

## 10 Top Tips for Area Directors

The following tips are in no particular order. They are my tips, nobody else's. Everyone will have their own, but I hope they will be of help to some Area Directors in the coming months. Having written these 10, I promptly thought of at least 5 items that are equally important, so have fun and think of your own.

### 1. Get Organized

Buy a portable organizer like this: (Snopake brand is good quality)



I am the first to admit to not being the most organized person in the world, but this year has made me become more organized and therefore more efficient. The key has been my file organizer which I take everywhere with me. Broadly this is divided into 2 groups; my personal TM items, AG items.

In my personal section I have sections for my current Communication manuals, current Leadership projects, HPL project, copy of the education program etc.

In the AG section I have sections for:

- Club Constitution
- Club Leadership Manual
- District Leadership Manual
- AG Visit forms
- New club information; forms, flyers etc..
- Membership building kit
- Agendas (every meeting I have attended this year)
- Spare contest forms and rulebook
- Etc.

This folder has saved me so many times I can't imagine how I would have managed without.

### 2. Be Visible – Often

Visit your clubs as often as possible. Your 'official' 2 club visits are the bare minimum. Being visible regularly keeps you informed and able to spot possible problems early. It also makes it much easier to write effective AG reports as you have more information and experience available to you. Speaking regularly to club officers and members gives you an insight into their concerns which can be useful when putting together your COT sessions.

As well as this, don't neglect your own club. You should aim to be there no less frequently than you were when you weren't AG.

### 3. Appoint Assistants

Assistants can help lift some of the burdens that come with the AG role. Many of us have a vision of ways to improve the clubs in our area, but all too little time to implement them, use your assistants to help. This achieves several things, it gives them something to focus on that is of benefit to the area, it may provide them with a task that they wish to continue should they later be elected as an AG, it contributes to their personal growth, it keeps them out of mischief ;) By serving as an assistant AG, a member will be better prepared if they subsequently become an AG, so you are setting your area up for continued and increased success.

### 4. Make sure every club prepares a club success plan

Not an obvious point. Every club should create a club success plan, it's part of the Club Leadership Handbook and it's a requirement for the ALB award but is still often overlooked. We should note that the format of the CSP has changed in the last couple of years and is now more detailed and comprehensive than it was in the past. Clubs should complete a Club Success Plan (CSP) at their first club officer meeting after taking over. Doing so provides a focus for what can otherwise be a chaotic meeting; many officers take up their role full of ideas to 'improve' their club but fail to concentrate on what is important for continued success. The CSP ensures that their initial focus is on building, and maintaining teamwork that leads to success.

When you visit a club for the first time, ask to see their CSP. If they haven't completed one, make sure they do, and keep asking until they can produce it.

### 5. Get your official visits in early

If you follow point 2, your official visits should be easy. When making visits ensure that you leave enough time afterwards to write up your report, circulate it to the club, make amendments, finalize and then submit to TI. This can take 2-3 weeks PER REPORT. There are various versions of the report that have been produced in Word format. I suggest recording your findings in one of these so that you can circulate it to the club. When it comes to submitting to TI you can then easily copy and paste the relevant sections to the online form; this only takes about 30 mins. per club if you have followed this process. Otherwise it can be a major chore.

Official club reports are vital if you wish your Area to be distinguished. For your Area to be distinguished you need your clubs to be distinguished, but you need to do your bit too. In my view it is an insult to their efforts if you can't be bothered to do your bit by compiling and submitting reports on time.

### 6. Delegate (Club Officer Training/COT & Contests – Assistants)

Delegation is difficult, for me at least. At heart many of us have 'control freak' tendencies. Now is the time to let them go. COT sessions and Contests are the ideal opportunities to delegate. If you have assistants, get them to do the work. At a contest the contest chair and chief judge have most work to do so get your assistants to do it. At a COT session, get them to deliver and lead a workshop.

### 7. Always have a speech ready – do a manual

No excuses – you should be able to complete 10 speeches in a year. If you are following point 2, you will be making lots of visits as well as attending your own club. You will get ample opportunities to deliver speeches, make sure you are prepared to deliver them.

### 8. Know the club constitution

Everyone should know and understand the club constitution, in particular club officers. Few do. In some respects I hope you never need to refer to it, mostly it's a sign of trouble when you do. However it is essential that you understand what the constitution says; many members, club officers, and not a few AGs, think you have far

more power than you do. Remember the member – it's they who wield power not you – and if you think otherwise you need to go and read the constitution.

## 9. Know who your support network is

Hopefully by the time you take up the role of AG you will have built up a network of TM friends who can help you when you need it. Your Division governor, past AGs, past Division/District Governors, other District officers, your TM Peers, club officers you have worked with in the past. You will be surprised how many people you know who can and will support you. Don't be afraid to ask.

I couldn't have got through this year without the help of my TM friends and support network, too numerous to mention by name.

If you have a non-TM partner at home, remember them too. You couldn't do this without them.

## 10. Grasp every opportunity

You have 12 months to partner with your clubs, make the most of them. Take every opportunity that comes your way.

Someone mentions the possibility of a new club/speechcraft; get involved, encourage, help organize, be there.

Go to both of your District Conferences; use them to network, get known, and learn.

If you are asked to help on a District committee, do it even if you think you are out of your depth. If you are asked then somebody believes in you, so take the chance and learn.

ENJOY every minute and good luck!

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