



# District Director Report

15 April 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to lead the District and grow as a person. There is no doubting that this has been a difficult year in many aspects but an amazing challenge at the same time.

It has been heartening watching many members come through as leaders; from being confident to express their views, get the job done, meet deadlines, and mostly complete what we said we would complete.

Marketing has been consistent throughout the year and, with analytics on the website, it has been able to be measured and adapted when required. We took advantage of an opportunity to tap into more reserves for promotion. This has been spent on many activities from funding the partial development of the new website, promotional materials, Facebook advertising, the Club Promotional Fund, club promotional incentives and more.

Membership is dependent on many things and we have felt the impact of clubs without venues, needing to go online, members with competing time commitments and, possibly, from members needing to do more work with online contests and the online learning experience. Historically, the product has been delivered in-person and it will be interesting to see how the gradual move back to that platform influences numbers.

New membership has started to ramp up in the last month especially. At time of writing, the number of new members is on a par with last year. These people are seeing value and, with some consolidation, we hope more and more will see and tap into the opportunity membership has.

Pathways continues to be problematic for some and the best thing since sliced bread for others. I feel we would benefit from recognising that members' opinions are all valid, whatever they may be. Successful businesses listen to their customers and endeavour to tend to all their needs. I feel we can do that in Toastmasters by delivering the projects online in Basecamp and making it easier to access the project files through other means too. This idea and others have been communicated to Toastmasters International along with the comments of members. There is a review occurring at present, though no timeline has been communicated for when any changes may occur.

Creating opportunities this year has been less than past years, mostly due to online activities. As the year progressed, more members received opportunities and I am sure this will continue. It is so important to expose members to greater challenges and higher learning and it is empowering to see those challenges embraced. Members come and members go. The need for new presenters, leaders, administrators, and organisers is constant and, whilst it can be hard to let go of the reins for some, there are invariably other reins to grab and projects to drive. This is one of the true strengths of the Toastmasters organisation.

This year has seen the most clubs close in any year in memory. It has been sad to hear stories of clubs close that were chartered by current members to receive their DTMs. However, the environment has seen clubs struggle for attendance, venues, competing priorities of members, employment changes, all manner of things. I thank the many people who tried gallantly to continue – all anyone can do is to do their best. We hope members of these clubs have found new clubs to attend and continue their journeys. It is a reminder that, however strong clubs are, it is important to be vigilant for when the winds of change blow.

Earlier this week I was reminded, simply, by a past District Director who said, "it's all about keeping up the standards." Our clubs, areas, divisions and districts are the results of where our standards are set. Are they high enough? Are we prepared to stand up for them? Are we aligned in pursuing them? A united team will keep everyone accountable so everyone reaps the rewards.

Lastly, I am proud of the efforts of the District Team, thank you. This is a diverse team of members all pursuing what they feel is the right direction. It has been great to hear your views, read your reports and feel the enthusiasm, energy and positivity. I am glad to see mistakes have been made and owned and successes have been had and celebrated. This is where we can try new things, take risks, and do things differently or the same and it's ok. Anyone looking for a new challenge would be well served by having a go in the coming year. You will meet people you wouldn't normally meet, do tasks you wouldn't normally do, learn about Toastmasters and also learn more about you.

**D72 District Director 2020-2021**

Rob Woolley