
HOST 100 ATTENDEES

Open House: Sky Rocket Your Membership Base

Tuesday 5th March 2019, City of London Toastmasters club hosted their first Open House meeting. With ambitious targets of 100 RSVPs and 10 new members, the committee team shares all their best practice to launch and host a successful event.



Challenge:

City of London Toastmasters club is a 24-years old club with a convenient and impressive venue at the heart of the City of London. On the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Tuesday of every month, Saint Botolph's without Aldgate Church comes alive with surprising impromptu speeches, enriching prepared speeches, and encouraging evaluations delivered by the members and guests of City of London Toastmasters. The club has a strong membership base of 56 paid members and has on average 40 to 50

Open House attendees at the end of the meeting in St Botolph's Without Aldgate Church.

How was the club going to gain 10 new members?

attendees to each meeting. Marketing is the strength of the club, ranking at the top of the search results of Google, guests can easily find the club. The welcoming and supportive atmosphere of the club is the other strength of the club, the committee team is working hard to create an inclusive and empowering culture for all. A lot of members at City of London are professionals who are sent on missions or travels outside of London and are unable to commit to joining the club for a full year. The committee team's main challenge was to ensure the club renewals and membership growth targets were in line with the District 91 objective of 70% renewals.

Solution:

The District 91 presented an opportunity in January to get a free box of supplies for clubs who would organise an Open House. After considering it, the committee team agreed that an Open House could drive enough awareness to bring back former members, convince members to renew, as well as convert new visitors. We also saw the opportunity to win the Talk Up Toastmasters! award by gaining 5 new members before March 31st. With 5 existing members not renewing their membership, we set the goal to gain 10 new members. Our club conversion rate to turn a visitor into a member is 20%, however if we only converted 10% of our visitors into members, we could hit our additional 10 members with only 100 RSVPs. All we needed was to get all our current members to bring a friend or colleague or get the word out extensively using every marketing channels. City of London committee team employed a mix of both, here are their secrets.

CRAFTING AN ATTRACTIVE MEETING

City Speakers meet after work from 6.30pm to 9pm, they often continue their conversations at the pub after the meeting leading to many hungry speakers by the end of the night. Knowing the time of the day, offering a collation seemed an evidence as people would stay at least until the collation. Pizza appeared as the most natural choice, most people love it, it can be customised to fit every dietary requirements, and is by far seen as the easiest food to share. We believe the pizza helped convince at least 20% of our visitors to join us.

SEQUENCING THE EVENT LAUNCH

The committee team focused on a structured execution to ensure a successful launch.

1. The committee team locked down the date of the event in line to win a membership award.
2. The event organiser requested the Open House goodie box provided by District D91.
3. Upon reception of the box, the structure of the meeting was agreed by



Ga Lok Chung, DTM
acted as time keeper
for the event.

the committee team.

4. The Eventbrite page was created 1 month before the event date by the VP Membership.
5. The event promotion to the members kicked off on WhatsApp, via emails, and at each meetings.
6. Each contributor was handpicked for their strengths to be showcased during the meeting.
7. The Toastmaster reached out to each helpers to get a little insight on their personal story with Toastmasters.
8. The promotion of the event to people interested in public speaking was launched 1 week before the event date to ensure we hit the RSVP target of 100 attendees.
9. Agendas were printed on the day, signs were put around the church to guide visitors to the venue, and the room was set up 30 minutes before the event doors opened.

All our members knew from one channel or another that the Open House was happening!

PROMOTING YOUR EVENT AMONGST MEMBERS

Before promoting the event, the whole committee team agreed on the messaging: the Open House is a meeting for guests to get a taster for Toastmasters, we invite everyone to bring a +1 to discover the benefits joining the club had on each of us, and show them what it could bring them. The key is messaging is the '+1', all club members were asked "join us to share the benefits of Toastmasters by bringing a friend with you at the meeting".

