

CLUB COACH

OPERATING MANUAL

DISTRICT 106

Serving Parts of Minnesota and Ontario, Canada

Adapted from *The Club Coach Playbook* © 2003

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# Introduction and Welcome

Congratulations on becoming a club coach or prospective club coach!

## **Preface**

Helping a struggling club to build a strong and lasting foundation is one of the most difficult, but also most rewarding, activities that you can participate in as a member of Toastmasters. Successfully completing this assignment will build your skills and help dozens of others gain the full benefits of Toastmasters for years to come.

Coaching is a transformative process for personal and professional awareness, discovery and growth, and the expansion of possibilities

- International Association of Coaching (IAC)

You’re not alone in this effort. The district support team is here to assist you and your club. This guide is just the first part of that assistance.

## Manual Contents

In this manual, we’ll cover:

* Club Coach requirements;
* The Club Coach as a facilitator;
* The first steps – observe, analyze, plan, and act;
* The S.W.O.T. analysis;
* Creating an Action Plan;
* The Club Coach Toolkit; and
* The district support team.

After covering this material, you will:

* Understand the role and responsibilities of a club coach;
* Know the steps you should take as you begin working with your club; and
* Be able to find additional resources and support for whatever challenges you face.

Let’s get started!

Gopu Shrestha, DTM

Club Coach Chair 2019-2020

Committee Members:

Edward Aylward, DTM

Adriana Fitzgerald Mickols, DTM

# Club Coach Requirements

As a club coach, you need to know about requirements for being assigned, requirements while serving as a coach, and requirements for completing your assignment successfully.

## Club Coach Assignment

Hopefully you are already aware of the requirements for being assigned as a coach, have met those requirements, and confirmed your assignment. What if you are a prospective coach or are unsure you have been assigned? Here are the official requirements as provided by Toastmasters International to be assigned as a club coach:

* The club must have at least one, but no more than 12 paid members at the time the coach is appointed.
* The club can have no more than two coaches appointed at one time.
* The individual must be a paid member in good standing with Toastmasters International.
* The coach cannot be an existing member of the club at the time of the appointment.

Additional requirements may be added by the district in the future. For example, prospective coaches may be required to attend training before being assigned.

If the club and the coach meet all requirements, then the coach can be assigned by either the district director or the club growth director. The club coach should complete the short application form (item 1152, see Additional Resources) and send it to the club growth director. The club growth director will sign the form and email it to Toastmasters International.

How do you confirm that your appointment has gone through? There are a few ways to know:

* You received an email from Toastmasters International ([clubcoach@toastmasters.org](mailto:clubcoach@toastmasters.org)) confirming your appointment;
* Your appointment is listed under “Club Support History” in your toastmasters.org profile; and
* You received a kit including an appointment letter, manuals, and a pin.

If you are not able to confirm that your appointment has gone through, please check with the club coach chair and/or the club growth director.

## Serving as Club Coach

What do you need to do as a club coach? There are three main responsibilities that will be asked of all club coaches:

* Attend club and executive committee meetings regularly;
* Facilitate a review and planning exercise (such as S.W.O.T. or Moments of Truth) initially and annually; and
* Communicate regularly with the district club coach support team.

How often should you attend meetings? You should plan to be there as often as possible, and in particular at the beginning of your term. Early on your experience and guidance is likely to be heavily relied upon at club and officer meetings. You are not obligated to attend each and every meeting. As the club grows in size and skill, hopefully your presence will be needed less often. Indeed, the point of the club coach is to help the club reach a state where the coach is not necessary for the club’s ongoing success.

The second responsibility is facilitating a planning exercise. This should be done very near the beginning of your assignment. A description of a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats exercise is included later in this guide.

Communicating regularly with the district club coach support team is the third responsibility. What does this entail? It’s as simple as sending an email once each month to update the team on how the club is doing along with informing them what other help might be useful to you or to the club. In fact, the district team will be reaching out to you asking questions, all you need to do is make sure to reply promptly, honestly, and completely.

Finally, it’s important to remember that no two clubs or situations are the same. In order for you to be successful as a coach, you may need to take on other responsibilities. Do not hesitate to call on more support from the district if you don’t know what to do or don’t have the time and resources to do what needs to be done.

All the above notwithstanding, there are no specific requirements after you have been appointed. The only way to be removed as a club coach during the up to two-year term is if the removal is requested by the club president or the coach. Not attending meetings, failing to complete training, etc. will not get you removed unless the club president requests your removal as a result. However, if you are not meeting these responsibilities you are not likely to be reappointed as a coach if you have not succeeded after two years.

## Completing a Club Coach Assignment

Your term as a club coach lasts at least until the end of the current program year (June 30th). If unsuccessful in the initial year, the term continues for another program year. If unsuccessful after two program years, you can be reappointed by the district director or program quality director.

How do you end your term successfully? By helping the club to reach distinguished status. The club reaches distinguished status by:

* Achieving at least five of the Distinguished Club Program (DCP) goals; and
* Having either twenty members or gaining a net of five-members at the end of the program year.

The DCP is summarized below. More information is available in the Distinguished Club Program and Club Success Plan manual that you received or will receive as part of your club coach kit. An electronic version of the manual is also available in the [Club Coach Tool Kit](#_ihv636) section of this document.

