

Why Pay? – September 2022

Toastmasters, honoured guests. It's that time of year when... Wait... let's back up. I heard your internal groan. My inner psychic sees your thoughts: Already? Or even: Again? I know what's flying through your brain: What's it used for anyway? Is it money well spent? Let's discuss.

Imagine you run into a supermarket for just one thing: a bottle of milk. Then, you smell baguette. Mnn, nice fresh no? Strawberries! Love them! Oh and I need matches... and light bulbs. One small thing at a time your trolley gets full. Well my friends, in Toastmasters, it's the same! A rosette costs nothing but add a banner, a name badge, a venue, an occasional slice of pizza, a glass of wine once a year, not to mention the honour of supporting a member to represent the club at Contest level. It all adds up.

But do we *need* these things? I mean, one *could* do without the branding, one doesn't *have* to have a rosette when one wins an evening, right? Sure. But doesn't standing here, having your photo taken and publicly saying: 'I did this for my Club, and my Club did this for me,' feel good? It feels good, you say, for a moment. Is it worth 120 euro?

Well, I'd argue that it goes deeper than that, indeed right to the core of who we are. Why? Because it's about identity. It's about publicly saying: 'Yes, I'm on the Toastmasters path. Yes, I'm a good communicator, or an aspiring one at least! This is who I want to be. This is my tribe.' Would any of you go to a job interview in shorts? In real life I mean, not on Zoom! No! Because your message to your potential employer is: 'I get you. I'm one of you. One of your tribe.'

And once you're part of it, like the mafia, you have a responsibility to that team. No seriously, a team is a structure that works on an individual for goals outside the sphere of achievement of that single individual. How poetic is that? How astonishing to be able to say, I'm so good with me I can think about bigger things; my Club, my Division, my District, my World! Distinguished Club. A club that's not just fun and interesting, and looks good, but that says: I didn't tread the chewing-gum into the pavement but come, let's get it off.

You see, finally my friends, it's about self-respect. For ourselves as individuals but also the culture we want to create in *our* Club. And it's an on-going thing. It's about noticing, reviewing. Have you ever had a favourite T-shirt that you wore a lot? It started to fade but you thought: It's fine... You wore it and wore it, and stopped seeing, and one day you looked in the mirror and went: Why didn't anyone...? Now imagine it's your child. Would you let them go out like that?

You see my friends, paying our Toastmaster's dues is about turning inward once a year and saying: How do I look? How do I want to look? And acknowledging that looking good, individually and as a team, matters. It says we care. About our club. About each other. And in essence not just about how we look, but who we are. (The RIB is on the What's App group. Please send me a text when you've paid!)