

Fellow Toastmasters:

Each club has its own individual characteristics. Each club is an independent legal entity (tax ID; by-laws; elections; bank account, etc., etc.) and functions under a broad umbrella of Toastmasters International policies, procedures and guidelines.

There are community or open clubs and there are corporate or closed clubs (for employees only). There are clubs that meet in the morning, at noon and in the evenings and some clubs meet for an hour and some as much as three hours. Some noon time clubs have quick lunch (brown-bag) and some evening clubs have dinner served. Clubs meet in corporate offices and training rooms, in restaurants, schools, colleges, libraries, churches, town-halls and in any place convenient, practical and affordable. Yes, TM clubs can come in many flavors, sizes and meet at various venues.

Many government, state and local agencies have Toastmaster's Clubs. For example in the United States, the U.S. Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps., National Guards and Army have Toastmasters club. The U.S. Departments of State, Defense, Education, Energy, Treasury, Agriculture, Environment Protection Agency, the United States Postal Service, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Dept. of Corrections in California, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Oregon, Washington and Ohio, all have Toastmasters Clubs. Even the U.S. House of Representatives, the U. S. Senate, the U.S. Secret Service and the Library of Congress have Toastmasters Clubs. The list is endless, especially when one takes into account, similar governmental organizations and agencies throughout the world. The number of Toastmasters Clubs as of now is around 13,500 and one or more new clubs are being formed somewhere in the world, as you read this e-mail!

We as Toastmasters take pride in our respective home-clubs especially as to how affordable the cost of the Toastmasters program is and when compared to the benefits received. Typically and on an average, the yearly cost of the program is around \$100 per year (\$72 membership dues to TI plus some local club dues, etc.)

I was at a 'open house' event not too long ago, helping a struggling club in the local area recruit more members. The event was well attended and Toastmasters from four or more nearby clubs attended the event to help out and in making the event a success. I believe the club as a result of the 'open house' recruited 4 to 5 new members that evening. Towards the very end of the program, I gave a short presentation (some may call it a sales pitch) and mentioned as to how inexpensive and affordable the yearly cost of the TM program is (i.e., about \$6 per month and less than the cost of a lunch or a dinner etc.) especially when compared to the enormous benefits – both tangible and intangible or direct and indirect. One of the "guests" and/or prospective members later approached me and asked about the details of my home club, etc. Since I was there to promote and support the struggling club, I was naturally reluctant to talk too much about my home club, especially since it is a dinner-club with associated additional expenses, etc. I did give him some general information.

I told him that my home-club was a dinner-club and that we meet once a week, instead of twice-a-month as in the case of the host club holding the 'open-house.' As I began to explain to him more about Toastmasters educational program as well as opportunity to meet toastmasters in other clubs during bi-annual speech contests and at district conferences, etc., I realized that the yearly cost, as earlier mentioned by me was just a starting point and maybe grossly understated, especially when one would like to take the opportunity in attending the district conferences, joining a dinner-club (average dinner cost is between \$15 to \$18) and other TM related activities and events. If one wants to join a

Toastmaster Club which is a dinner-club and participate in the two district conferences in year, the cost would be around \$1,200 per year. That is about 12 times more than the \$100/ year amount, earlier mentioned by me! When a Toastmaster attends the annual Toastmasters International Convention, one can easily add another \$1,000 to as much as \$1,500 (including registrations, hotel, travel etc.) Yes it can add up to as much as \$2,200 to \$2,800+ a year for the total package and in attending/participating in all of the district and international convention level events and activities.

I reiterate that the current cost of \$72 per year versus the enormous benefits of the Toastmasters program is truly a bargain and affordable by most Toastmasters. Where can one build self-confidence, learn and improve their listening skills, evaluate and judge speakers, become comfortable with making presentations, learning impromptu speaking and finally the ability to stand up in front of an unfamiliar audience and speak with minimal apprehension or anxiety – all for just \$6 a month. The price tag to learn, practice and enjoy all these benefits is minimal or some may say - priceless!

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