**QUALIFYING REQUIREMENT** To be considered for recognition, your club must either have 20 members or a net growth of at least five new members as of June 30. Transfer members do not count toward this total until their membership has been paid and is current in their new club.

**GOALS TO ACHIEVE** Following are the goals your club should strive to achieve during the year:

**EDUCATION:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Traditional Education Program**  1. Two Competent Communicator (CC) awards  2. Two more CC awards  3. One Advanced Communicator Bronze (ACB), Advanced Communicator Silver (ACS) or Advanced Communicator Gold (ACG) award  4. One more ACB, ACS or ACG award  5. One Competent Leader (CL), Advanced Leader Bronze (ALB), Advanced Leader Silver (ALS) or Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM) award  6. One more CL, ALB, ALS or DTM award | **Toastmasters Pathways Learning Experience**  P1. Four members complete Level 1  P2. Two members complete Level 2  P3. Two more members complete Level 2  P4. Two members complete Level 3  P5. One member completes Level 4  P6. One member completes Level 5 |

**MEMBERSHIP:**

7. Four new members

8. Four more new members

**TRAINING:**

9. A minimum of four club officers trained during each of the two training periods

**ADMINISTRATION:**

10. On-time payment of membership dues accompanied by the names of eight

members (at least three of whom must be renewing members) for one period

and on-time submission of one club officer list

**RECOGNITION:**

When your club meets the qualifying requirement and also does the following, it is eligible for Distinguished Club recognition at year-end:

Achieve five of 10 goals: Distinguished Club

Achieve seven of 10 goals: Select Distinguished Club

Achieve nine of 10 goals: President’s Distinguished Club

# The Club Coach as a Facilitator

As a club coach, you are a facilitator - not a director. It is understood you will not be able to change the club culture. Only the club’s members can change the culture and climate of the club. On the other hand, the club coach can influence change and guide the change in a positive direction. A coach helps individuals and organizations move forward into new areas of growth.

As a club coach, your task is to help the club discover the root causes for their present status, and to help them understand that they need to take ownership of the process. Furthermore, the club must embrace and implement the actions required to accomplish change if they are to achieve enduring growth and success.

As a club coach, it is expected that you will lend support to the club and its officers by providing the tools, education, information, and guidance in their endeavor to succeed in the DCP. In fact, the DCP becomes the metric against which the club measures its performance (as does Toastmasters International). Using the DCP as a traveler does a compass, guide the club through the rocky shoals of new growth toward the port of Distinguished Club Status.

## Attributes of a Successful Facilitator

Some of the key characteristics and attributes of an effective facilitator are listed below. In their entirety, these characteristics describe the model or ideal facilitator.

Are you worried that you don’t have all of these attributes or skills? Don’t be. It is not expected that each club coach – or any facilitator, for that matter - possess all of these qualities. One of the great benefits of serving as a club coach is that it will give you a chance to develop these attributes and practice related skills.

1. High degree of self-confidence
2. Understanding of, and commitment to, the client’s need to undergo cultural change in order to remain competitive (or operational)
3. Low ego needs – takes support role rather than the “limelight”
4. Focused on the needs/expectations of the client (internal and external)
5. Assertive – not pushy, aggressive or offensive
6. Enthusiastic – energetic self-starter
7. Achievement orientation – keeps teams moving toward results
8. Willing to take well-conceived risks
9. Understanding of and commitment to the client’s improvement initiative(s)
10. Pride in the client (Club)
11. Active listener
12. Above average verbal communication and presentation skills
13. Positive attitude
14. Able to establish rapport with all types of individuals
15. Able to coach team members through difficult tasks
16. Charismatic – able to inspire other, create a sense of urgency
17. Able to observe and provide feedback about group behaviors
18. Interpersonal competence
19. Political savvy and diplomacy
20. Well organized
21. Flexible and adaptable –possess a high tolerance for ambiguity
22. Able to forgo instant gratification
23. Enjoys variety in his/her “job”
24. Desire to see the client’s market share (member base) and earnings improve
25. Ability to model behaviors consistent with member involvement.

In summary, an effective facilitator is an individual with diplomatic skills, one who is organized, understanding, and achievement oriented. The facilitator is sociable and well liked. They are flexible and appreciates being known as an individual that can adapt readily to different challenges and situations. The facilitator Wears many hats simultaneously and is open and responsive to the needs and wants of others. Experiments with different ways to respond and act with the group. An effective facilitator actively encourages others to participate and provides recognition for contributions and accomplishments. Additionally, the effective facilitator is an energetic coordinator who offers facts, opinions, ideas, and relevant information to further discussion and decision making.

The effective facilitator works best in an environment that is sociable and democratic; flexible, yet still structured enough to provide necessary challenges, resources, and recognition for both individual and group contributions and accomplishments. The organizational culture and climate (the club’s environment) encourages personal interaction through coaching, goal setting procedures and processes, and team building initiatives.

## Mentor Versus Facilitator

It’s likely you’ve been mentored in the past and also served as a mentor, whether in your professional life or with Toastmasters. While facilitation is similar to mentoring in several ways, the differences are significant. In order to better understand the role of the club coach as a facilitator, the two roles will be compared here.

**Similarities:**

* You are an implied role model.
* You are viewed as the expert, and, in fact relied on for your expertise.

