



TOASTMASTERS SURVEY

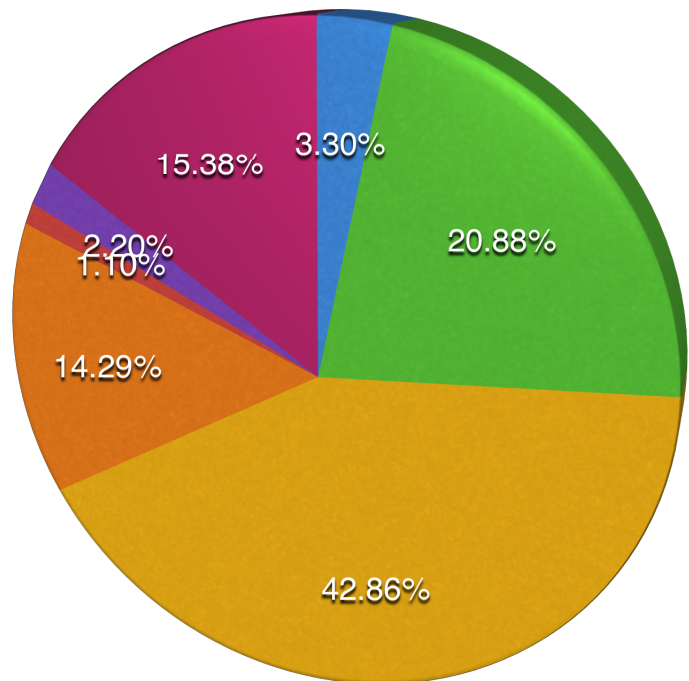
by Jennifer Kwan



What do individuals benefit most from their Toastmasters experience? What can we do to make Toastmasters a better experience for individuals?

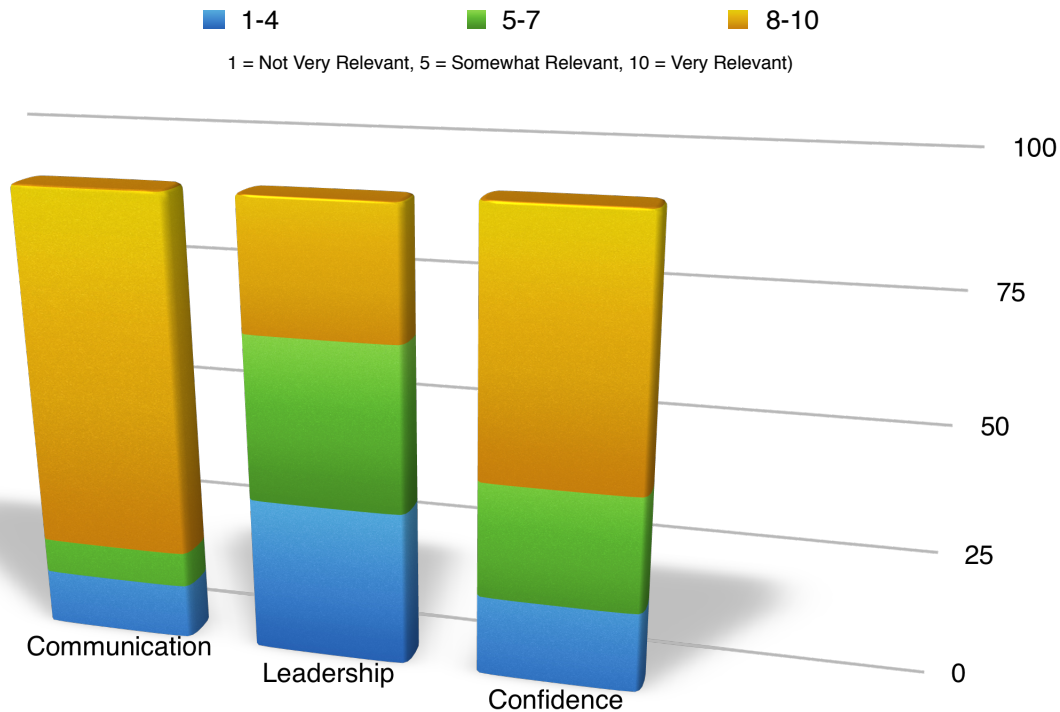
The Toastmasters Survey was conducted Fall 2015 to explore what works well and what could be improved upon to make Toastmasters most beneficial for individuals. In total, 91 responses were collected from members, former members, and guests from mainly the Founder's District area. The greatest number of survey participants were club officers and members, which will help us get a good inside look at the club level experience.

