7/23/09

Division Speech Contests
Best Practices

Dear District Executive Officers-

Last year, as Division E Governor, I held two contests: the Fall Humorous Speech Contest and the Spring Inspirational Speech Contest. **65** people attended the fall contest, and **55** people attended the spring contest.

Best Practices:
Steps…

1. I asked my Area Governors to e-mail their club Presidents and speak with club officers about the contest.
2. Within the next two weeks, I called each club President (or V.P. of Education if I could not reach the President). I spoke with the President (or V.P. Ed) or left a message.

Typical Voice Message:

"Hello Bob, this is Ben Lappen calling from Toastmasters. I'm just calling to share with you that the Spring Inspirational Speech contest is coming up on April 25th! It's a really exciting night - some of the best speakers in the Area will be competing - all to see who will move to the next stage in the *International Speech Contest*. I'm calling because I think it will be a really fun, educational experience for the members of your club, and I'd love to speak more about it with you. Please call me at ###"

Example of a conversation:

Me: "Hello Bob, this is Ben Lappen from Toastmasters."
Bob: "Hi Ben, how are you? What's happening?"
Me: "well Bob, we haven't had a chance to meet yet – I'm the Division Governor, I work with [x] Area Governor."
Bob: "oh okay."
Me: "I don't know if [x] Area Governor has mentioned this to you yet, but I'm calling to share with you a special Toastmaster event that is happening around your Area. It's the Division level of the International Speech Contest. Some of the best speakers in the Area will be competing in [name local town], all to see who will move to the next stage in the *International Speech Contest*. I'm calling because I think it will be a really fun, educational experience for the members in your club, if anyone is able to attend."
Bob: "Sounds interesting."
Me: "Yeah, do you think anyone from your club might like to attend?"
Bob: "Yeah, send me an e-mail. Sounds like a fun night, and I'll make sure the members of my club know about it."

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3. After the conversation by phone, I followed up with an e-mail:

> Hello Bob,
> Great speaking with you by phone today! I hope to see you at the Division Contest. Please review the following information on the contest and forward the info to the members of your club:
>
> The address:
> **Bose Corporation, Corporate Center**
> **100 Mountain Ave, Framingham, MA, 01701, United States**
>
> The time: **7:00-8:30pm.** Date: **Thursday, April 25th.**
> **<u>Please arrive by 6:45 sharp.</u>**
>
> The benefits to your members:
> *They will have a chance to see polished speakers deliver entertaining speeches
> *They will have an opportunity to network with many exceptional and influential members in the District
> *They will have a good time and come to understand more benefits they can gain out of Toastmasters

4. **I asked Bob (and other club Presidents) to confirm with me who was going.** This way, I had a list of people who were coming and I knew what size crowd to prepare for.
5. Followed up. Confirmed people.

Note To Division Governors: Area Governors also play a large role in making sure people come. By virtue of their role as Area Governors, they have more relationships with local members than you do. Make sure to get them on board, and ask them to emphasize the contest to their clubs.

Note About Time Management: it might seem that the above approach takes more time than simply throwing together a Division Contest for 15 people. This is not necessarily the case. People who have small contests typically worry about two details that do not come up in larger contests: a) who is going to take what role? If you hold a small contest, you will most likely be worrying about who is going to judge, time, count, or even if you will have enough people in the audience to hold a proper contest. There can be confusion, and often stress to make sure all roles are filled. b) Smaller contests might require that you, the Division or Area Governor, do a larger percentage of the work. More time is spent trying to find judges, a contest master, a chief judge – perhaps even some arm twisting is needed. Larger contests, however, automatically have a large pool to choose from and you can delegate most tasks.

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