**Toastmasters International**

**District 5, Southern Division**

**Post Contest Debrief**

**Contest:** Southern Division Humor and International Speech contest

**Date of Contest:** 2/27/16

**Date of Write Up:** 4/16/16

**About this Document:** This document combines feedback from key stakeholders and participants in the contest. We have specifically focused our comments and feedback on roles and process—ie. contest, emails, Toastmaster—to facilitate future efforts in these areas.

**Contacts:**

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**Overview:**

The chairs used Google Docs to organize and share files with volunteers and to make sure files were stored in a central location for future use. Committee chairs were found for each meeting function. Committee chairs then found volunteers to support them before and during the event. We relied on the Division Director to find space and schedule a date. The Division Director also found the competition co-chairs.

**Successes:**

* The Opportunity Drawing ‘round up’ concept worked really well.
* Selling Opportunity Drawing tickets in series of 10 during the break rather than as singles.
* The committee chairs did an excellent job filling and managing their teams.
* The marketing materials supported clubs needs to know about the competition and communicate it to their members.
* The location and volunteers for all major functions found 2 months ahead.
* Google docs worked well, but required team training.

**Challenges:**

* Volunteer no shows the day of: 10-15 volunteers did not show up of the 35 needed.
* Parking the day of was impacted by construction. Facilities did not know that we were coming until after they scheduled construction. Meaning, the day of the parking lot was under construction as was the entrance in front of the venue; and they were testing fire alarms. [A facility document was drafted to solve this issue.]

**Event suggestions:**

**Pre-event mandatory meeting**

* 1-3 days prior to the event
* Should include all the people involved, speakers included, for a quick run through.

Questions would arise then instead of the day of the event.

The goal: eliminate questions, proof that everything is together and everyone knows what to do.

**Website/Flyer**

* Recommend one single location that we send members to RSVP and find out information. Suggest a webpage attached to d5tm.org or to division/club webpage. Members had a hard time finding a central repository of information for the contest. The Google forms are limiting, and don’t allow for calendaring or other messaging.
* Suggest that d5tm.org have division pages with each division’s information and events.

**Emails**

* Recommend Mailchimp (or access to vision mail) to send out emails and manage separate lists.
* Recommend using one email address for emails.
* Central contact for clubs
* Email list of potential volunteers, and past volunteers

**Event Venue**

This is the second year we have used SDG&E for our Division contest. They are an excellent host, that supports the event through access the day prior; event setup as desired (theater seating with surround tables); A/V equipment and parking.

* Event debrief document: Recommend providing a simple document to the location chair. Include: 3 contacts (Division Director, Competition Chair, Hospitality Chair) and their role; typical activities and event needs (theater seating, food, prizes, microphone); expected number of guests; time-frame; preview day prior.
* Table outside for registration. See Reception/Registration.
* 2 spaces: 1 event space and 1 quiet room for functionary instructions and speaker support. Separate tasks; and separate the audience from the functionaries. The SDG&E space does not allow for separation between work getting done and enjoyment of the event. Recommend having a secondary room for speakers, judges and TM to prep for the activities. See Speaker + Speaker Support.
* The venue has a TV. Would recommend using it to show the agenda and program

**Reception/Registration**

Our registration table was offset from the door and utilized dignitaries. It was overrun prior to being set up, and half the volunteers did not show resulting in an entrance experience that was disjointed at times.

* Use wristbands to identify paid attendees, speakers and functionaries (not judges).
* Place registration table in front of door to create a must stop location. Goal is to stop people from entering without checking in or paying. People easily bypassed it, resulting in an unknown number of attendees.
  1. If venue does not provide a table for outdoor locations, recommend bringing a 6’ table to place at the door.
* Volunteers arrive 2 hours prior to event, or one hour prior to the doors opening: Registration volunteers need to be the first to arrive. Their function is critical to the economic success of the event. They should do the setup, and understand and be comfortable with the fees and documents.
  1. All registration lists must be sent to the volunteers prior to the event to support their familiarity with them. Recommend that they put the lists together with competition chair oversight.
  2. Have 2-3 floaters that know this role.
  3. Do not use individuals who are required for other roles.
  4. We had $250 in cash, $50 singles, $200 in fives. Everyone will bring $20s, hand out as few $5s as possible.

**Opportunity Drawing**

We had three costs: RSVPs; Door price; Inside price.

