

# Succession Planning in Toastmasters

*Notes from the District 109 Division E winter COT German succession planning workshop for club committees*  
Version: January 14, 2024

These notes are based on the feedback generously shared by all participants in the workshop. Their willingness to speak openly and share their experiences made it possible to collect knowledge on succession planning for the benefit of others.

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*"Just because you don't see something doesn't mean it isn't there. The stars are always there." — R.C. Lewis*



## Club Succession Planning for Club Officers

Club officers have many tasks and responsibilities, from making sure that club meetings take place in an orderly manner to organizing club contests. Among all these tasks and responsibilities, it is important not to forget about succession planning. A key element for the future success of the club is how the next club officer committee is built and how well the handover is done.

The input from the participants at the workshop can be divided into three categories:

- Strategy and timeline
- Empathy and suitability for the club officer roles
- Transfer of knowledge and reliability

### Strategy and Timeline

- Start early with the process (i.e. 6 months before your term ends).
- The election of the incoming club committee should ideally take place latest in May, so that June can be used for handover.
- Be consistent over time. Start by mentioning the idea directly to the potential club officers and follow up at later occasions (the positive version of the boiling frog<sup>1</sup>).
- Being asked to take on a role in the club committee is a sign of appreciation, as it depends on your standing in the club and the trust others have in you. Only members that make good impressions are asked.
- Be transparent and share all the required information for the role. Incoming officers should have clear expectations on what the role entails. This is key to avoid frustration and drop-outs later on.
- In many cases a mix between first time club officers and members who have been club officers before has proven to be successful. Ideally no officer does the same role twice or more in consecutive years. Club committees with mostly new members can work as well but might require more mentoring support throughout the year.

### Empathy and Suitability for the Club Officer Roles

- Ideal candidates are motivated for the challenge to be a club officer and have consistently in the past engaged in club meetings and events.
- Ideal candidates know how to manage themselves. They don't need to know everything, but they should be able to plan when their tasks need to be completed and actively clarify open questions in time by asking other members.
- Can-do-attitude is important as well as the willingness to create, to be open and to be tolerant.
- Members have different personalities, with different strengths and weaknesses. A VP membership role might be easier for some and more challenging for others. When looking for successors, it is important to consider their strengths and weaknesses in order to suggest a suitable role for them.

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<sup>1</sup>In case you are not familiar with the boiling frog, check [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boiling\\_frog](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boiling_frog)

- A successful club committee often consists of people with different personalities and different levels of Toastmaster experience.

### **Transfer of Knowledge and Reliability**

- Create (digital) libraries so that your successors have easier access to existent material and don't have to recreate everything from scratch.
- Have a proper handover meeting before the new Toastmasters year starts.
- Offer to support if questions come up later on. It's important for incoming club officers (especially first time officers) to not feel like they are being left out in the rain.