DISTRICT 227
KARNATAKA & GOA

Open House Made Easy - a D227 Document

I. What is an Open House?

A Toastmasters Open House is a **specialized meeting designed to introduce public speaking and leadership** training to a new community/group of people.

II. Why Open House?

It is a great opportunity for the club to **build membership** and **create awareness** about Toastmasters in the neighborhood/organization at large.

Every club needs an influx of new membership regardless of the strength for fresh ideas and talents. This will **infuse greater variety** of role takers/volunteers and widen the **potential leadership pool**.

A) Benefits for the club

- Build **membership** offers a **wider pool of role takers/volunteers** for club meetings and **potential leaders** to run the club
- Creates **awareness** about the club and Toastmasters fraternity at large
- Establish the club as another **center for learning and socializing** in the neighborhood (community clubs) or any organization (corporate/college clubs)
- A great opportunity for the club to showcase itself as an **initiator** to add **new members and potential clubs** to the District and Toastmasters fraternity
- Creating **leadership opportunities such** as marketing and organizing an Open House enhances the member experience in terms of **learning**
- Can be a permanent fixture on the calendar (per term)

- An opportunity to pitch a Speechcraft offer from the club if several members are interested in enrolling as they may not be able to make long-term time or financial investment (offer it as an alternative based on the vibes during the Open House)

Pro-Tip:
Organize **1 Open House (recommended once every 3-4 months / when needed),** not just to increase membership but for increasing the awareness of Toastmasters in the community/organization and get more guests walk-ins.

B) Benefits for the community/organization

- A **new educational and networking platform** is introduced free of charge
- Helps create more **confident public speakers and leaders**, making it a more diverse community/organization

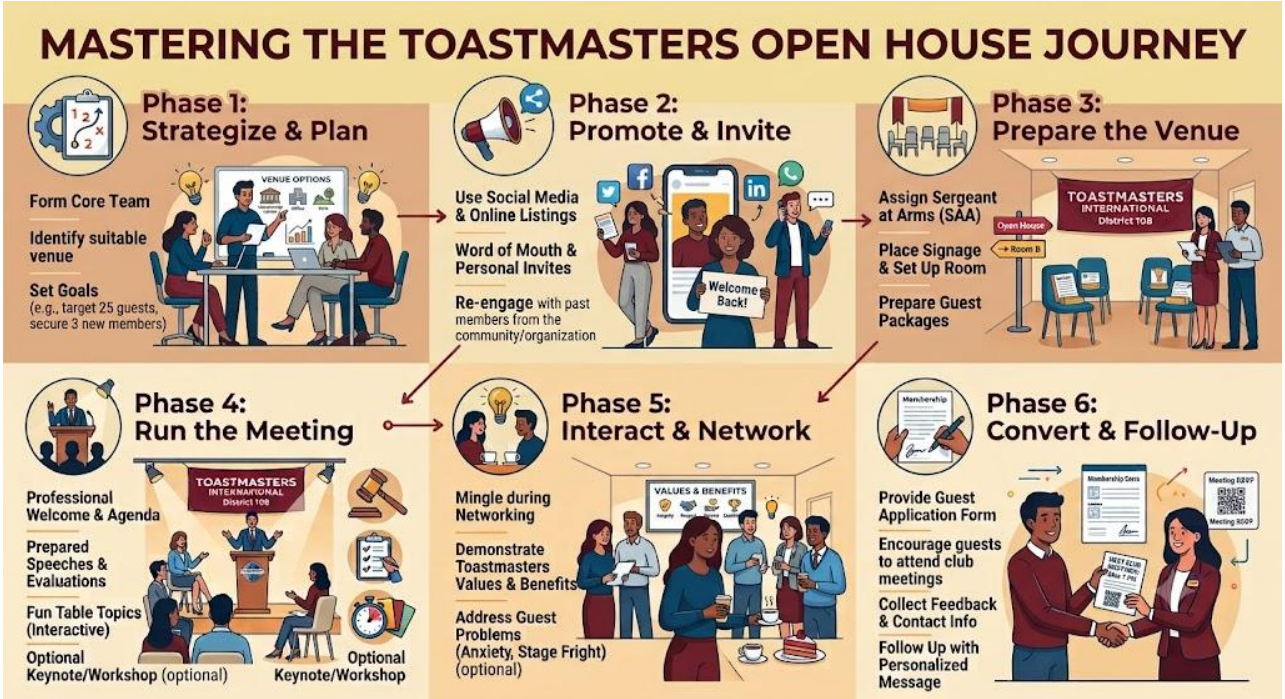
Pro-Tip:
Community Clubs will do well to **develop strong relationships** with community groups and educational institutions in the society to **benefit in terms of venues and participation** in Open Houses and other Toastmasters events
Corporate/College Clubs must **promote themselves** within the organization for **enthusiastic response** for Open Houses and other Toastmasters events

C) Benefits for the District and Toastmasters fraternity

- New communities/organizations are identified for the district to charter a potential club
- More communities/organizations are **aware** of Toastmasters movement
- **Every new member** added to a club is an addition to the district and fraternity at large
- The district discovers **new leaders**, volunteers who participate beyond the club are potential leaders

Pro-Tip:
The points mentioned for Corporate Clubs apply to **College Clubs**; replace senior leaders with Principal, Heads of Department and Senior Faculty.

