

Build Your Membership with a “Snapshot” Toastmasters Meeting

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A snapshot meeting is a mini-membership-builder. It is not an overnight process resulting in huge gains, but because it gets a lot of people involved in the process periodically over a year's time, the snapshot meeting has a lot of merit. It is yet another way to promote our clubs and Toastmasters in general.

What is a public library snapshot meeting?

This concept was developed when I was VP Membership for the San Carlos - Belmont Club. A snapshot meeting is an abbreviated Toastmasters meeting similar to a demo meeting: It has only one speaker, one evaluator, 3-4 table topics and a lengthy discussion/Q&A (question and answer) section at the end.

How long is the meeting?

The meeting is one hour long and includes everything a regular meeting does except Word of the Day, Grammarian, Vote Tabulator, Ah Counter, or a Business Section.

How do we arrange for a snapshot meeting to take place?

You contact the local public library's director and schedule a date, time and meeting location (generally a corner off to the side of the main room, or a separate conference room). Clapping is kept to a minimum or per Area C2 Governor Louise Wolfe's great suggestion, just shake your hands [by holding them up at eye level and waving them, like applause for the deaf] but don't clap them. Be sure to ask if there is any charge for use of the room. Many libraries now charge a fee for use of a room.

How do we publicize it?

The director of the library generally prefers to generate an in-house library advertisement and posts it in the library on the bulletin board, and also produces flyers and puts them with other free handouts for public access. Check with the director at your location to determine what they prefer.

You can publicize it by creating your own flyers and posting them at coffee houses, government buildings, schools, hospitals, etc. in the vicinity of the public library. Also can post on Craig's List, <http://www.craigslist.org/>, and District 4 under events I believe.

Which materials and handouts should we bring to the meeting?

Come prepared on the date of the meeting with Membership Application forms, pamphlets (available from the Toastmasters International store, <http://www.toastmasters.org/store/>) other handouts about Toastmasters such as the Toastmaster Magazine, a sample Basic Manual for them to look over, an Agenda for the Meeting, and flyers advertising your own club and/or clubs in the vicinity of the public library they can visit.

Is it okay to bring food?

Clear this with the director first, but snacks and beverages are always a plus for these meetings and quickly help break the ice when speaking to hesitant, but interested people.

Be sure to clean up after the meeting and return chairs to their original positions. In the spirit of reciprocity, offer some of your leftover snacks to the director and Library Staff (or offer to whomever is in charge when your meeting takes place if after normal business hours). These snacks are always well received!

How often should we schedule a snapshot meeting?

We scheduled a snapshot meeting at the public library about once every couple of months. We had visitors to our club as a result and there were a few people who became members as a result.

The biggest value was in the public relations and exposure. Just having a Toastmasters meeting in a very visible location as opposed to behind closed doors was meaningful. Many people who had no idea what Toastmasters was walked by and observed, and many took flyers. Some even called the number indicated to inquire further.

The current Belmont Library location is rather small. I believe that a larger library may generate more interest.

Who benefits?

The experience benefits club members who participate. The speaker completes another speech toward their next award. Participants also gain a sense of camaraderie as they work as a team toward club membership goals. There is always the benefit of meeting new people and having the opportunity to practice our communication skills by answering guest questions. We also get to practice our public relations skills by inviting guests to a regular meeting. When we see them show up at a regular meeting, we then get to practice our mentoring skills as we introduce them to club members and sit with them through the club meeting and explain more about Toastmasters.

Who is part of the Snapshot team?

Whoever you want, basically. I recommend the Club President, VPM, VPPR, one speaker, one evaluator, a Timer and table topics master. The guests really enjoy meeting the Club President. They love participating in the Q & A session at the end of the meeting. The President, VPM, or VPPR conducts the Q & A session. Have a handout with FAQs about Toastmasters and about your club in particular, something that your guests can take with them.

What if we don't have enough volunteers?

For clubs who may not have enough volunteers to put on a snapshot meeting, once you have a date certain, broadcast your need for volunteers to conduct such a meeting to the District. With enough advance notice, you should be able to fill the 5 or 6 positions needed to get the job done. Invite a District officer to attend. Give them an opportunity to say a few words (1-2 min.) about Toastmasters at the beginning of the meeting and once again (1-2 min.) at the end. That leaves the guests with a great impression of Toastmasters, as District officers are generally very polished speakers.

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