Once the key message was locked in, City of London Vice President of Membership, Louise Taylor, took the lead and created a video to promote the event. The video was posted it on City Speakers WhatsApp group. Additionally, Louise spoke about the Open house on the 3 meetings preceding the event to create excitement and curiosity around the Open House. She leveraged EasySpeak Mass communication email to invite all members to RSVP on the Eventbrite page she had created. All our members knew through one channel or another that the Open House was happening!



Louise Taylor receiving an award by Florian Bay for organising the Open House.

PROMOTING YOUR EVENT TO PEOPLE INTERESTED IN PUBLIC SPEAKING

Louise collaborated with Vice President of Public Relations, Ryan Joyce, to drive awareness and RSVPs to prospects. By creating the Eventbrite page early and promoting the event as a 'public speaking workshop', a lot of visitors curious about speaking in front of an audience who didn't particularly knew Toastmasters signed up for the event. Eventbrite analytics revealed that setting up the event early and entering a large number of tickets available (120), the algorithm helped us appear in many search results. In layman's terms, Eventbrite really helped the club promote the event for FREE to the right audience.

In addition to the Eventbrite page, City of London club has a great digital presence, Ryan leveraged Louise's promotional video and published it on City of London Toastmasters Website, Instagram and Facebook channels with a clear action "RSVP Today" leading

to our Eventbrite page.

One week before the event, with 70 RSVPs Ryan had to drive the last 30 RSVPs and decided to launch the club's first Facebook ads. By targeting local Men and Women, using the Facebook app 2 mile around the Church, with an interest for 'public speaking', 'personal development', and 'leadership' what could go wrong? The Eventbrite page had hundreds of new visitors yet no RSVPs directly came from the Facebook Ad but with a budget of £12 it was worth a try.

The execution of the meeting was as important as the preparation of the event.

MAKING THE EVENT A SUCCESS

The event was a success because of the robust team in place during the event.

The event wouldn't have run so smoothly without members greeting guests, signing off visitors from the Eventbrite attendee list, providing name badges to each visitor, getting volunteers signed up for the table topics, organising the pizza delivery, cutting the 9 pizzas, arranging soft drinks for 100 people, collecting and counting the feedback and ballot slips, keeping the event running on time, taking pictures of the event, and having committee members collecting members forms from interested guests. The execution of the meeting was as important as the preparation of the event.

HAVE A STRONG TEAM LEADING THE EVENT

Last but not least, the team behind the event planning is paramount. Once the Open House was mentioned by the President to the committee team in their quarterly meeting, Louise stepped up and took the lead of organising this event. Louise was given full ownership, the brief was broad: organising an event for members to drive enough memberships for us to afford an additional meeting per month. Louise took the brief and made it happen thanks to the supportive culture of the club and its members. Everyone assisted in their own way to making this event a success and it was everybody coming together that inspired the committee to want to repeat that exercise.



Table Topic "Bingo" session mastered by Hugh McCarthy.

Results:

City of London Toastmasters succeeded in getting 100 RSVPs via the Eventbrite page! A few attendees entered the church to pray but stayed with us the whole evening. Other visitors ended up coming last minute without a RSVP. The Church was beaming with positive energy, supportive feedback, encouraging conversations. Never had the church been so overwhelmingly busy, it was thrilling to be able to share the power of Toastmasters with so many people. The table topics saw 19 guests come up in front of the large audience and deliver their first ever impromptu speeches. Everyone was so brave and it was truly beautiful to witness people realising that they too can do public speaking!

Outside the RSVPs target being hit and the collective effort demonstrated by the club, the best result was the 10 new memberships gained as a result of this event.

Additionally, following the feedback from members and guests, City of London will repeat this event annually and will help share their best practice with other clubs for them to experience the benefits of an Open House.

Watch out for the next Open House for City of London Toastmaster in March 2020!



**Interactive Evaluation
session run by
Christine Harris.**



Rachel De Cesaro went above and beyond as Toastmaster.



Cristelle Delaporte opening the meeting in front of a full house.



Tim Cummins 10th Speech from the Competent Communicator Manual.



Sarah Bergin completing her Ice Breaker from the Persuasive Influence path.