**Differences:**

* You are NOT the leader, but a team builder and process expert.
* You must deal with group dynamics and conflict.
* Although you may BE the expert, you should generally AVOID playing the expert role by offering “silver bullets.”

**A Facilitator’s Goals:**

* Design and model an efficient process for a group to accomplish its work.
* Help a group learn how to identify when they are acting inconsistently.
* Help the group develop processes that lead to effective Club operations and problem solving.

**The Role of a Facilitator:**

* The role of a facilitator is to ensure that healthy team (club) functioning by managing the group dynamics and progress toward resolution of quality (e.g., meetings, educational programming, structure, etc.) and productivity (e.g., membership growth, DCP goal achievement, CC, Pathways Levels, etc.) related problems.
* When necessary, the facilitator regains team members’ focus on the task of discovering the root causes of specifically defined problems.
* Serving as a guide, the facilitator assists a team in working through each step of a structured problem-solving process.
* It is also the function of the facilitator to coach team members who do not contribute appropriately during team meetings.
* The facilitator should strive to reduce the team’s dependence on him/herself and assist the team in becoming self-facilitating.
* Members of management (e.g., district officers, the club coach support team, area directors, etc.) who serve as facilitators have the additional responsibility of encouraging team members to challenge the status quo, and search for ways to improve.
* Members of management must also enable team members to act more autonomously by increasing their competence, using techniques of coaching and empowerment.

### 

## Words to Remember

### 3 Ps

Patience, Persistence and Positivity

### EDR

Empathy, Resilience and Dedication

### ICE

Inspiring: Inspires people to action (does not manipulate/threaten)

Caring: Cares more on the people than results

Empowering: Empowers others to be creative in the responsibilities they're given

### **R.E.A.L. Skills**

* Relationship
* Empowerment
* Attitude/Accountability
* Leadership

# Steps to Follow

You’re ready to begin working as a club coach. What do you do? It is recommended that you follow this process to get started with your club:

1. **Before attending a meeting: Educate Yourself about the “10 Major Reasons Clubs Fail”**
2. **(Meeting 1) Observe a meeting;**
3. **(Meeting 2) Introduce yourself to the club;**
4. **(Meeting 3) Begin S.W.O.T. exercise – strengths and weaknesses;**
5. **(Meeting 4) Finish S.W.O.T. exercise – opportunities and threats; and**
6. **(Meeting 5) Create an action plan.**
7. **Ongoing: Help the club work the action plan.**

The plan above has been broken steps out into separate meetings to account for whatever time is available. If the meeting time allows it, you can combine certain steps (for example 3 & 4) into a single meeting activity.

## 10 Major Reasons Why Clubs Fail

1. **Weak Leadership / Club President**

* No vision; not trained; poor leadership skills; lack of service orientation.
* Not trained; little accountability to members.

1. **The Club Depends on Just One or Two Members to Keep it Going**

* If this key member leaves, there are no leaders within the Club to give it direction.

1. **The Club Leaders Don't Use the Distinguished Club Program (DCP)**

* They are not educated about the DCP and/or
* They don't buy in to the value of the DCP and/or
* The District Leaders don't talk up the value of the DCP.

1. **Lack of knowledge and lack of mentoring**

* No knowledge about how to do the basics for effective communication, leadership, and meeting management.
* Club lacks experienced, knowledgeable members (or they are unavailable) to guide, mentor, and act as role models for the less experienced members.
* Club leaders and members are unaware of the resources that are available to help them - Area Director, Division Director, Materials from Toastmasters International, etc.

1. **Attitudinal Barriers of Club Leaders**

* Club leaders foster a feeling that the Club is an island unto itself.
* Club leaders view the Area Director visits as interference instead of support, encouragement, and help.

1. **Untrained or Uncommitted Area Director or Lack of an Area Director**

1. **Weak Educational Program**

* Members are reluctant to use Pathways, either for lack of training or other reasons.
* VPE is unaware of Club educational standards OR doesn't aspire to challenge the members live up to these standards.
* VPE lacks a service orientation.
* Members are not surveyed.
* As a result of not being aware of Club educational standards, manual speeches are only an option. This slows the educational progress of the members.
* Poor meeting planning.
* Poor delegation of duties.
* Poor follow-up.
* New members are given meeting functions to perform without adequate mentoring or guidance.
* No educational sessions involving Better Club Series, Successful Speaker series, Leadership Excellence Series, Success/Communication, or Success/Leadership are conducted for the Club members.
* Educational achievements are not recognized or praised.
* Members are not addressed by their educational designations.
* Members don't wear TM badges or pins.

1. **Relationship Problems**

* Veteran Toastmaster/s forget the mission of the Club and dictate standards to other members.
* Some Toastmaster members form cliques.
* Evaluations are poor quality.
  + "Brickbat" (overly negative) evaluations discourage members;
  + "Whitewash" (overly positive) evaluations don't help members grow.

1. **Poor Guest Relations and Little or No Emphasis on Growing the Membership**

* Due to lack of training or unsuitable dispositions, the President, VPM, Sergeant-at Arms and others don't greet and treat guests properly.
* No guest book; no follow-up to guests' visits.
* No guest handouts.
* No/weak membership drive.
* No new member inductions, including mentorship.

