

The Feedback Loop

If I had to choose one element of the Toastmasters program that is really the straw that stirs the drink it would have to be the feedback we provide our members. When a member gives a speech, we owe it to them to let them know what they did well, which areas could use improvement, and suggestions on how to make those positive changes. The best evaluators really give the speaker something to work with. It is about providing options. Speakers can and do refer back to those evaluations with regularity. Our members get all they need when they give a speech. Unless they don't.

In my judgement, there is no such thing as too much feedback on a speech. I welcome any and all comments and perspectives. Our speakers get a verbal evaluation as well as the written one from their project manual. Isn't that enough? Short answer - NO! Not even close. Imagine giving a speech and receiving the regular evaluation. Good info for your next speech project. Now imagine the same speech but in addition to the typical evaluation you get 5 slips of paper with notes. Let's say your club promotes giving speakers notes and comments that are written on slips that are provided by the club and set out every meeting by the Sgt. at Arms.



In my club they are affectionately referred to as love notes. Short, sweet, and to the point. Every meeting. And not just for speakers. Evaluators, Table Topics respondents, Toastmasters, Timers and Ah Counters all get feedback. Why do we do this? We realized that there was a ton of feedback we were leaving on the table. And by the way, how do evaluators improve without good feedback? I asked that question once and was told it was the General Evaluator's job. If giving strong evaluations is the single most difficult thing to do consistently well in Toastmasters (and I firmly believe it is), why don't we shower them with feedback too?

If your club culture welcomes feedback (and if not let's talk), why wouldn't you leverage the collective experience of all your members to help make all of your members better? Every meeting. Every role. Buy a couple of small notebooks and have your members give feedback to everyone they can. You may well be amazed at the result!