

*"The well-balanced,
intelligent speaker is the
natural leader in any group
of which he is a part."*

— DR. RALPH SMEDLEY,
FOUNDER OF TOASTMASTERS
INTERNATIONAL.

Building New Corporate Clubs

A professional sales approach

By Patrick McClure, ATMS/CL

Last year, Toastmaster's International hired an experienced marketing organization to research and to recommend ways to establish new corporate clubs. TI's Board of Directors as well as attendees at the 2006 Toastmasters International Convention reviewed the resulting recommendations. Here is a summary:

The year was 1924 and the location was a small room at the YMCA in Santa Ana, California. A small group of young men was listening to a slightly-built, dark-haired man wearing thick glasses. They listened as Dr. Ralph Smedley, the founder of Toastmasters, explained that their careers and future success were linked to their ability to communicate. He encouraged these young men to help each other develop their communication and leadership skills and to use these skills for the good of society.

From those humble beginnings, Toastmasters International has experienced explosive growth. Today hundreds of thousands of people speak in more than 10,700 clubs in 90 countries. For 81 years, Toastmasters has been building successful speakers and leaders on an unprecedented scale.

Every year, approximately 900 new Toastmasters clubs are formed worldwide. Of these clubs, 60% – about 540 – are *corporate* clubs. Unlike community clubs, these are sponsored by a corporation with meetings held on corporate premises at lunch or during off hours. Most corporate clubs are not open to outsiders but they use the same Toastmasters materials and they follow the same standards and procedures as do community clubs. Some of the most famous corporations in

America sponsor corporate clubs, including American Express, AT&T, Bank of America, Boeing, Farmers Insurance, and Sun Microsystems. In fact, more than 50 percent of all Fortune 500 companies sponsor in-house Toastmasters clubs in affiliates worldwide.

A very large part of TI's expansion, and its future, depends on the organization's success in recruiting new corporate clubs. However, a recent study found that while a small number of Toastmasters districts were highly successful in recruiting new corporate clubs, most districts struggled with attracting "new business" and needed help.

If you're facing the task of recruiting new clubs, and you're starting to despair at the job, take heart! Here is a list of strategies to help increase the number of corporate clubs in your community. They are core approaches that successful marketing professionals know. Why not apply them to the job of "selling Toastmasters?" If you master these seven simple strategies, you will be amazed at your results:

1 Select your Prospects Wisely. Before anything else, spend some time researching your community and determining the most likely prospects. You want to spend your valuable selling time with the people and companies that are most likely to need your Toastmasters program.

Research online via Google or Yahoo to learn about every company in your geographic area that has a facility with more than 250 employees. Include churches, associations, companies, corporate divisions, schools and governmental bodies.

Most sales people waste too much time trying to sell to the wrong customers, and you don't want to make that mistake. With a "master list," you'll be able to determine your ideal prospects and spend your time more productively.



2 Qualify your Prospects Further. Here are some areas to investigate for each company on your list:

- What is the company's size, location, revenues and activities?
- Who are some key contacts that can be isolated in departments such as personnel, training, finance or the office of the president?
- Does this company invest in training its employees?
- What are this company's priorities?
- Is the company conservative? Is it into high growth with executives willing to take risks with products or services offered?
- What are the company's strategies, mission, key initiatives?
- Is there any recent research, recent news or a Web site about the company?
- What is its business focus?

Your research may include asking other Toastmasters in your area to find out who they know in the target

companies. At a minimum, it should identify the decision makers in the company you plan to contact.

3 Brush up on Features and Benefits. You will be calling on corporate executives and asking for their support for a Toastmasters club. These are professionals, so you will need to explain how the benefits of TI's program are valuable to them in their terms. A typical executive will be most interested in hearing how Toastmasters will help with:

- Boosting their return on investment
- Reducing turnover
- Refining employees' presentation skills
- Achieving more effective meetings
- Improving leadership skills
- Promoting better teamwork
- Increasing loyalty

Refer to the Features and Benefits chart on the next page for more information. Remember to describe the



