

# Conferences and Convention Training



Revised June 2009

# Conferences and Convention Training

One of the primary functions of the District Leadership Development Committee is to provide training events at the four quarterly District Conferences including the convention. These training events are for both current and future leaders.

## Role of the Leadership Development Chair

The District Leadership Development Chair and the Committee work under the direct supervision of the District Governor. In scheduling Conference workshops they also have to work with the Meeting and Convention Chair, as well as coordinate workshops with a number of other District Chairs.

Generally the training coordinated by the Leadership Development Chair are the workshops, breakout sessions and roundtables. This generally does not include the general sessions, meal functions, Board of Directors or Executive Committee Meetings or spouses/partners functions.

The Leadership development Chair, along with the Governor, usually selects the workshops, breakouts and roundtables to be presented. The Chair, under the direction of the Governor, can then arrange rooms with the Meeting Chair, arrange for presenters, orient presenters, provide handouts, arrange room set-ups and do whatever it takes to make the sessions go smoothly.

It is important to recognize that Governors and Districts vary widely in the function of the Leadership Development Chair. The preference of the Governor has to take precedence.

### KEEP THE ADULT LEARNERS' ENVIRONMENT COMFORTABLE

- Introduce yourself and the topic you are presenting.
- State objectives of your presentation before you begin
- Be thoroughly prepared and know your material; never read it
- Establish rapport with your group
- Be flexible
- Provide positive feedback
- Begin and end on time



## Rooms

Minimum requirements for the first three quarterly District Conferences are:

- ◆ One large meeting room to hold all attendees
- ◆ One meal function room. This can be the same room if time is allowed for setting and resetting tables
- ◆ One breakout room (many breakout rooms are desirable for large Districts)

The Convention requires a complex array of rooms according to its schedule.

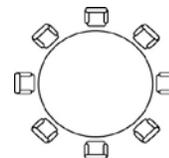
## Seating Styles

The appropriate seating style will enhance the comfort of the attendees and will make presentations more effective. Note that *breakout* generally means to meet in a separate room, whereas **roundtables** means to divide into separate tables in the same room.

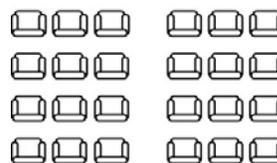
**Roundtables** are usually best for most Conferences. They offer versatility for one seating style to be used during the whole day. Roundtables can also be used for meal functions. Usually eight people are seated per table.

**Classroom** seating represents chairs behind tables that all face toward a front podium or lectern. This is best for a learning situation where writing or note taking is desirable. This seating style is particularly desirable for workshops and breakout sessions.

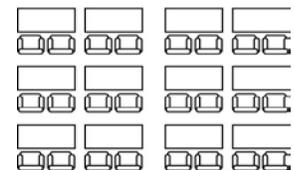
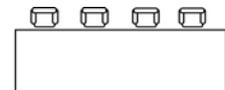
**Theater style** seating represents rows of chairs facing forward. This is used when space is limited and writing is not required.



Roundtable



Theater Style



Classroom

# Conferences and Convention Training

## Room Set-Ups

Room set-ups generally include seating, podium, microphones, head table arrangement, risers, flip chart and markers. Also include signs to identify roundtable or breakout session topics. Other options include motivational signs, overhead projector, laptop, LCD projector, projection screen, pencils, notepads, handouts and water on tables.

Before each session inspect each room and check for:

- ◆ Seating that is comfortable and does not squeeze attendees together
- ◆ Space at the front of the room for interactive exercises
- ◆ Space for people to enter late without clogging the aisles or disrupting the presentation
- ◆ Light switch locations and actions
- ◆ Check operation of technical equipment such as microphones, laptops, projectors, etc.

## Handouts

Handouts or materials for most suggested sessions can be photocopied from standard Optimist publications. Our International Office in St. Louis or Montréal offer handout resources for most of the topics listed in this section.

You may find it easier to ask presenters to bring their own handouts. You may also make photocopies for presenters if they submit them to you in advance. Try to avoid making copies at your meeting site since they can be quite expensive.