1. **Meeting Location and/or Time is Inconvenient to Many Members.**

* Club leadership doesn't seek to address this issue.

## Observe a Meeting

The first step is an initial “needs analysis” by the club coach. This may be your first visit and can be done even before being assigned as a coach. The coach visits the club and observes the meeting (or lack thereof) and makes notes for later discussion with the co-coach and with the district support team. This meeting and needs analysis is a “grounding” exercise so that you have an idea of some of the behavioral and other issues that might be encountered throughout the rest of the process. This initial analysis can also be used to help make a decision if it is a good match between the coach and the club. The analysis can include private notes for later review and/or conversations with club members.

## Introduce Yourself to the Club

After the initial visit, you move into the realm of the consultant, counselor, guide, and effective communicator. Prior to the next meeting, you need to be in contact with the club’s officers to help them understand what is about to happen, and to schedule a time to address the club in its entirety. This is important to establish the communication pipeline and to begin the communication process regarding the coaching program and process. At this next meeting:

* You will hopefully be granted 10- to 15-minutes to address the club. For a club with 12-members, the chances are that only 5- or 6-members attend meetings. Thus, there should be no problem in scheduling speaking time.
* Use the allotted time to introduce the club to the club coach program, tell them what is expected of them, of the club coach, and tell briefly tell them the process.
* Hand out the questionnaire to all members. The officers of the club receive two sets with the instructions that they are to look at the club from the viewpoint of executive officers (and their own performance in that role) as well as from the viewpoint of the “regular” member. Request that all forms be anomalously completed and brought to the next meeting. The only identifier to be found on the forms is that one set (the seven officers) will have EXO written (or printed) in the upper left corner of the form. No names, just the designation. These forms will be handed to the club coach at the next meeting.
* At the conclusion of your presentation, request a 30-minute time slot for the next meeting to begin the coaching process that will help the club return to health – as long as the club truly desires to return to this state – and request that everyone put on their thinking caps and try to identify & write down five to ten strengths and five to ten weaknesses they feel the club demonstrates. There is a simplified Moments of Truth Checklist attached here that can be passed out and used to jog members’ memories. Following this step will make the next meeting more effective and time efficient.

## Begin S.W.O.T. Exercise – Strengths and Weaknesses

The majority of time at the next meeting has hopefully been set aside for the coach to facilitate an exercise that allows the club members to analyze their current situation. This will serve as the building block for the club creating an action plan that will lead to a strong and successful club. The recommendation is to conduct a S.W.O.T. exercise informed by the Moments of Truth, but other exercises (e.g., Moments of Truth, T.O.W.S.) are acceptable as long as they allow the club members to accurately understand their situation and plan their recovery. Going forward with the S.W.O.T. approach, at the third meeting:

* Collect the survey forms that you handed out at the last meeting from the members and the club officers. Take these homes for review and return them to the club at the next meeting.
* Begin the discussion of the strengths and weaknesses (use white board or flip chart to write on) of the club. You are now acting as a facilitator and guide to help the club identify as an entity what strengths they possess and what weaknesses might be hindering their growth and success. These are internal factors that are at least partially controlled by the club or its members. More details on how to perform this and the entire S.W.O.T. exercise are provided in the next section of this guide.
* Record the entire list of strengths and weaknesses, for example by taking the flip chart pages or taking a picture of the white board. Alternatively, you can request a member record the responses at the beginning of the session.
* Following the discussion of the club’s strengths and weaknesses, close on a positive note and congratulate the club members for their honesty, and their desire to be a vibrantly, vital, and vigorously successful club.
* Set the next meeting time allocation (ask for about 40-minutes) for discussion on opportunities and threats. Request that the members again “put on their individual thinking caps” and see if they can identify 5 to 10 opportunities that support or cause club growth and success, and 5 to 10 threats to the club’s survival. This will set the stage for the next meeting when opportunities and threats are discussed.

## Finish S.W.O.T. Exercise – Opportunities and Threats

As with the previous meeting, you have hopefully had approximately 40-minutes allotted to facilitate the next portion of the S.W.O.T. exercise. At this meeting:

* This meeting runs similar to the last meeting. Discuss external factors – opportunities and threats – using the club members notes from the end of the last meeting as a starting point.
* At the conclusion of the opportunities and threats discussion, bring the strengths and weaknesses back to the table and do a brief review of the entire picture. The end result of this exercise is to identify where we do things well, if we rely too heavily and for too long on those things we do well, what our weaknesses and threats are so we can develop specific action plans to eliminate threats and turn weaknesses into strengths so we as a Club can capitalize on the opportunities we have identified. This will take about 5 to 10 minutes to wrap up after the initial discussion, hence the longer time requested for this meeting.
* Set the next meeting’s time parameters so that the club coach can help the club walk through the vision and mission phase (something that is specific for the club), and begin developing the action plan needed to get the club moving towards success.

