

spring contest chair journal 2004

by jj campbell

three weeks before the scheduled club spring contest, i decided to be the chair. i had this sneaky feeling that no one else was going to take on the task unless it was someone that had already had experience being a contest chair. here is a bit of my journey.

how i started:

first i made sure my back was supported. essentially, i asked 2 to 3 people in the club - who knew what they were doing - if they would be available to answer as many questions as i could throw at them. then i went to the area 42 website ([www.d42.org](http://www.d42.org)) and read through the entire "Plan A Speech Contest" document to get an idea of what i had agreed to organize.

after reading through the doc once, i went through it a second time and started to compile lists of roles to fill, what the roles entailed, forms needed, etc. this way i had a "checklist" of items to start on.

next i carefully crafted an email to send out to the members of our club, regular guests and those in leadership in the area that may be willing or wanting to be involved. the email set out to inform the recipients why a contest is important, why it is good to get involved and then 3 areas i needed volunteers: (1) contestants for the evaluation contest, (2) contestants for the international speech contest, and (3) people to fill roles for the event.

bulk of the work:

now comes the fun part (and probably the most important part if you intend to retain your sanity through the ordeal) - DELEGATION. yes... you must delegate. you must. i cannot stress this enough.

i began this process by email and used a consistent format for my own records. for example, every subject line looked like this... re: club contest - 'role or task or question' then if i was asking someone to volunteer for a role or

answer a question, i would ask them to CONFIRM by email. it was the easiest way to keep track of who was doing what. i found that confirming was just as important as delegating.

the more you imagine in your head how the evening will run minute by minute the better off you'll be. for example, for an evaluation contest there is a test speaker and then the contestants get 5 minutes to prepare their evaluation. but you must remember that the audience has nothing to do for that whole 5 minutes. to fill the time i asked someone to have a joke prepared and i asked someone else to make an announcement concerning an upcoming toastmaster event.

also, the more you imagine the event in your head, the more realize how many small items that could easily be overlooked. for example, making an agenda (with timing, contestant lists, roles filled out, special thanks, etc), preparing a guest sign up sheet, organizing the purchase and then the presentation of the snacks, seating of the timers and the judges, thank you cards, making all the appropriate amount of copies of all the forms and the list goes on.

summary of important items:

- 1 make lists: lists of people, roles, forms, etc.
- 2 delegate
- 3 things to do early: book a room, get judges
- 4 ask people to confirm

my feelings on the subject:

i have previous experience planning events and i feel i have a good grasp on the detail view to make sure everything gets done and runs smoothly in the end. i have to honestly say that the only thing i learned from chairing the spring 2004 contest was how many formalities i found out about in regards to these events. i felt as though expectations were high, but i say this with neither negative nor positive connotations.