

Life in an overactive Toastmasters club – CIGNA Lunchtime club.

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Would you like to have the problem of too many members in your Toastmaster Club? Well, I used to think that a Toastmasters club could never have too many members, but I found out that it can be quite a challenge: one that many Toastmasters are up for.

I attended my first Toastmasters meeting in Pretoria in 1994. I did not sign up because the meetings were inconvenient for me at the time. In 2004, I found myself in Connecticut and joined a Toastmaster club at my workplace in December of that year. I was delighted to find out that my employer pays the annual dues, and the meetings are held during lunchtime in my building, making the meetings extremely convenient.

The club was just recovering from a period of low-membership (less than 15). Our VP Education instituted a number of strategies to grow membership, such as a Mentoring Program, a recognition program and posting flyers for our club all over the building. We met twice a month and I began to enjoy the benefits that Toastmasters offers.

In 2006 I took on the role of VP Education. Our membership growth strategies continued to work and the result is that we now have 35 members. We found that club members had a four month waiting list to get a speaking slot, so we changed to weekly meetings. We now meet every Tuesday at lunchtime. Although this has improved the situation, we still have a long waiting list, and we have now implemented a Speech-athon for the last meeting of every month to provide more speaking slots. We have reduced the waiting list to only a few weeks currently.

One great benefit of living in the USA is the number of Toastmaster clubs. If speakers are anxious to present a speech, and we don't have a speaking slot, speakers attend a meeting at one of the clubs in our area as a guest speaker. There are two clubs in a five mile radius of my home, and five clubs in a six mile radius of my workplace. If a Toastmaster wants to speak, then he or she can usually find a speaking slot within a 10 mile drive, within a week.

This is the first club that I have been involved with where a large membership poses a pleasant challenge for the club officers. I love these challenges, and sincerely wish that all Toastmaster clubs could have the problem of overactive members.

Wayne Botha grew up in South Africa, and now lives in Connecticut, USA. For more articles, please visit www.waynebotha.com. Wayne still misses sunny South Africa.