## Be a Host

During the conference be a good host. Help presenters get set up. Introduce them to the audience, if appropriate. Welcome attendees, show them to the right rooms and let people in the hallway know when sessions are beginning. Do whatever it takes to make the leadership training go smoothly.

## Even Speakers Need Some Coaching

Help establish the perfect fit between the speaker you've selected and your audience:

- Make sure your speaker understands the length of the presentation.
- Ask the speaker for a "bio" from which you will prepare his/her introduction.
- Get a list of all AV equipment the speaker will use.
- Ask for a copy of an outline and/or agenda for the speaker's presentation.
- Ask the speaker to prepare a statement of his/her learning objectives for the presentation.
- Inform your speaker of anticipated audience size and meeting room setup.
- Thank your speaker for a job well done.



## The Conference Agenda

There is a large variation from District to District in quarterly Conference agendas. Generally the general session is for building spirit, recognition and awards. Most learning takes place in the roundtables and breakout sessions. You should allow a two-hour training time to incorporate a Skills Development Module at each quarterly Conference. The following is a suggested model of each of the first three Conferences:

### Evening before:

Executive Committee Meeting  
Hospitality Area - activities and entertainment are optional

### Day of Conference

9 am General session for all  
10 am Roundtables and breakouts  
Noon Luncheon with program  
2 pm Roundtables and breakouts  
4 pm Adjourn

Generally the Leadership Development Committee will arrange the 10 am and 2 pm workshops, breakouts and roundtable discussions.

# Conferences and Convention Training

## Suggested Topics

The District Leadership Development Committee is usually responsible for setting up breakout and roundtable sessions to develop leadership in volunteers. These roundtables and breakouts are usually conducted during the two-hour morning and two-hour afternoon sessions.

**Something for everyone:** If you want to boost District Conference attendance, offer something for every level of volunteer. For example, don't make a Club Chair sit through a Board Meeting. Consider scheduling a District Board of Directors business meeting at the same time as a Skills Development Module. This meets the diverse interests of your attendees. Of course one individual cannot attend every session and every roundtable, nor should they. Leave your attendees hungry to come back to more District Conferences.

## Skills Development Modules

Optimist International has a number of topics available. Present one of these at each District Conference. The idea is to teach these modules and encourage others to present them as a series at Club meetings. They represent the personal growth topics available to all members as they develop optimism as a philosophy of life. It is important to communicate early with the Governor and Meeting Chair to get a two-hour block of time for these modules. The current Skills Development Modules are listed on the Fact Sheet in the "Supplemental Information" section.

Each module comes with an Instructor's Workbook and a Participant's Workbook. Make copies of the Participant's Workbook for participants.

## Optimist Topics

A number of subjects may be arranged at a number of roundtable discussions. Set a large room with round or rectangular tables for six to ten people each. Two hours is good for the overall session with 25 minutes at each rotation (5 minutes to switch). A room monitor should keep time and call for a switch when time is up. Table tents on each table can identify the topic and the presenter. Attendees can rotate to the table of their choice. Handout information is available from the Optimist International website. Some topic options are:

- ◆ Service Activities in general
- ◆ JOOI Clubs
- ◆ Oratorical Contest (2<sup>nd</sup> quarter)
- ◆ Optimist International Junior Golf Championships (2<sup>nd</sup> quarter)
- ◆ Communications Contest for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (1<sup>st</sup> quarter)
- ◆ Tri-Star Sports - basketball, baseball, football, hockey, soccer (3<sup>rd</sup> quarter)
- ◆ Youth Appreciation

