



To Web or Not to Web – That’s Not a Question!

◆ CREATING AND MAINTAINING A HIGH-QUALITY CLUB WEB site can be a daunting challenge. But it’s worth the effort and can ultimately benefit a club in many unforeseen ways.

Unconvinced? Consider that Toast of Jax Toastmasters in Jacksonville, Florida, added 10 new members in the first year after launching its full-featured Web presence. Consider also that the club’s weekly meetings improved since it began using the site as an information tool for current members. And consider that the club’s weekly meeting attendance grew by 30 percent just after the Web site was implemented.

A Web site can be as simple or as complex as club resources will allow. It can take the form of a basic guide featuring information on how a potential visitor can find the club – most Toast of Jax visitors find the club through its Web site, www.toastofjax.org. Or the Web site can provide members with detailed information on their assignments and upcoming events, and feature a complete club newsletter.

How complicated is it? Actually much easier than it may seem at first. Consider this: No matter the method used, the Vice President Education (VPE) has to develop a proposed schedule for future meetings. Because the information already exists, suppose it was created in a standard format. Suppose further that the VPE e-mailed the data to the Webmaster. Imagine that the Webmaster has created templates that convert the raw data into various forms. For example, the scheduling data can be organized by week, by assignment or by member. Suddenly, almost as if by a magical process, the raw data is converted into three basic Web pages. With a few mouse clicks, the pages are posted to the Web site and members can visit from anywhere around the world to determine their assigned roles.

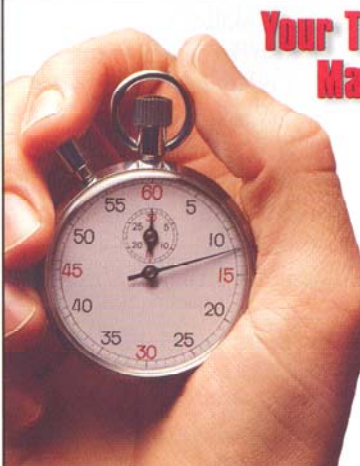
So, what was accomplished? Several things actually. The VPE, knowing that members will be checking the site regularly, makes sure that the new schedule is updated within 24 hours of the last meeting. Members can identify their assigned roles (and can click on the role to determine its required duties). And, as an ancillary benefit, the data feeds a rough outline of meeting minutes to simplify the club secretary’s role. Because of the reduced burden, the secretary generally has the minutes ready for publication on the Web

site within 24 hours. Through an input screen accessible to the secretary, the data is transmitted instantly online to the Webmaster, reformatted and published. With the officer roles simplified, their efforts are leveraged into a high-quality Web site and club.

At our club, once the momentum began, the development began to feed on itself. Before long, speakers were inputting their speech introductions online. At every meeting the Toastmaster had robust introduction information on cards printed in large type. Gone were the hand-written, difficult-to-read, scribbled notes. With better introductions, the audience had a better idea of the speaker’s goals and the club became better at the art of introducing a speaker. With clearly articulated expectations, the audience was able to supply more insightful feedback. With better feedback, members continued to come back for more and guests began signing up to become members.

Should your club implement a Web site? If it doesn’t, you may never know the joy of hearing those magic words from a guest, “I found your club on the Internet!” **T**

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Your Time is Valuable –
Make the Most of It!

Do you have trouble getting your speeches to “fit” into the prescribed time limits? Here’s a program that provides you with the colored visual indicators you get at club meetings, which you can use in the privacy of your own home to practice getting the time just right.

For more information
contact Dan Karlan at
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