III. How to organize Open House effectively?



Pre-event:

- Identify a **suitable date 4-6 weeks in advance** (ensure it's on a weekend and not a Public Holiday/festival for Communities and non-holiday across time zones for Corporates)
- **Target** at least **50-60 guests** to attend the open House, thus with 10% conversion 5-6 new potential members can be added
- **Promote** the Open House within the community WhatsApp group or organization's intranet portals, share useful information about the merit of Toastmasters and sample newsletters from your club or Toastmasters International; idea is to **create curiosity and interest** in the event
- Identify a **trusted member** of the community or a **prominent leader** in the organization to be a votary of Toastmasters/Public Speaking and leadership to support the event, it will make the process easier
- Identify suitable and easily accessible venues within the community or a comfortable room within the organization, ensure it has provisions for hybrid meeting if required
- Prepare and share the **agenda** at least a **week in advance**, ensure that the agenda is **crisp (60-90 mins including Q&A)**
- Identify suitable role takers and facilitators to suit the agenda and the occasion while providing growth opportunities for committed members
- Float a simple registration form to ascertain the number of participants including leadership, this will help clubs make arrangements at the venue (seating, refreshments, volunteers at help desk)

Pro-Tip:

Share useful information with potential attendees that will boost their interest and curiosity about Toastmasters and Open House, excessive info might dissuade them (**No TMI please**)

How to plan an ideal agenda for Open House?

- Ensure that President, Vice-President Education and Toastmaster of the Day are **aware of the demographics** of the attendees based on responses in the registration form and discussions with leaders of community/organization; helps decide the overarching tone of the meeting and discussion of benefits
- Nominate an **enthusiastic TMOD who is experienced** in Toastmasters, one who can share necessary information through the session without being verbose, one who can create a light atmosphere while being formal
- Ensure that the **theme is appealing to guests** across demographics while being **simple**; Eg: Toastmasters - a great place to learn and network, How Toastmasters helped my career? How Toastmasters made me a confident individual?
- Nominate a **relatively new speaker who is confident** while retaining the freshness, idea is to encourage the participants that **they too can aspire** to reach the speaker's level in terms of confidence and delivery
- Identify a Speech Evaluator who can provide a **pointed yet encouraging evaluation**, too critical an evaluation like in some clubs may dissuade participants
- Identify an **enthusiastic Table Topics Master** who can give a mix of topics that are **simple and enjoyable** without requiring subject matter expertise, idea is to ensure they speak for a minimum of 1 minute by making the participants feel welcomed and comfortable; **do not experiment** with multiple formats
- Identify 1-2 **Table Topics Speakers to kickstart** the Table Topics session, they will ensure that the participants volunteer for subsequent topics, **avoid Contest Winners** because that may be counter-productive
- Identify an **experienced** member for **General Evaluation**, a member who can appreciate good aspects of roles, deliver **pointed yet encouraging evaluation**, and offer **specific areas of improvement** without sermons
- Identify TAGL role takers who can deliver concise reports with confidence; Timer must time every role diligently and brief role-takers accordingly
- Identify an **experienced facilitator** who can share his/her experience in Toastmasters while highlighting the specific benefits they have reaped while also responding to questions in **Q&A session**; for a new community club, engage experienced members from the neighboring clubs or seek District's help; for a Corporate Club, identify a **senior leader** from within the organization or a similar member from a successful corporate club as **making an impression on participants and leaders** alike is important
- The General Evaluator can double up as a facilitator if they fit the bill

Pro-Tip:

In case of a gated community/apartment complex, try to distribute flyers by visiting the venue 2 days prior to the Open House, for a corporate club, send follow-up communication/reminders after the agenda is shared; for College Clubs, distribute flyers through various student groups