- ◆ Essay Contest (1<sup>st</sup> quarter)
- ◆ Respect for Law/Promotion of Non-Violence
- ◆ Youth Safety (2<sup>nd</sup> quarter)
- ◆ Childhood Cancer Campaign
- ◆ Membership overview
- ◆ Recruitment
- ◆ Induction/Orientation/Enrollment
- ◆ Maintenance and Retention
- ◆ Attendance
- ◆ NOW Program (2<sup>nd</sup> quarter)
- ◆ District Achievement and Awards (A&A) Program
- ◆ Fund Raising Ideas
- ◆ Publicity for Clubs
- ◆ Programs of Member Interest (1<sup>st</sup> quarter)
- ◆ Fellowship Ideas
- ◆ Publishing a Club Bulletin (1<sup>st</sup> quarter)
- ◆ CPA Workshop (3<sup>rd</sup> quarter)
- ◆ Future Lieutenant Governors Q & A (2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter)
- ◆ Service on a District Committee Q & A (2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter)
- ◆ How to Build a New Optimist Club - at least 1 hour (1<sup>st</sup> quarter)
- ◆ Club Secretary-Treasurer Update
  - 1<sup>st</sup> quarter - role in member retention, role in Honor Club
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter - update mid-year progress, Q & A
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter - reports (Officer Elect, CPA, Life Membership)
- ◆ Club President Update (each President attends one of these)
  - 1<sup>st</sup> quarter - new member installations, how to motivate volunteers
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter - current promotions, NOW program
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter - Honor requirements, CPA books

# Conferences and Convention Training

## Other Topics

You may have other resources in members of your District who have special expertise and speaking ability in a number of areas.

Anything is possible such as: stress reduction exercises, how to combat negativity, dealing with depression, making a champion, communications, Optimism on the internet, remembering names and faces, conflict resolution and personality profiles.

See what talented presenters you can find in your District.

## Special Sessions by Quarter

### First Quarter

- ◆ New Club Building Seminar (1-2 hours)
- ◆ Roundtables - Essay Contest, Oratorical Contest, Tri-Star Basketball, JOOI Clubs, District A&A Competition, Childhood Cancer Campaign

### Second Quarter

- ◆ Future Leaders Conference called "Catch a Rising Star." This is a 90-minute workshop for potential Optimist leaders. A guide for this workshop is available from Optimist International, Leadership Development Department.
- ◆ NOW Program (New Optimists Wanted)
- ◆ Reception (or breakfast) for Distinguished (or Honor) Club Presidents
- ◆ Preparing a CPA book to highlight your favorite project
- ◆ Roundtable discussions - Youth Safety, Respect for Law, Optimist in Action and Junior Golf Championships

### Third Quarter

- ◆ Reception for newly elected Club Presidents with short orientation
- ◆ Interviews with Lieutenant Governor-Elect candidates
- ◆ Oratorical and CCDHH District Contests and Essay results

## District Convention

- ◆ Train Club Presidents - 7 hours
- ◆ Continue training for Lieutenant Governors-Elect - 1 ½ hours
- ◆ Current officers - fourth quarter membership drives, completing paperwork, Honor Club requirements and building motivation

## Optimist Diplomas

Consider a recognition program for Optimists who attend leadership or training sessions. Give **one credit per one hour of workshop or roundtable** attended. This would apply toward earning an Optimist Diploma.

Bachelor of Optimism degree for 6 credit hours

Masters of Optimism degree for 9 credit hours

Doctor of Optimism degree for 12 credit hours

The next year's Governor should agree to carry on the program for continuity since credits may carry over to another year.

Attendance credits are verified by filling out an evaluation form at each session or roundtable attended. (Include date, session name, time length of session, overall rating, your comments, print your name, sign your name).

Certificate diplomas or degrees may be awarded at District Conferences showing the degree earned. A limited supply of blank diplomas are available from the Leadership Development Department.

**Evaluation Forms:** Distribute and collect evaluation forms after each conference. Use them to modify future leadership training sessions.

In summary, design your Leadership Development sessions so there is always something for everyone. When the Club officers are meeting have something the regular membership would be interested in. Great sessions will make Optimists want to come back for more and bring their friends.

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## Conference Evaluation Form

Name of Session \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Presentation Length: \_\_\_\_\_

**Circle your rating**

Value of the information:                      Excellent      Good              Average              Poor

Relevant to my needs:                      Excellent      Good              Average              Poor

Suggestions for next session: \_\_\_\_\_

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(optional)  
Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

(certification)  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_

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**Circle your rating**

Value of the information:            Excellent    Good            Average    Poor

Relevant to my needs:            Excellent    Good            Average    Poor

Suggestions for next session: \_\_\_\_\_

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(optional)  
Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

(certification)  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_