* RSVPs got the best bang for their buck: the goal was to get a handle on the number of people going; entice them to sign up with a great deal.
* Round up: Make the Opportunity Drawing costs an easy sell.
* Give them something for registering early.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Cost to participate** | Early Registration | $5 |  |
|  | At the door | $7 |  |
| **Opportunity Drawing** | Early Registration | 2 Free |  |
|  |  | $0.50 each | 10=$5 |
|  |  |  | 40=$20 |
|  | At the door | 1 Free |  |
|  |  | $0.75 each | 4=$3 |
|  |  |  | 8=$6 |
|  |  |  | 15=$10 |
|  |  |  | 40=$20 |
|  | On the floor | $1.00 each | 5=$5 |
|  |  |  | 15=$10 |
|  |  |  | 40=$20 |

The concept to round up worked well, however there was some confusion with the team. Make sure your team understands your pricing structure.

The pricing structure was developed by the Competition Chairs not the Opportunity Chair.

* Recommend that the Finance Chair, Competition Chairs and Opportunity Chair work together to define pricing structure.

The Opportunity Drawing prizes came in bulk the day of. We knew of a 3rd of the prizes.

* Many were theme related, which is maybe why we had such a solid turnout.
* Clubs were asked to provide a club or member mentoring prize. Joyce provided clubs an event planning prize.
* The setup crew set up bags with numbers, taped to the tables.

**Donations**

This year we had to pay for printing. It was one of the largest costs.

* Ask for physical donations.
* Have the hospitality/opportunity chair look for food, coffee and printing donations.

**Speakers + Speaker Support**

Speakers were emailed their documents prior to the day of, and recommended to fill them out prior to that day. A volunteer was identified to support them, by mic’ing them and get them ready to go on stage.

* Speaker support was critical. It takes a job off of the Toastmaster.
  + Confirm that the speaker support will be there. Have a backup that is ready to go.
  + Make sure this person attends the walk through to get information on the gear.
* Instruct speakers on mic. It impacts what they need to wear.
* Have a quiet room for speakers and judge instruction where speakers can wait until it’s their turn.

**Functionary Leads/Committee Chairs**

Each function should have a lead. This will minimize the number of people in email chains; shorten the decision chain; and improve volunteer management the day of.

* The Functionary Lead should know their role, and the roles of all of their volunteers.
* They should prep each volunteer on their tasks (what needs to be accomplished before the event and the day of), and follow up with them regularly.
* Functionary Leads are responsible for their paperwork: printing, getting it filled out and handing it off to the Competition Co-Chairs.
* Volunteer management:
  + Secure all of their volunteers 1 month prior to event.
  + Meet with your team at least once. Ideally this happens 1 month prior with a second meeting the week prior to the event. Conduct correspondence as needed.
  + Report back to Co-Chairs on activities and needs.

**Competition Co-Chairs**

* Should meet 3 months prior and on a bi-weekly basis.
* Co-Chairs should delegate work early and check-in periodically.
* Provide budget guidelines to Committee Chairs.

**Toastmaster**

Our Toastmaster was well prepared with the topic, used a Q&A version of Table Topics to wake the audience up and create engagement. He did not have a defined area for his items such as paperwork which caused a little confusion for him initially.

* Toastmaster, Sergeant at Arms and Timers should go over the timer’s agenda and create a plan for when the event is running over.
* Provide a dedicated table for the Toastmaster near the podium/lecturn. Just prior to the start the Toastmaster was swarmed with people. This is to support organization of notes, and speaker certificates and awards. Include pens at the table.
* Table Topics at the beginning was inspired, and a ton of fun. 5 questions was slightly too many, and caused the timers to get nervous about keeping us on schedule.
* Overall, Toastmaster provided a high level of energy that helped drive the meeting.

**Sergeant at Arms**

* Had a difficult time managing the room. Suggest having timers and committee chairs use clapping at time to get audience to take their seats and find order. This worked after break to remind people to settle down.
* Suggest having 2 confirmed Sergeant at Arms for next time.

**Agendas**

2 Agendas, one for guests/attendees; the 2nd with exact times and speakers for lead functionaries, timers, toastmaster, District/Division reps.

**Letter of Commitment**

* Volunteers need to recognize that they have made a commitment to the competition and that we are counting on them.
* When they sign on, they should receive an email confirming their participation, and emphasize that they are expected to be there the day of and time.
  + Ex.: Thank you for signing up to be Sergeant at Arms for the Southern Division Contest, Feb 27, 9-12. This role is very important to the overall competition. Please make note of it in your calendar. Please review the district and international contest guides for your duties. Your main contact is… Plan to arrive 2 hours early. If you are unable to attend, please contact me immediately. ASAP.
* Communicate what you’re willing to do for them, i.e. benefits of volunteering.
* District incentives
* Referrals on LinkedIn
* Letter to employer