## Create an Action Plan

The final portion of these initial planning exercises is to create an action plan. This will probably take place at the next meeting. Ask for another 30-minutes. At the meeting:

* Lead the club in creating a club vision. The might be tied to DCP goals, but likely also includes intangible aspects such as creating a certain culture. The Moments of Truth is again a good resource to identify the most important parts of the club vision, but the vision must be the club’s and not merely the vision of the coach or one vocal member.
* Lead the club in crafting a club mission. Ideally this is a club specific mission. If the club members want, they can use or modify the club mission as provided by Toastmasters International. Most importantly, the club must take ownership of whatever mission they adopt.
* Lead the club in creating the action plan. The action plan will include specific objectives, methods or actions for achieving those objectives, and deadlines. Goals can be short, medium, or long-term. Ideally, there is a mix of all three. The objectives should take the club at least to distinguished status; if the club doesn’t want that, it is worth considering whether the club really wants a coach or even wants to be a Toastmasters club. For methods and deadlines, as the facilitator you may challenge the club as to whether the plan is reasonable but avoid imposing your view. There will be opportunities to observe the outcome of the plan later and update it if goals are not being met.

This step may take more than one meeting and is sure to be highly interactive. You will have to be on your toes for this stage and your facilitation skills will be tested. Be aware of individual behaviors within the group and highly vigilant for members that wish to have their will become the “law” over the true wishes of the group. This may even call for you to end the session and begin fresh at the next meeting. The goal is to continuously keep the Club moving forward with small accomplishments throughout the process, and these accomplishments should always be recognized and praised by the Club Coach.

## Facilitate the Action Plan

Once the action plan is completed, the club members will know what to do. Hopefully the members are motivated to act. You may need to continue to motivate and inspire them, especially if there are not immediate results. Remind the club members that the plan must be implemented to be of any use.

Building a club can be a slow process. Don’t get discouraged. Stay optimistic and let your optimism uplift the club members.

# About S.W.O.T. Analysis

Why use S.W.O.T.? SWOT is a comprehensive tool that deals with internal and external factors of an organization, giving us a good picture of the club. It identifies and assigns each significant factor, positive and negative, to one of the four categories, allowing you to take an objective look at your organization (the club). Advantageously, a SWOT analysis is also relatively simple. It can be readily understood by club members even without extensive training and can be done by a small group of people. While the S.W.O.T. analysis benefits from having specific quantitative data, club members are usually well informed enough to both identify and prioritize the primary factors in each category that are relevant to a Toastmasters club’s success.

The SWOT analysis begins by conducting a review of internal strengths and weaknesses in the club. You will then note the external opportunities and threats that may affect the club based on the overall environment. As noted in the previous section, you can do this with your club over the course of one- or two-meetings.

The first stage is a brainstorming process. Don’t be concerned about elaborating on these topics. Bullet points are usually the best way to begin. Capture all of the factors club members believe are relevant in each of the four categories.

There are three additional steps after identifying items for each of the four categories:

* The group should make sure that each item is listed in the correct category. This comes up most commonly when members phrase internal factors, things the club can control, in the language of opportunities or threats.
* Overlapping items may be combined. It is very common during a brainstorming session for similar ideas to be said in multiple ways. Group ideas logically so that it is easier to understand each category and to prioritize items.
* The (approximately) five most important items in each category should be identified. By focusing on the most relevant items, the action plan that is developed is likely to provide the most efficient path to growth.

These steps can be performed after working through each category, at the end of each session, or after having finished brainstorming for all four categories.

You are a facilitator for this exercise. Your focus is on making sure the process is followed correctly. Your guidance is most important for things like ensuring that items are worded correctly and find their way to the correct category. For example, to make sure that the group is not mistaking weaknesses for opportunities. You are not there to identify every strength, weakness, opportunity, or threat for the club. You may want to nudge or suggest something from time-to-time, but the exercise should not be an argument with you trying to convince the club to come around to your way of thinking. Remember, your goal is to empower the club members and motivate them to take ownership of the club and its challenges.

To help you make sure the process is followed correctly, each of the categories is described in more detail below.

## Strengths

Strengths describe the positive attributes, tangible and intangible, internal to your organization. These factors are completely under the club’s control and the members decide how to utilize them for the benefit of the club. What does the club do well? What resources does it have? What advantages does the club have over its competition? Note that competition for a Toastmasters club could be other speaking or leadership training organizations, other Toastmasters clubs, or even company provided training.

Strengths can be evaluated by area, such as marketing, finance, manufacturing, and organizational structure. Strengths include the positive attributes of the people involved in the club, including their knowledge, backgrounds, education, credentials, contacts, reputations, or the skills they bring. Strengths also include tangible assets such as cash in the club’s bank account, equipment, past and present members, existing channels of distribution, copyrighted materials, patents, information and processing systems, and other valuable resources within the business.

One category of strengths is based on areas of expertise. If your club has experienced and talented speakers, then list that down as your strengths. If the club has skilled officers that have been given adequate training, then they are also considered a strength.

Strengths may also fall into the category of resources. For example, (relatively) large cash reserves could be a strength. Equipment, supplies, a strong website, and professional meeting space could also be strengths.

Often smaller clubs offer intangible benefits such as many opportunities to speak and a close-knit group.

What are other examples of strengths? You can use the Moments of Truth as a good starting point to identify what might be relevant strengths (or weaknesses).

In this exercise, strengths are relative to competitors or alternatives. Having several skilled speakers might be a strength for one club, but not for another that meets in the same building as an advanced club with many professional quality speakers. A club that does not pay for their meeting space may consider a bank account of a few hundred dollars a strength, while a club that must rent space would label the same balance as a weakness.

