

On Being Part of the Senior Leadership Team

In District 45, we have four positions as part of the Senior Leadership Team – Public Relations Manager (PRM), Club Growth Director (CGD), Program Quality Director (PQD) and District Director (DD). Unlike most Districts, our PRM is elected and is considered in the line of succession. It is hoped that when someone is elected as PRM, he or she will continue to move through the chairs to District Director. This allows for better continuity in the District and allows more time for one to grow into the DD position.

Because the PRM is generally not considered to be in the line of succession, there are no prerequisites to serve in this role. However, it is recommended that the PRM has at least met the prerequisites for CGD. If not, those prerequisites would have to be met while serving as PRM to be able to move on to CGD and above. The PRM is responsible for coordinating publicity efforts in the District. By establishing and maintaining lines of communication between the District and its members, as well as between the District and the public, the PRM works to increase awareness of Toastmasters through all available media. The PRM is responsible for the District newsletter, the District website and social media sites as well as sending press releases on significant events within the District. The PRM is encouraged to have a team to handle most of these efforts.

The CGD is responsible for all aspects of marketing, club building and club-retention efforts within the district. This includes defining an overall marketing strategy for the district, developing outreach and retention efforts with existing community and corporate clubs and penetrating new markets. Additionally, the club growth director supports challenged clubs and helps them to become Distinguished. To be club growth director, you must have served at least six consecutive months as club president and at least 12 consecutive months as a program quality director, club growth director, division director or area director.

The PQD is responsible for all aspects of education and training within the district. This includes supporting quality club programming efforts, promoting the Distinguished Club Program and planning, organizing and executing the district conference. The PQD is also responsible for promoting and supporting club quality and member retention. The PQD sets the agenda for the TLIs which are to be organized by the Division Directors. To be program quality director, you must have served at least six consecutive months as club president and at least 12 consecutive months as a program quality director, club growth director, division director or area director.

The District Director is responsible for directly administering and overseeing the district's day-to-day operations, finances and human resources. The DD empowers the district leadership team members to work together toward the district mission, while supporting each one in his or her development as a leader. To serve as district director, you must have served at least six consecutive months as a club president and at least 12 consecutive months as a program quality director, club growth director or division director, or a combination thereof at the time you take office.

The Senior Leadership team conducts the District officer training in July for Area and Division Directors. The District Director, Program Quality Director and Club Growth Director must also attend the training provided just prior to the International Convention and the mid-year training conducted by World

Headquarters. The Senior Leadership team members must attend the District conferences. They participate in regular conference calls as a team and supplemental conference calls with Division and Area Directors. To be a member of the Senior Leadership team requires a significant time commitment in each of the four years and requires the ability to work effectively with various teams.

There is reimbursement available for much of the travel done as a Senior Leadership team member. Full details on the expenses for which you can be reimbursed are included in the District procedures which can be found on the website.

A number of past District Governors/Directors were asked their thoughts on District leadership. They were asked what the best thing about being a District leader was, what their biggest challenge was and why they would encourage others to offer for District leadership. Their comments follow.

The Best Thing About Being a District Leader

Former leaders said the best thing about being a District leader was seeing the growth in others and the growth in themselves. Getting to work with so many Toastmasters in the District and in other Districts around the world was also seen as a positive. Comments were:

Putting myself out there in spite of uncertainty about whether I was up for the task - and discovering that I WAS up for it! Amazing things happen when you put yourself in a leadership position where the responsibility for making something happen is suddenly yours - it puts pressure on you to perform, but at the same time brings out the best in you.

I would say the best thing was getting to work with so many wonderful people and getting to know so many people around the globe. I really enjoyed working with the executive teams that lead up to my DG year - wonderful people.

It was the privilege and honour in serving all of our District 45 members. There was also the opportunities to network with other District leaders from around the world at conventions and at district leader trainings.

Best part was enabling the team to achieve success. We finished #7 in the world. People love being part of a team that achieves results. People love to achieve.

For me the most rewarding aspect of being a District Leader was observing the personal growth of other Toastmasters first hand. Being able to help motivate and inspire others in their personal journey was extremely exciting, rewarding but also very humbling. As a District Leader, I too was able to grow in areas that I didn't expect when first taking on the role. In one word, the best thing about being a District Leader is "Growth"

One of the best things about being a District leader is getting to see another side to what Toastmasters has to offer you. To take a step outside of your club and become an Area Director is a big leap but there are so many great leaders around supporting you through your journey. Everyone wants you to succeed and continue on the path. Before your year is over you have met people from not only your Area but many from your Division. For me it was my first exposure to District conferences – I was hooked. All the people from three provinces and three states in one place together, with one goal in common – to learn and have fun. The next logical step was to run

for a position on the District Executive. As I worked up through the District Executive I had three years to hone my leadership skills in the various roles as LG Marketing, LG Education and Training and District Director. I got to attend three International Conventions and train with Toastmasters from around the world. I heard their stories and built on their excitement- brings totally different perspectives to the roles you are taking. Again I have made friends, seen places I only dreamed of as a child, got to encourage and help others fulfill their dreams as I fulfilled mine. What more could one person ask for???

To me, one of the best things about being a District leader was having the opportunity to benefit from the experience of past District leaders in other Districts. Their experiences helped me to grow and to bring back ideas that could help District 45 succeed.

