



## Ideas for Toastmasters Corporate Programs

*While some corporate programs are thriving, others are not. All can benefit from the “Best Practices” companies worldwide use to engage and excite their employees about being active participants in Toastmasters. Take a look at this list of ideas and see which ones can help your corporate program attain the next level of success.*

1. **Strong Leadership.** Any effective program needs a strong and committed leadership team. *Successful programs have engaged, enthusiastic, and active leaders.*
2. **Corporate Program Strategic Plan.** Create, reference, and use your corporate program strategic plan throughout the year to incorporate the results of the most recent *Moments of Truth* survey (Key Performance Indicators), which will highlight areas for improvement.
3. **Session Role Assignments.** Schedule all session roles at least two months in advance. This gives participants visibility on what is expected from them for upcoming events. In addition, participants from programs that follow this process report how much better the speeches and sessions are. Doing this ensures that the shy employees will make their first speech.
4. **Fourth Speaker.** One way to ensure there are at least three formal speeches at every session is to ensure there is always a fourth speaker available to jump in and fill any last-minute vacancies.
5. **“Speech in Hip Pocket.”** It’s been a long-standing tradition in Toastmasters to encourage every Toastmaster to have a “speech in the hip pocket” to be able to jump in and fill any speaker vacancies.
6. **“Better Speaker Series” Speeches.** For those Toastmasters lacking enough time to prepare a speech, dozens of already prepared speeches are available online at the Toastmasters.org website under “Resources” and then the “Wow! Factor.” The “Better Speaker Series” is a collection of ten speeches on the art of speechcraft that can be

used for any session. There are two other series with prewritten speeches available on the same website.

7. **Toastmasters Buddy.** Have employees find a “Toastmasters Buddy” that they can swap assigned roles if they know they will miss a session and, consequently, their ability to fulfill the assigned role they were given.
8. **Full Participation.** While welcoming guest Toastmasters from outside, do not allow them to speak ahead of a participant who has a speech ready to go. A Pittsburgh corporate program member NEVER gave a speech in the one-and-a-half years she was active with Toastmasters. One reason: guest Toastmasters were allowed to speak before the regular participants, and she never had the chance. She dropped out.
9. **Mentoring.** Our Founder, Dr. Ralph Smedley, said that “The two most important factors in Toastmasters are Mentoring and Evaluations.” Sadly, they are the two factors missed most often. Effective programs have vibrant and engaging mentors. Those speakers who do not need a mentor should become a mentor to those who do.
10. **“One-on-One” Meetings.** Leaders in any company realize that “employees don’t leave a company—they leave their boss.” Just as this axiom is true in business, it all too often is true in Toastmasters—participants don’t leave Toastmasters as much as they leave the leadership team. Why? Because their needs weren’t being met and no one noticed, no one seemed to care. Influential leaders regularly reach out individually to participants to ensure their voices are heard, and their needs are being met.
11. **Socialize.** Spend time before, after, or both an online meeting to reconnect. With most programs convening online, the need for the personal touch is even greater than before, proving the wisdom of the axiom “High Tech requires High Touch.” There are many ways to do this, such as having a time for chit-chat before the session begins, even if it reduces some of the speeches/Table Topics (cut Table Topics before cutting speeches.) If people don’t feel a connection, they may become dissatisfied and decline further participation.
12. **Reignite the Passion.** Effective leaders connect with those participating less to understand the dynamics behind the changed behavior better. One way to drawback participants is to have them describe why they first joined Toastmasters and attempt to reignite that interest, that passion.
13. **Fun and Engaging.** Make the sessions more *fun* and engaging by visiting other Toastmasters groups and asking the Area Directors for ideas since they visit many Toastmasters organizations. Better engagement often increases productivity, improving the bottom line.

