

Inviting People to Remain in the Club: Retaining Members

Members form the foundation of a club. No one has ever died from inviting people to join a club. Still, a club can die from failing to encourage people to join or failing to ask Toastmasters to remain in the club. Dr. Ralph Smedley said, "Our members stay in their clubs because they like each other, and they are learning together." Therefore, we must create an environment that fosters learning together, and we must invite people to remain in our clubs. How? We should meet the members' needs. Here are five steps that can help you achieve the needs of members and ensure that your club has a strong foundation.

1. Ask members what their needs are. Members often leave because they feel the club is indifferent to their needs. A new member is frequently asked to complete an interest form. When was the last time you asked your current club members to update that same form to identify what they currently want to get from Toastmasters and the club? The needs of every member change over time and the club must strive to be aware of and to meet as many of these needs as possible. Observe members to identify their talents and ask them to become involved in the club, so they use these talents! All too often, a person is just the unasked question away from becoming an active, engaged member of the club!
2. Greet members enthusiastically. Enthusiasm is the kindling spark that can light a fire within the club. Do you welcome the current members with as much enthusiasm and courtesy as you do your visitors? We should not only welcome every member to the meeting but also radiate during the meeting how much we enjoy sharing our time with the other members.
3. Have quality meetings. Meetings need to be exciting, fun, and educational. Well-run meetings with thought-provoking themes, member involvement, and a structure of manual speeches with positive, helpful evaluations provide value and encouragement to every member. Members leave feeling time was well-spent in a quality setting among friends. They learned and received recognition for accomplishments during the meeting. A well-run meeting creates an environment for learning to which members want to return.
4. Introduce your members to the Pathways program. Let them know about the different paths, about the flexibility and convenience provided and that over three hundred competencies are covered, with resources and videos to help you learn the skills. Also, keep members informed of events outside the club. Stress what opportunities are open to each member and the potential rewards. Of course, don't forget to ask all members what they want to learn, which could help them reach their goals. Then match their needs to those of the club, area, division, and district.
5. Provide strong positive leadership. Club leaders inspire members to move in the directions they've never anticipated. To do this, club officers should be trained, share common core values, and demonstrate respect for fellow members. They set the example and tone for the club by staying focused on the club's vision and mentoring club members to help them shape a rewarding and fulfilling Toastmasters future. Express pride in your club officers; treat the visiting Area Director as a guest of honor to highlight potential leadership opportunities.