



# TASTER COURSES

## TIPS, IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS

If you have any new tips, ideas or suggestions, please email them to the Development Officer.

These notes will be updated from time to time

**Please also see the notes on "Recruitment" and "Retention"**

### **WHAT IS A TASTER COURSE**

- A "Special Event" designed especially for visitors to show them the benefits of your Speakers Club and specifically to recruit new members. You could call it a taster course, an introduction session, a demonstration evening or anything else you like.
- For some clubs taster courses are their main recruitment tool – some clubs hold one every year.
- It might be:
  - A single session in an evening
  - A half or one day event at a weekend
  - A series of two or three evenings
  - Held in place of your usual club evenings
  - Additional to your usual club evenings

### **ADVERTISING**

- It is easier, and more effective, to advertise a single event, like a taster course, than "ordinary" club evenings.
- "Blitz" your advertising – this may be all that you need for the year!
  - Advertise on your web site
  - Ask for an item to be included on the National Website District Pages
  - Posters and leaflets everywhere you can think of (including at the venue)
  - Tell other local groups who might have members who would be interested (eg Rotary, Chamber of Commerce, etc)
  - Tell friends, neighbours and passers by in the street!
  - Free newspapers, magazines, local radio etc

- Consider paying for a one off advert
  - Contact local employers
  - Etc, etc, etc
- Direct your advertising bearing in mind the existing membership – if your existing members are all “retired” then if all the visitors to the taster course are young business people who come in search of help with presentations at work then:
    - Your visitors may not stay because they will not see the existing members as relevant to them, or people with whom they would want to be friends
    - Your existing members may be put off by an influx of young business types who only want to learn how to make sales presentations

The best visitors to a taster course are a complete mix of age ranges! Promote this in your advertising.

## **FORMAT**

- There is no set format but remember that you are trying to show prospective members:
  - ✓ What Speakers Club can do for them (public speaking, confidence.....)
  - ✓ How Speakers Club works (the assignments, topics.....)
  - ✓ How Speakers Club has benefited existing members
  - ✓ That they would enjoy coming along, both for the public speaking and the friendliness

The taster course therefore needs to incorporate demonstrations of each and all of these.

- Consider a mixture of:
  - ✓ Demonstration speeches from the manual (choose ones in the middle range)
  - ✓ Demonstration evaluations
  - ✓ Chairmanship skills
  - ✓ Explanations as to how it all works and what a typical evening comprises
  - ✓ “Why I joined and why I stayed” speeches from existing members
  - ✓ Training sessions so that those who attend can go home with some tangible extra skill to show for their attendance – eg speech construction, use of voice, chairmanship....
  - ✓ Consider aspects outside the normal ASC meeting format - for example, use of Powerpoint, microphones.....
  - ✓ Topics sessions or similar so that those who attend can “have a go” (whether they like it or not!)
  - ✓ Time for social contact – prospective members need to see that everyone is friendly, the atmosphere is non-threatening and that they will enjoy themselves; plan for a longer than normal interval
- Consider handouts, or notes and provide any literature about the ASC

## **WHO DOES WHAT**

- Get speakers from amongst your existing members, nearby clubs, Area, District and even National officers.
- Make sure (especially if you are holding the sessions in place of your usual meetings) that you involve all of the existing members sufficiently to ensure that they do not feel “left out” or alienated. Consider using a “buddy system” where each member looks after a visitor, and is their point of contact.
- Ensure that visitors are introduced to your club president and before they leave you have their contact details!!

## **CHARGES**

- Consider a one off charge for the duration of the taster course (perhaps £15 or £20 for a full day or three evenings).
- Consider offsetting that charge (or part of it) against the first year’s membership of your speakers club in the event that the visitor joins the club, or maybe provide a free Speakers Guide for those who join.

*Rosemary Harris - National Development Officer - December 2006*