

## CLUB “OWNERSHIP”

I read the following quote in the September 2006 issue of the Toastmasters magazine:

“Membership numbers alone don’t guarantee success. True success happens when club members are committed, active and enthusiastic -- when they feel ‘ownership’ of the club while achieving their personal goals.”

This begs the question: how do you get ICES members to “feel ownership” of the local club? Following are some proven methods that are helping other clubs retain membership involvement.

If possible, involve everyone in what are traditionally considered the “Reps’ Duties.” Are the same people doing all the work at every meeting? If so, it’s time that they were appreciated for duties performed, but it’s also time to involve other people. Sometimes folks come just to relax and be with the group and if that is their expressed wish, welcome them and make them feel comfortable. But if it’s NOT their expressed wish, what if ... just what if ... someone wanted to become involved, but didn’t know who to ask or what to do? Make sure that everyone feels that the success of the next DOS rests in part upon their shoulders.

Recognize achievement. Public thanks are necessary morale boosters, but more than that, it’s courteous and professional to express appreciation for good service or work well done.

Follow up on absentees. Appoint a friendly, outgoing person to quietly take attendance and call or e-mail members who have missed several meetings. It’s important that the absentees don’t feel chastised for missing ... but that they feel genuinely missed when they are not there. A simple phone call or friendly e-mail can reiterate their importance to the group.

Look in the mirror every once in a while. Is your club warm, welcoming and supportive? Does it genuinely appreciate everyone’s

input? Does it bear the ICES motto of caring and sharing? Is the Rep doing all the work? If so, it’s time to promote leadership opportunities.

Make meetings fun. This will generate enthusiasm and build excitement and cause folks to want to become involved in the next DOS. Do funny, interactive skits, including as many of the audience as you can. If there’s a “joker” in the group, appoint them head of the “Funny Club” and have them come up with something new every meeting.

Assign mentors. Help new members get off to a flying start by teaming them up with a responsible, friendly mentor for their first few meetings. This will help to answer the new member’s questions, make them feel welcome and introduce them to the “regulars” of the group. Have the mentor call and remind them of the next meeting, offering to car pool or help in other ways as necessary.

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