When developing the action plan, strengths are used in several ways. Strengths should be maintained. They can also be applied to opportunities in order to maximize growth. In general, strengths should be used.

## Weaknesses

Weaknesses, like strengths, are internal factors within the control of the club members. Despite being in the club’s control, these factors somewhat detract the club from performing at an optimum level. These will hinder progress and growth.

Weaknesses may include all of the same types of areas as strengths. What are common weaknesses of struggling clubs? Low membership and attendance is incredibly common. Often struggling clubs lack experienced, skilled, or committed leadership. Members may not understand the educational program and how to use it to maximize their own growth. As with strengths, using the Moments of Truth as a guide is a good way to identify the most relevant weaknesses for a Toastmasters club.

When developing the action plan, weaknesses are addressed in two main ways. First, weaknesses may be areas that the club wants or needs to improve. This is very common given the limited scope of a Toastmasters club and the resources available to all clubs. Second, weaknesses may simply be areas that the club wants to minimize, work around, or avoid. In either case, weaknesses that the club finds are likely to lead to very important parts of the action plan. The more accurately the members identify the club’s weaknesses, the more valuable the SWOT exercise will be.

## Opportunities

In a S.W.O.T. analysis, opportunities are positive external factors. External forces are such that are beyond your control. Opportunities assess the external attractive factors that represent the reason for your club to exist and prosper.

What opportunities exist in the club’s market, or in the environment, from which it hopes to benefit? Opportunities might be found in areas like local business needs, economic conditions, and government actions. For Toastmasters clubs, opportunities are often businesses, communities, groups, or other populations that have members who might benefit from improved communication and leadership skills. This doesn’t need to be a situation that is changing. Most struggling clubs are failing to fully take advantage of the opportunities around them. For example, each of the businesses within a 5- to 10-minute drive of the meeting location might be an opportunity for the club.

It is very common in S.W.O.T. exercises for participants to become confused about what constitutes an opportunity. Here, we only consider opportunities that are external factors or beyond the control of the club members. What appears to be an opportunity, if it is in the control of the club, should often be rewritten as a weakness in this process. For example, a club member might suggest that there is an opportunity to improve member knowledge of the educational program with training. While this makes sense normally, within a S.W.O.T. analysis this idea is better expressed as a weakness: club members lack knowledge of the educational program. Strengths are also sometimes presented as opportunities. As the facilitator, try to make sure that club members understand the distinction and ideas are placed in the correct category.

When creating the action plan, the club should generally find ways to use their strengths in order to act on opportunities.

## Threats

Threats are, like opportunities, external factors in a S.W.O.T. analysis. However, threats are negative and risk damaging or even destroying the club.

What are common threats that a Toastmasters club might face? Very often a business that sponsors a corporate club or at least provides many members might experience layoffs, start a new project that demands extra time from all employees, or even go out of business. These can be devastating for a club. Another common threat is that a club’s meeting space might become unavailable. That is hardly all. What situations might threaten the club? Get your worst fears on the table. Part of this list may be speculative in nature, and still add value to your SWOT analysis. When prioritizing, it may be valuable to classify your threats according to both their “seriousness” and “probability of occurrence.”

As an external factor, the same warning and guidance applies to the facilitator as described above for opportunities. Be cognizant of strengths or weaknesses being phrased as threats. If a member suggests something that the club can control, explain why it fits in another category (and add it if it isn’t already there).

What do you do with threats that the club identifies? Threats can be watched, they can be mitigated, or contingency plans can be created.

## Ranking and Using Results

A S.W.O.T. analysis may identify a long list of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats for the club. This can be overwhelming. In order to focus the club’s efforts, the club should focus on the (approximately) five most important items in each category. By focusing on the most relevant items, the action plan that is developed is likely to provide the most efficient path to growth. The items to focus on can be determined using the nominal group technique. After discussing each option, participants rank the options, assigning “5” to the item they think is the most important, and “1” to the item they think is the least important. The votes are tallied and the options with the most votes are kept. This can be repeated to narrow the options down to 5, if necessary.

When creating the action plan, keep these ranked items in mind when setting goals that focus and leverage all categories from the S.W.O.T. exercise.

# Creating an Action Plan

The final portion of these initial planning exercises is to create an action plan. Once the action plan is completed, the club members will know what to do. Hopefully the members are motivated to act. You may need to continue to motivate and inspire them, especially if there are not immediate results. Building a club can be a slow process. Don’t get discouraged. Stay optimistic and let your optimism uplift the club members.

## The Club’s Vision

The first step in developing an action plan is defining a vision for the club. The vision is an imagined future. It describes what the club will be like when it has fully realized its potential.

The vision can be broad in scope, but also detailed. It can cover many aspects of the club experience. Ask the club to imagine they are a guest visiting their club for the first time. What do they want that experience to be like? Have them imagine themselves as new members. What guidance would they like to receive? As they become more experienced, what opportunities would they like to have available? Explore the details of different aspects of the club, from how the room is setup to how members treat each other. Try and get members to not just describe what they see in their envisioned future, but why that contributes to a stronger club.

As you facilitate this exercise, write down ideas on a whiteboard or flipchart. The club will refer to this vision throughout the rest of the meeting.