Toastmaster's International

Features / Benefits / Value Chart

Features “We Have ...”	Benefits “It Will ...”	Value “Which Means ...”
Workshop-based communication skills training	Improved communication skills	Better teamwork Improved morale Increased productivity
Company-sponsored training program	Overcome anxiety and fear of public speaking	Self confidence Career advancement
Weekly meetings	Reinforce lessons learned continually	Skills learned are used and retained
Opportunity for leadership roles	Improved leadership skills	Improved management and increased productivity
Low cost/very economical	Welcome everyone to benefit from the program	Great return on investment
Mutually supportive training environment	Enhances teamwork and morale	Decreased turnover and improved customer service
Prepared speeches	Train employees how to structure presentations for maximum effectiveness	Effective meetings and better communication with customers
Table Topics	Teaches how to think fast and react to crises	Enhanced confidence and poise under pressure
Critical evaluations	Improves ability to coach and help teammates	Smoother team functioning better performance
A key benefit for all employees	Enhance your job satisfaction and career	Employee retention Career enhancement
Meetings are kept lively and fun	Improve enjoyment of your job	People who enjoy themselves will perform better
Opportunity to meet fellow employees from other areas of the company	Enhance diversity and teamwork	Improved productivity Less absenteeism
Work at your own pace	Adapt with flexibility to employee/company schedule	No disruption or loss of productivity
Training on how to properly conduct a meeting	Improve quality and results of meetings	Increased productivity and morale
Active participation in the training	Assist employees to learn by doing with help from fellow club members	Better teamwork, morale and productivity
Leadership development programs	Directly improve leadership skills	Reduced “churn” and better managers

benefits of Toastmasters in terms that a business executive can appreciate.

4 Send a Letter of Introduction. Send out a nicely written letter of introduction to the executive you wish to meet. It should be hand-addressed and stamped with a regular stamp, not a postal meter. It should be printed on good paper and enclosed in a high-quality envelope. This letter will identify you as a volunteer with Toastmasters and will explain why you are asking for an appointment. Most importantly, it will explain the benefits of this introductory meeting to the executive. You may wish to include the brochure, *Clear communication. Your organization needs it.* (Catalog No. 103) This is an eight- by 10-inch document, which will require a larger envelope than a regular letter, but its size may increase the likelihood that the letter will be read.

5 Make First Contact. Nothing happens until you pick up the phone and contact your prospect. No one ever closed a sale by staying in their office and avoiding contact. Your role in this first telephone call is to schedule an appointment. Don't get bogged down in over-explaining the details of Toastmasters on the phone. Stress the benefits of the program and request 20 minutes in the executive's office to cover the details.

You'll find that sending a "warm-up" letter first, followed by your call, will result in many more appointments. If you have trouble reaching the executive in charge, try befriending an assistant and gaining his or her support for your cause. Remember to stress that you are a volunteer and you're only asking for a short meeting to introduce yourself and explain a valuable program. Most people have already heard of Toastmasters and will be favorable or curious about hearing more.

6 Present TI's Program to the Executive. Be prepared. TI offers several excellent brochures describing Toastmasters and its corporate club program. You can order a New Club Information Kit (123B), which includes two inserts focused specifically on the benefits of corporate club building. This kit is free, aside from a shipping charge. Take it to the meeting, along with some samples of the *Competent Communication*, *Competent Leadership* and *Advanced Communication program* manuals. Share the manuals during the meeting, and leave the New Club Information Kit as a resource for future reference by the executive.

Review the benefits of the program and give examples of TI's success with corporations. Refer to other companies in the area who are already benefiting from Toastmasters.

Answer their questions and respond politely to any objections, then confirm their support for an in-house

club. Studies have shown that the biggest mistake all sales representatives make is failure to ask for the order!

Review the Club Application form and ask the corporate executive to sign it. It's a good idea for you to request a check from the company at that time as a monetary commitment to the club. If they include a charter fee of \$125 with the Club Application form, their company will receive all initial club administration materials plus 20 New Member Kits (which include the necessary manuals for club members). But what if the executive can't decide? There is one additional tool you can use to win or confirm this person's support: Schedule a demonstration meeting so that company members can see, first-hand, how Toastmasters works.

7 Schedule the Demonstration Meeting. Don't delay! Schedule the next meeting as soon as possible, and confirm it with the executive or his or her assistant before you leave the office. Always have your next meeting confirmed before you leave, to avoid having to follow up via phone or e-mail.

Use this meeting to showcase the "Toastmasters experience." Ask your corporate contact to invite all prospective employee-members to attend. Your objective is to prove how Toastmasters works and establish the "go forward" plan with that company. Usually, meetings like this produce dozens of potential Toastmasters who decide they'd like to learn more.

Remember to choose experienced Toastmasters for this demonstration. You want to validate the executive's decision and set the stage for a great club, so choosing carefully is worth the effort.

Toastmasters offers an excellent reference guide to help you through this critical meeting: *How to Build a Toastmasters Club* (Catalog No. 121) includes guidelines for the demonstration meeting as well as several subsequent meetings. It provides information on all the steps a company executive needs to take in order to charter a club.

Today's business leaders are looking for ways to increase their employees' performance and bottom-line results. They need managers and leaders who demonstrate confidence, can express their ideas with conviction and can manage others with superior communication skills. In short, they need Toastmasters. You can help by sharing the excitement of a club meeting and convincing these leaders to give TI a try. **T**

Patrick McClure, ATMS/CL, an area governor in Founders District, is a member of Rancho Speechmasters in Rancho Santa Margarita, California. He owns the PTM Sales Group and can be reached at www.easysaleshome.com.