who is in charge of that portion of the meeting. The General Evaluator introduces each of the Evaluators assigned to prepared speakers in succession. Then the General Evaluator asks for the Grammarian and Filler Word Counter reports, followed by the delivery of their own overall meeting evaluation. Control then is returned back to the Toastmaster.

At this point the Toastmaster will be presenting award ribbons for Best Table Topics, Best Evaluator, and Best Speaker. The vote counter(s) will have tallied the votes for the three major sections of the meeting and communicated them to you as Toastmaster. You will present these awards, make any closing comments, and return control to the club's President.