## The Mission

After defining a vision, the club should establish a mission statement. In a sense, this is a simplified version of the vision. The mission statement explains the reason that the club exists, it guides decisions, and it unifies the members. Toastmasters International has already created a mission statement for every club:

We provide a supportive and positive learning experience in which members are empowered to develop communication and leadership skills, resulting in greater self-confidence and personal growth.

This is a powerful mission. If the club members believe in this mission statement, then they should use it. In fact, every club should use this mission statement in addition to any mission statement they establish. However, the mission statement should not simply be accepted without thought or glossed over. Make sure to spend time discussing the meaning of the mission statement and how it contributes to the vision defined previously. Ask the club to vote to accept it only after you are confident the members understand what it means.

You may also want to help the members create a mission statement that is unique to their club. This is especially true if the club serves a particular audience such as a corporate club or if the club has a special focus such as leadership, evaluations, humor, etc.

When creating a club-specific mission statement, consider the following questions:

* What do we do?
* How do we do it?
* Whom do we do it for?
* What value are we bringing?

Answer those questions and then remember to be specific with your language and keep the mission statement succinct. Reading the mission statement should enable someone to understand the purpose of the club and inspire them to work towards that purpose.

## The Action Plan

After creating a vision and mission statement, it is time to get to the action plan. The action plan comes from the Mission Statement and is very specific in its objectives and performance metrics.

Refer members to the mission statement and club vision in order to determine objectives and metrics. Then work with the club to identify how they can use the S.W.O.T. analysis conducted earlier to meet these objectives.

The [Club Success Plan](#_76zonm4uf683) provides a good guide on what is needed for each item in the action plan. The plan should describe the objective, the resources available, the individuals responsible, the timeline, and the specific steps that will be taken to ultimately achieve the objective.

As the facilitator, be mindful of the level of specificity needed to make the action plan meaningful while still moving the exercise forward. “We should hold an open house” lacks a timeline and can easily be put off, but you also don’t want to spend the entire meeting talking about the best day for an open house. Agree on deadlines and trust the individuals the club identifies as being responsible to plan the precise details.

When setting the Action Plan, the Club Coach can also use the DCP as their guideline for objectives and help the Club establish deadlines to achieve the objectives that will lead them to Distinguished Status. Some of the deadlines are established by WHQ and are not subject to change, while others are completely under the control of the Club. Remember that the DCP is a guideline and represents metrics that will indicate success in certain areas, it is not success itself. True success is creating a group that realizes the club’s mission.

This step is sure to be highly interactive. Club Coaches will have to be on their toes for this stage and their facilitation skills will be tested. Coaches must be aware of individual behaviors within the group and highly vigilant for members that wish to have their will become the “law” over the true wishes of the group. This may even call for the Coach to end the session and begin fresh at the next meeting. The goal is to continuously keep the Club moving forward with small accomplishments throughout the process, and these accomplishments should always be recognized and praised by the Club Coach.

## Follow-up

Once the Action Plan is completed, it must be implemented – hence the word ACTION! – Or it is of no use. Members will need to begin working.

While many, and hopefully all, club members will be involved in different parts of the action plan, the club president should oversee each aspect of the plan to make certain that items are completed. That is, he or she should be checking on the status of the projects. If necessary, the club president may need to meet one-on-one with a member that is not making progress to provide feedback. Remind them that feedback should be supportive and motivating, with the aim of helping the member achieve their goals. If the member is not able to continue working on his or her project, then the club president should find another member to take on the task.

The club coach should then keep an eye on the president to make sure that he or she is overseeing the club members. Provide feedback and guidance to the club president as necessary.

Occasionally, the club should review their progress with the action plan either with the entire club or just the club officers. Objectives and plans should be adjusted as necessary based on what has been working and how the situation has changed.

# Club Coach Tool Kit

In the following sections, you will find several Toastmasters tools and resources for successfully completing your club coach assignment.

## Club Coach Troubleshooting Guide

<https://www.toastmasters.org/resources/club-coach-troubleshooting-guide>

This two page survey is used to quickly determine which areas a club can improve in. This can be used by the club coach alone, or to get feedback from all of the members of the club.

## 

## Club Quality Checklist

<https://www.toastmasters.org/Magazine/Magazine%20Issues/2019/Jan/26%20Club%20Experience>

This three page checklist is a quick way to review club quality. It is similar to Moments of Truth, but is formatted as a checklist.

## Moments of Truth (Item 209)

<https://www.toastmasters.org/resources/moments-of-truth>

Part of The Successful Club Series, Moments of Truth outlines how to create a positive first impression of your club, and recognize and deal with situations critical to club success. Moments of Truth is another fantastic tool to help evaluate club quality. This can be presented and discussed over the course of a meeting, or used as another survey to gather feedback from the club.

## Toastmasters International Club Coach Guides and Training

### How to Rebuild a Toastmasters Club Guide (Item 1158)

<https://www.toastmasters.org/resources/how-to-rebuild-a-toastmasters-club>

This guide contains information similar to this Club Coach Manual, including how to use the Club Coach Troubleshooting Guide, and guidelines on what to include in an action plan. This guide has yet to be updated for Pathways.

### The First Class Club Coach (Item 218f)

<https://www.toastmasters.org/Resources/First-Class-Club-Coach>

This is another example training from Toastmasters international about Club Coaching.