- Non-Members
- Members
- Club Officers
- Area/Division/District Officers
- Former Members
- Former Club Officers
- Former Area/Division/District Officers



....more people joined Toastmasters in order to develop their communication skills and build confidence than to work on leadership skills.

In reviewing the data collected, the responses showed that more people joined Toastmasters in order to develop their communication skills and build confidence than to work on leadership skills. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = Not Very Relevant, 5 = Somewhat Relevant, 10 = Very Relevant), more individuals reported that working on communication and confidence were of greater relevance to them.



When we asked our survey participants what they liked most about Toastmasters, the most frequent responses included **growth opportunities in a supportive environment, the chance to practice and develop skills, and building confidence**. When we asked what they thought members benefit most from Toastmasters, they answered with similar responses. Further data collected from this survey revealed that our Toastmasters who choose to stay active do so because they desire to continue their progress, and help others through the mentoring and camaraderie of the club environment.

When we asked our survey participants what they did not like about Toastmasters, the most frequent responses included **lack of commitment, participation, or motivation from fellow club members, and the need to improve structure at club meetings**. In addition, almost an additional tenth of our survey participants noted that just a few people are doing all of the work at their clubs. This could be the reason for why some of the club meetings are lacking structure.

....a rise in leadership would greatly add value to the club experience.

From collecting and reviewing the data here, it appears that a rise in leadership would greatly add value to the club experience. If our data is a reflection of what Toastmasters clubs beyond the Founder's District are experiencing as well, then guests who become members are making it a greater priority to work on their communication skills and building confidence before they consider working on their leadership skills. If we continue at that rate, Toastmasters will then continue to see a lack of commitment at their clubs with just a few leaders taking on the load.

The good news is we are paving the way for individuals to get their goals met in our Toastmasters clubs. What we can do from here is find a way to close the gap between

communication and leadership. If we see more members take on leadership tasks, thus more commitment, we can see some of our greatest concerns at the club level decrease.

What can we do to motivate members to step up as leaders?

What can we do to motivate members to step up as leaders? This is a great question that will take some time to explore. From my own observations, I have noticed that members tend to be active in the Communication Track of the Toastmasters Educational Program and neglect the Leadership Track. I have also noticed that there is a tendency for a few club officers to wear more than one hat in order to keep the club functioning.

When I first joined Toastmasters, I was not interested in taking on a leadership role. It was the least of my priorities. Like many of the survey participants, my goal was to work on my communication skills and confidence. In addition, I did not believe I was qualified to take on any kind of leadership. But I had great mentors in my club who encouraged me to take on small roles here and there. I started out helping the Sergeant at Arms set up for club meetings. Then I moved on to help make a few announcements at club meetings and prepare club events. Then I worked on projects towards the Competent Leadership manual. Eventually, I would find myself active in leadership roles within my club and beyond. Perhaps encouraging individuals in the smaller things first is something that we can do in our clubs. It would alleviate the pressure of making a huge commitment and eliminate the feeling of receiving an overwhelming amount of responsibility. Over time individuals will become familiar with club logistics, which would make them more likely to feel at ease about becoming more involved. Providing small leadership tasks for members to start off with can be a valuable means of club leadership training.

A few initial ideas come to mind to expand leadership participation in our clubs....

- **Make sure all club officers receive Toastmasters club officer training and understand their roles within the club.**
- **Educate new members and existing members of the various club officer roles, and regular club meeting roles to help them understand what makes the club function.**
- **Have existing club officers develop projects for new members and existing members to assist with.**
- **Have existing club officers delegate tasks for new members and existing members at club meetings.**
- **Emphasize the Leadership Track of the Toastmasters Educational Program and Competent Leadership manual projects at club meetings.**
- **Have a mentorship program with structure.**

Perhaps many of our members are not ready or do not believe they are ready to take on a big leadership role yet. However, we can start them out with small tasks at club meetings and educate them along the way. In time, maybe we will find ourselves with more committed members becoming more involved in our clubs and even challenging themselves to serve as club officers. I will be implementing these strategies at my own club and look forward to observing the results.