Challenges

The time commitment was a big challenge for many of the former leaders, particularly balancing the time needed for Toastmasters with work and home life. Another major challenge for some was learning to work effectively with a team.

I lost a key member of my team at a critical point in the TM year. My initial reaction was to panic. But I stayed calm, read the policy manual to learn the formal process for filling the role, involved others on the team who were impacted and then acted. In the end, what could have been a big problem was reduced to a bump in our road to a successful, Distinguished year.

My biggest challenge was balancing work, TM and home. When I was a District leader (LGM, LGET and DG), I worked full time in Concord (1 hour commute one way), I would spend about 2-3 hours almost every night on TM stuff. Sometimes, there would be meetings out of the house, but often, on the weekends I'd get up at 4-5 AM so I could get my TM work done before my husband was ready for me to spend the weekend with him. It was a VERY long 4 year stint.

While there were several challenges during my district service years, none were unsurmountable with the assistance and guidance of former district leaders, the region advisors, the international directors and WHQ staff.

Challenge was helping people see how they could contribute to team success. If people see how they can contribute they do amazing work. If people don't see how they can contribute, the core team bears a heavier load and needs some luck to achieve results

Time! New underestimate the amount of time it takes to do a job well.

The biggest challenge in being a District Leader is working with a Team. There will always be conflict of personalities, we are all hard-wired differently. People need to check their egos at the door and remember as a member of the District Team it's not your year, it's your year to serve the members whether you're the Area Director right up to the District Director. Trying to deal with that and keep things running smoothly is tough. And don't forget, people are volunteering to do these jobs and other things that pay the bills and family commitments will take priority.

The biggest challenge for me was others not living up to their commitment. Everyone has challenges with balancing time but I feel, if you take on a role, you need to find the time to

execute it properly and if you can't fill the requirements of the role, let someone know. Ask for help – it's usually there or in the worst scenarios, resign from the position so it can be filled by someone who has the time to do the job. I had two team members who, for various reasons, could not do their job. One resigned and while it was a challenge to fill the position, we were able to do so and things worked out. The other person did not resign. They just kept saying they would do things but never followed through and that was a much more frustration situation.

Why You Would Encourage Others to Serve

The reason that former leaders would encourage others to serve can best be summarized as “it’s an experience of a lifetime” and it’s one that will help you in more ways that you might imagine. Former District leaders noted:

For me, it was a life changer. It notched up my level of professionalism; it reinforced the discipline of following up on commitments and leading by example; it gave me the confidence to know that I could succeed if I put my mind to it - all of which have helped me greatly in my work from a home office now!

You never know what you can do unless you try. I really did and still do believe in the TM program - after leaving District leadership I did take on an Area Governor role and earned another DTM - so I am a believer. I think you really learn a lot about the TM program when you are a District Leader... you learn how the numbers stack up (thanks Heather), you learn why the numbers are important, you get to give lots of speeches, you get to travel, you get to enjoy the company of people around the world. You also learn that not everyone who is on your team is a team player and you have to deal with those things too.

I would encourage members that see “outside the box” and have vision for enhancing practices in our District to step up and hop on the District 45 leadership ladder. From Public Relations Manager to District Director (elected positions) as well as the Finance Manager and Administration Manager (appointed roles) – each position provides a plethora of learning and guiding other district team members and the membership of District 45. It is magical to state you are a District leader and to represent the members in our District. There is a wealth of knowledge and expertise in our members and I know that there are many Leaders who haven't stepped up, for personal reasons and professional requirements. But I wish they would! Please step up D45 members!!!

I encourage people to fill these roles because if they're smart about their efforts, they'll learn how to motivate people and teams to achieve results. These are transferable skills. However if they aren't smart about their efforts, or are interested in only a credit or title, they won't experience personal development and will in fact impede the larger team.

If you have a desire to help others grow while being part of a dynamic team that pushes District 45 towards success, then a role as a District Leader is the path you will certainly want to go down. The bonus will be that you will personally grow beyond your wildest expectations! It is a journey worth taking

I was speaking with PID Ross McKay in the Washington, DC airport on my way home from Convention last August and he asked what was next for me. I told him that I was considering

putting my name forward for Regional Advisor but I would probably take a year off first. I told him how much I had loved the roles that I had held and how much I loved helping people and watching them grow. I told him it must be the “Mommy” in me – that I liked to nurture people. I almost wore the cup of tea he was drinking. He said he had never thought of it that way – and he was going to steal that line. The benefits that you get out of serving on the District Leadership are many. We each get self-confidence, self-assurance, confidence, inspiration, passion, patience, open-mindedness to name a few. We each received these at different level and degrees and then we have the chance to share them with other. My favorite quote from Dr. Ralph Smedley has always been “Ours is the only organization I know dedicated to the individual, we work together to bring out the best in each of us and then we apply these skills to help others.”

I would encourage others to become a District leader because your growth in communication and leadership skills will be phenomenal. Yes, your communication skills improve as well – both in communicating one-on-one and to groups. I had an Area Governor tell me that what he learned through practical experience as an Area Governor was far more than he would learn from a university course and for far less money! Overall, being a District leader should be, and is, fun! The friends you make during your journey, both from within the District and from other Districts, will be friends for life. It’s an experience you will never forget and, if done right, will never regret.