## Membership Growth Resources

### Membership Growth (Item 1159)

<https://www.toastmasters.org/resources/membership-growth>

This guide offers tips for finding new members and how to convince them to join your club.

### Success 101 Brochure (Item 1622)

<https://www.toastmasters.org/resources/success-101>

This brochure has a lot of great ideas for building membership, establishing a guest program, and retaining members.

### Toastmasters: From Prospect to Guest to Member Brochure (Item 108)

<https://www.toastmasters.org/resources/from-prospect-to-guest-to-member>

If the club is struggling with membership, this brochure can help give a clear plan for converting guests into members.

### Membership Building Contests

<https://www.toastmasters.org/leadership-central/club-officer-tools/membership-building/membership-building-programs-for-clubs>

If the club needs additional external motivation to add members, Toastmasters membership building contests are a great way for the club to get recognition and rewards for adding members. Membership building contests include: Smedley Award, Talk Up Toastmasters!, and Beat the Clock. There may be additional incentives offered from the district as well.

**Smedley Award**

Program Dates: August 1 – September 30

Can your club add five new, dual, or reinstated members with a join date between August 1 and September 30? Accomplish this goal and you’ll qualify to receive a "Smedley Award" ribbon, named in honor of Ralph Smedley, which you can display on your club’s banner. Qualifying clubs can also earn a special discount code for 10-percent off their next club order. (The discount code expires six months from the date of issue and is not valid with any other offer.)

**Talk Up Toastmasters**

Program Dates: February 1 – March 31

Toastmasters love to connect, so take advantage of it. The "Talk Up Toastmasters" membership program is the chance to encourage your members to invite guests to a special meeting where prospective members can learn about Toastmasters' many benefits. Then add five new, dual or reinstated members with a join date between February 1 and March 31, and you’ll receive a special "Talk up Toastmasters" ribbon to display on your club’s banner. Qualifying clubs can also earn a special discount code for 10-percent off their next club order. (The discount code expires six months from the date of issue and is not valid with any other offer.)

**Beat the Clock**

Program Dates: May 1 – June 30

Toastmasters are taught to run meetings on time, finish speeches on time and reach membership goals on time. In that spirit, "Beat the Clock" is a great motivator for finishing the year on schedule—on time and with record numbers! Make it your club’s goal to earn the "Beat the Clock" award and encourage every member to take part. Clubs adding five new, dual or reinstated members with a join date between May 1 and June 30 receive a "Beat the Clock" ribbon to display on the club’s banner. Qualifying clubs also earn a special discount code for 10-percent off their next club order. (The discount code expires six months from the date of issue and is not valid with any other offer.)

## Educational Program and Pathways Resources

### How to be a Distinguished Club (Item 299)

<https://www.toastmasters.org/resources/how-to-be-a-distinguished-club>

Many low member clubs have lost sight of not only what it means to be a quality club, but what is involved in following the Toastmasters education program to be a distinguished club. This item is part of the Successful Club Series, and can be conducted as a speech by the Club Coach to explain the Distinguished Club Program. This guide has yet to be updated for Pathways.

### Club Success Plan (Item 1111)

<https://www.toastmasters.org/Resources/Distinguished-Club-Program-and-Club-Success-Plan-English>

### Pathways Navigator (Item 8722)

<https://www.toastmasters.org/shop/8722--The-Navigator>

### Taking the Pain Out of Pathways

<https://takingthepainoutofpathways.wordpress.com/>

### District 106 Pathways Guides and YouTube Videos

<https://d106tm.org/startpathways/>

## Speechcraft

<https://www.toastmasters.org/education/speechcraft>

<https://d106tm.org/info/resources/speechcraft/>

Running a speechcraft program is a great way to promote the club, engage club members, and potentially recruit new members!

## Additional Resources

### Club Coach Appointment Form (Item 1152)

<https://www.toastmasters.org/resources/club-coach-appointment-form>

# The District Support Team

You are not alone as you work with your club. The district leadership wants your efforts to be successful, so that the club grows stronger and so that you can receive credit for your hard work and commitment. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have questions or concerns.

## Club Coach Chair

The Club Coach Chair is the primary point of contact for all club coaches in District 106. If you have any coaching related questions or problems, he is the first person to talk to. All club coaches should strive to provide a brief summary of their club’s status to the Club Coach Chair once each month.

## Club Growth Director

The Club Growth Director oversees the club coach program. He is the person that must sign all club coach assignments. If the club you are working with needs additional help or is facing specific challenges, the Club Coach Chair will bring him in to help. http://d106tm.org/district/directory/

## Division Directors

Division directors oversee approximately thirty total clubs each divided into a number of areas. Division directors meet regularly with the district trio and also have contact with the individual clubs. If the club you are working with needs additional help or is facing specific challenges, your area director will bring the division director in to help. http://d106tm.org/district/directory/

## Area Directors

Area directors work directly with four to six clubs offering support and resources. As a club coach, you should ideally be in regular contact with the area director. Contact the area director when you are assigned to let them know you will be working with one of their clubs. You may contact the area director as needed for additional support and to keep him or her apprised of the club’s progress.

You can contact area directors through the District 106 website directory:

http://d106tm.org/district/directory/