During the Open House

- Ensure all role-takers reach **ahead of time** for setting up the stage and familiarise with the facilities and complete admission formalities (ensure all role-takers are aware of the formalities and assembly time)
- Ensure the club standee and other Toastmasters banners/awards are exhibited with prior permissions from the hosts
- Sergeant-at-Arms starts with a bang while mentioning the rules and indicating facilities to guests, also ensuring that water, tissues and AC are in order while seeking the team's help to arrange refreshments for post-event networking
- The **President** should **inspire the audience** while sharing their anecdote, both opening and closing addresses must be crisp while also reflecting their growth as a leader and individual; ensure that feedback is sought from a couple of leaders and members before closing the session
- Either the President or TMOD can request a couple of leaders to address the audience for two minutes before the speeches, their words are taken seriously by the community members/employees and may decide the success of the Open House
- TMOD keeps a close tab on the time and energy of the room during the session, takes control of the meeting and ensures timely conclusions.
- Every role taker is responsible for the time taken by them, remember that you not only represent the club but Toastmasters International too
- Topics Master must ensure that at least 8-10 guests attempt Table Topics; ensure that they are engaged and can consider joining a meeting or the club
- Facilitator must try to make the session interactive while keeping a close watch on time
- Ensure that feedback and details of all attendees are collected while seeking their interest in attending the upcoming club meeting; thus, focus on them for membership
- Ensure that Listener's Quiz is engaging and crisp, limiting participants to the guests
- Handover Club bookmarks or chocolates to guests after their participation in Table Topics, Listener's Quiz and Feedback sessions. They will take away something from the club apart from learning and a great experience. Identify volunteers to dispense them so that no one is excluded
- Ensure that Club Meeting venue and timings are clearly mentioned at least twice, also included in Guest Packet (soft copy recommended)

Pro-Tip:

Identify a **mix of youth and experience across both genders** for roles to highlight **inclusivity**, participants appreciate such efforts

Time is of the essence, start and end on time to uphold the punctuality that most Toastmasters follow religiously

Post-Event and Networking

- Ensure most participants, if not all, stay back for refreshments and networking
- Share club membership fee details with all members so that they can also share info and not rely entirely on the Vice-President Membership or President

- Ensure there are enough copies of QR Code to collect feedback and details from every participant
- Thank the Point of Contact and leaders keeping a channel of communication open with them, pitch a possibility of organizing a Speechcraft if you sense interest
- Leave the space cleaner than before Open house commenced, ensure all trash is disposed in the designated bins
- A Thank You Message to the leaders of the community/organization from the President of the Club will reflect the professionalism of the club and Toastmasters
- VPM must reach out to every guest who expressed interest in attending the club meeting before the next meeting and invite them

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What should a Guest Packet contain?

A guest packet is a personalized packet customized for the guest's containing information about Toastmasters program, the benefits of membership, information about the specific club, and an invitation/information to join the club.

Guest Packets should be provided to prospective members at club meetings, open houses, or special events. Post-pandemic, the Guest Packets have become virtual. They are sustainable and can be customized by respective clubs.

An ideal Guest Packet must contain (recommended):

- Club Introduction (Important contacts and Meeting details)
- Benefits of Toastmasters membership
- Brochure: **All About Toastmasters**
- Pathways Introduction (in brief)
- Features, Benefits & Value
- Brochure: **Toastmaster wears many Hats** (document defining meeting roles)
- Brochure: **Find Your Voice**
- Brochure: **Your Path to Leadership**
- A personalized welcome message to the guests from the Club President
- Links to the club's social media handles
- Latest Toastmasters Magazine and Club Newsletter

IV) Criteria for "Open House Awards"

- **Star Award – Add minimum 4 members within 45 days of Open House**
- **Champion Award – Add minimum 8 members within 45 days of Open House**

Award Submission Forms for Clubs: *Clubs are advised to submit the forms after each Open House they organize. Clubs should be within 15 days of the Open House Completion.*

https://tinyurl.com/D227OpenHouse

V) Useful Links & Resources:

- **Guest Packet / Booklet Design**
  https://www.d227toastmasters.org/guestbooklet

- **Marketing Templates**
  https://www.d227toastmasters.org/marketingtemplates

- **Poster Templates**
  https://www.d227toastmasters.org/postertemplates

- **Resources - Fliers, Presentations and Marketing**
  https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1PRlXzpk2gKx0kN0_enT1BG092l9JLd7i

- **Why Toastmasters**
  https://www.toastmasters.org/membership/why-toastmasters#

- **Open Houses Open Doors to New Members** - Article by Peggy Beach, DTM
  https://www.toastmasters.org/magazine/magazine-issues/2023/mar/open-houses

- **The standard application form to hand out to guests during or immediately after the meeting.**
  Official Membership Application (PDF)

Key Contact List – District 227

The district will be pleased to guide you in your efforts towards organizing an “Open House” at a venue identified by your club.

Club Growth Director

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Open house, Speechcraft and YLP Chair

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