14. **Session Humorist.** Add the “Humor Master” or “Humorist” as a way to develop participants’ abilities to inject humor and levity, where appropriate, into presentations.
15. **“Posture Monitor.”** More and more Toastmasters groups across the globe—including corporate programs—are adding the role of a “Posture Monitor” to provide feedback at the end of the session on how the participants were seen by others in the online media: how was their lighting? Camera level? Volume? Attire? Standing? Any distracting items behind them? Posture? Recognizing that online forums are not going away after the Pandemic is over, astute Toastmasters programs help their participants improve their image to enhance their self-confidence and perhaps give the organizations a competitive edge.
16. **Recognition.** Ensure bosses know of employee’s progress and breakthroughs. Since club Vice Presidents for Education must approve all educational awards, they are in the perfect position to provide updates to the company leadership and HR. HR should place a printed copy of each educational achievement in the employee’s file to ensure those reviewing these folders—for promotion, for example—are aware of this self-improvement accomplishment. Recognition is a crucial driver in achieving the corporate program’s strategic plan goals and objectives and is measured in *Moments of Truth*.
17. **C-Suite Encouragement.** Ask members of the “C Suite” to “encourage” participation in all company-sponsored Toastmasters events. Invite them to attend.
18. **Promo Video.** If possible, create a short promotional video about the corporate Toastmasters program. Work with HR to have this video in a high-traffic area for maximum exposure. Ensure there is contact info along with session details for those who express interest.
19. **Videos of Speeches.** Participants who record themselves when giving a formal speech can relate the feedback they receive to the speech’s exact point.
20. **TLI Attendance.** Corporate programs require strong leadership. That leadership starts with the program leadership team attending and participating in the Toastmasters Leadership Institute (TLI) events that all Toastmasters districts host every six months to develop foundational skills and share best practices and provide a forum to benchmark with leaders from other companies.
21. **Greater Reach.** Ask other managers outside of your group’s area to send employees they believe would benefit from the Toastmasters *Pathways Learning Curriculum* and experience.
22. **Satellite Locations.** With HR’s assistance and the necessary leadership approval, recruit employees from other corporation satellite locations to join yours.

23. **“Rent-a-Crowd.”** Consider inviting members from other Toastmasters programs to help “fill up” the meeting room and make the sessions more fun and engaging. Area Directors and Division Directors can provide names to contact. This is especially important for a corporate program that doesn’t have many participants but plans an Open House. Remember first impressions.
24. **Website.** Use the “Meet Our Members” section of the Toastmasters corporate program website or add one to the internal company website for a Toastmasters commercial. Have your participants list why they joined, what differences they are experiencing, and its impact.
25. **New Employee Recruiting.** Part of the new employee onboarding should include a Toastmaster’s live presentation reviewing the *Features, Benefits, and Value* of becoming an active participant in the Toastmasters corporate program. Some corporate programs enroll all new employees into their Toastmasters group for the first full year to expand their professional communication and leadership skills.
26. **Share the Burden.** The Toastmasters Corporate Program Executive Board is a group of seven participants elected to serve as leaders of the group. To avoid having one leader do everything, there are seven positions. Recall that Toastmasters serves to develop both communicators and leaders: this executive board is a wonderful platform for existing leaders to refine their skills while helping less-experienced individuals develop theirs. Effective programs ensure all leaders share the burden of responsibility evenly to prevent any participant overload and burn-out.
27. **Annual Reviews.** Some corporate programs include the employee’s participation and progress in Toastmasters as part of the annual performance review process. Requiring employees to show what progress they have made in *Pathways Learning Experience Curriculum* will increase achievement of educational goals.
28. **Exit Interviews.** Just as HR often conducts exit interviews when an employee departs, the corporate program leadership team must seek feedback on why the participant is leaving. Their input may reveal a blind spot that can be quickly addressed.

*The level people participate in any organization often directly reflects the value they perceive they are receiving from it. If your Toastmasters group is not growing, if attendance is declining, if the excitement the group once had has evaporated, participants are clearly communicating they believe their time is better spent elsewhere. Using the results of a recent Moments of Truth survey, program leaders must take actions—such as some listed above—to restore the group to an organization that participants eagerly seek and support.*