



District Director Report

9/4/2022

This has been a tale of two halves this year, the first six months have been relatively settled and we as a District made plans and decisions based on those conditions. However, the first three months of 2022 changed all those plans and the District leadership team had to make some difficult decisions regarding Contests and face to face events. To lose the in-person conference for a third year was a particularly hard pill to swallow but the fact that the pandemic finally turned up in our District did not leave us with a choice.

The period since the Christmas break has seen the District enter the “perfect storm” of the pandemic and the economic conditions which are having a huge impact on the April renewals period. With many clubs struggling to meet in person and not having a good grasp of meeting using the hybrid method, as well as Zoom fatigue, growing membership has been difficult. The economic situation has meant some members have decided not to renew their membership. Five clubs have made the decision to close and there are a number of low membership clubs who are starting to struggle both financially and with member engagement.

Many clubs are not advertising or struggling to get the marketing of their clubs right so that they are not attracting new members. However, those clubs who have got it right are growing new members (especially in the Wellington Divisions) and there are quite a few clubs across the entire District, who have grown by four new members and a couple that have grown by eight new members, which shows us that people are still looking at Toastmasters.

District Team

I am especially proud of the Area Directors, Division Directors and members of the top table who have stepped up this year, it has been an absolute privilege to see these people grow as leaders. I set a rule at the start of the year that we would be open and honest with each other, and the District team have followed that rule, with most decisions we made this year vigorously debated in a positive and member focused way.

The fact that District Parliamentarian Denis McCord was the only person on the District leadership team who was doing a role for the second or more time is quite incredible and as a District we must be proud of the fact that we grew so many new leaders this year. We also expanded the Training and Tech teams which sets the future of the District on a good path.

The District team tried to honor the Districts mandate of in-person contests and many Division and Area Directors elected to do four contests at one event to try and mitigate the ongoing covid threat. This resulted in the Area Directors and Division Directors having to take on the challenge of running online contests at short notice. While we had some learnings to take forward they should all be very proud of what they delivered.

The Area Directors completed the new Club visit reports very well and while the new format is an improvement from the previous version there are some learnings that they can pass on to next year’s Area Directors.

Training

The quality of the training this year has again stepped up a level. District officer and Club officer training was exceptional and innovative. The entire training team should be very proud of what they delivered this year. While the numbers for the second round of club officer training was a little disappointing, that was a result of the environment we were operating in in the second round period however those officers who attended were very engaged and I am sure learnt something new. I wish to thank Kathryn and the entire training team for their huge effort over the year.

Marketing

This year the Trio looked at different ways to market Toastmasters to the public and came up with some new ideas that we hadn't tried before. The TVNZ on Demand advertising that we did in conjunction with D112 seems to have generated traffic to the website and while we cannot quantify that to new members as such having more people looking at our website is a positive.

The advertising material produced for clubs, Areas and Divisions use seems to have gone over well with supplies being snapped up quickly.

I take this time to thank Glen for the huge amount of effort he put into marketing this year.

This year Brad as PRM focused the Facebook advertising and content growing the Toastmasters brand and I have been impressed with the effort he has put into it. The District newsletter is a much improved version and the feedback that Brad has received from the membership has been very positive and he should be proud of what he produced this year.

Website

Brad as Webmaster has been very busy over the year refurbishing the website and the results are a much-improved member experience and there is a plan to add more resources to the page to help make it an even more useful tool for the members.

Finance

This has been a challenge this year as we had a smaller budget than previous years and the increased costs we faced because of the economic conditions made decision making difficult.

The District team delayed some marketing plans to later in the year to try and find a sweet spot to maximize the impact. This has meant that we were behind our marketing spend for the first six months of the year.

The cancellation of the in-person District events such as the Conference has also had an impact on the budget. Tony our Finance Manager has done a very good job getting reimbursements done quickly and efficiently. I am sure it has been a very challenging year for Tony and that he has grown a lot as a toastmaster.

Administration

Kayleen has done an amazing job of making sure that the District team have completed all the admin tasks this year. I certainly would have been lost without Kayleen giving me gentle reminders of what needs to be done and by when.

District Parliamentarian

With so many new District officers this year many of whom had little or no experience in parliamentary procedure I would like to thank Carol and Denis for the effort that they put in this year. As the District Director having their knowledge a phone call or email away was invaluable to my growth as a leader.

I will finish my report by thanking the multitude of volunteers and mentors who have helped the District out over the year, your efforts and knowledge at all levels of the District has been invaluable. It is your contribution to the District that has made my year as District Director the most enjoyable experience of my life.

David O'Brien

D72 District Director 2021-2022