

October 3, 2011

Fellow Toastmasters:

The question of "why club members leave" the Toastmasters program has been raised and discussed probably since the beginning of the organization some 86+ years ago. Some may say that it is natural for members in any organization to leave when they decide to do so. That being true, I am however writing about Toastmasters organization in general and district 65 in particular.

Those who are interested in the success at club and district levels must become concerned about the growing trend in district 65 over the past 5 years of members leaving the district in larger numbers, as follows:

2010-2011 - Number of members left = **830** (40% of base-membership)

2009-2010 - Number of members left = **655** (33% of base-membership)

2008-2009 - Number of members left = **694** (35% of base-membership)

2007-2008 - Number of members left = **606** (32% of base-membership)

2006-2007 - Number of members left = **486** (27% of base-membership)

As you can see the trend of members leaving district 65 is consistently increasing each year. In this past year (2010-2011) almost 3 out of every 7 members left district 65. The retention of members at most clubs within district 65 is becoming a major issue.

To an individual member or a group of members, these numbers may not be of any great significance. However if one is a club or district leader, these numbers as presented are alarming.

So what are some of the many reasons why members leave and what can be done about it? Here are 30 reasons divided into three broad categories as to why club members leave the Toastmasters program.

**(A) Understandable and acceptable reasons:**

1. Member has achieved his or her personal goal.
2. Member has moved.
3. Member has passed away.
4. Change in job and/or family circumstances
5. Member cannot financially afford the club dues.

**(B) Not so acceptable reasons!**

1. Lack of personal growth and/or improvements
2. Expectations not met
3. Loss of job and/or unemployment
4. Time constraints
5. The TM program is no more a challenge

**(C) Totally unacceptable reasons:**

1. Poor club environment
2. Mediocre and superfluous evaluations

3. Club meetings are no longer fun
4. Internal club politics
5. Gender bias and other discriminatory practices
6. Member become bored and loses interest
7. Lack of protocol at club meetings
8. Lack of warmth and camaraderie
9. Stressful club meetings
10. The club ignored a members personal and professional needs
11. Tired of side-bar conversations and/or comments during the course of he club meetings
12. Personality issues
13. Lack of or poor club leadership
14. Club meetings become boring, routine and uninteresting
15. Constant doubling of club meeting roles (due to lack of members and/or fewer members in attendance)

I am sure there are several other reasons that can be added to the above list.

I believe that it is the duty and responsibility of all Toastmasters to ensure that items mentioned in category "**B**" and especially category "**C**" above, are not prevalent in their respective clubs. If they are, then immediate actions need to be taken.

**How can the district help?** By strengthening the 'club officers training program' (hands-on, practical and action oriented programs) so that greater number of club officers attend, participate and get trained (increasing the attendance from the current and stagnant 50% level) and in improving the quality and presentation of relevant educational modules. District also needs to support and acknowledge each club's performance and not to take the club's performance or lack thereof, for granted.

**How can the club leadership help?** Treat each member as individuals. Spend time with individual members to find out how the club can help meet their goals and needs. Treat all members like customers. Stay away from politics and favoritism. And most important of all; make member retention and attraction your club's # 1 goal.

**How can individual members help?** Each member at the beginning of the year promises to bring at least one or more guests (a friend, a colleague, a co-worker, a neighbor, a partner, or a family-member) to his or her club meetings, every two months, making member recruitment a continuous campaign.

Fellow Toastmasters and readers on this '*listserve*' are welcome to add their ideas and opinions in managing the district-wide membership retention issue. Remember this is the only 'communication' platform available to express and exchange different views for the benefit of all members, clubs and the district.

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