Best Practices for using your website as a marketing and promotional tool
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Top 4 Musts:
1. It MUST be current. If content looks old it, appears that the club is not active and is a turn-off.
2. Know what makes your club unique among all Toastmasters club. What is your brand? What do you want to be most known for? All Toastmasters are friendly and supportive; why would I join your club over another?
3. Most people looking for a Toastmasters club will search for one close to home or work. Yet, your club may be a better fit for them - inspire them to make the drive.
4. View your website through the eyes of a stranger. Invest your time in (1) the HOME page, (2) MEET OUR MEMBERS page and (3) CALENDAR page. Focus on the guest; answer the question, "what's in it for me?"

Move away from cookie-cutter:
• Leaders are not cookie-cutter. Demonstrate your leadership with a unique and memorable website.
• Demonstrate good communication skills through your website. Deliver a clear message that stands out.
• Update the original club-number domain to an alias. Your URL should be as short as possible. Make it easy to say, easy to remember and easy to type correctly. (Example: VOI.toastmastersclubs.org)

MEET OUR MEMBERS Page:
• The *most important* page after the HOME page. Every website visitor wants to see if they know or connect with someone.
• Your bio is about the prospective guest – not you. Prospective members want to know how Toastmasters helped you; why you joined, and why you stay. They don't care about your kids, your pets or your hobbies.
• Encourage every member to have a head-&-shoulders photo, interesting bio and don't forget to check the box to make the bio public.

CALENDAR Page:
• Guests want to see an active club. If your calendar looks uninteresting, so does your club. Add interest to your calendar by adding club themes and a URL hyperlink to your online meetings.
• Add interesting District workshops and events that guests may find interesting. Recognize member achievements on your calendar page. Add your executive committee meetings.
• Calendar events are posted in different colors when signed on as Admin vs. as a member and adds interest.

CONTACT US Page:
• If you do not give potential guests ways to reach you, it is a turnoff for them.
• Have as many contacts as possible on the contact list: at least two officer's names and one phone number.
• Include a friendly note: "Thank You for your interest in XYZ Toastmasters. We look forward to seeing you soon!"

HOME Page:
• Focus on the goal: for them to visit your club. Get them in the door and then tell them what you'd like.
• The HOME page is prime real estate - omit anything that does not support the goal: i.e., listing club officers, history of Toastmasters, etc.
• Craft a message to engage a visitor. Be enthusiastic about them being on your site. Give a specific and clear invitation to visit your meetings.

Photos are Important:
• Quality is more important than quantity but at least one photo on each page is good.
• Real photos of *your* members are better than stock photos – but stock is better than nothing
• Mix photos of groups with photos of individuals. Crop for best face(s) shot. If captioning, use first name only. No last names on the Internet. Respect member's privacy

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- Plan photos. Careful with the background: not too busy. The American flag is still very popular and adds color. Your club banner or lectern with logo are good choices.
- Photos that support your color scheme are a huge asset in a professional, pleasant look. If meeting online, plan a day for members to wear Toastmasters T-shirts or shirts of all one color.
- Smiles, smiles, smiles! Look like you're having fun. Possibly pose members for a great shot
- Toastmasters suggests having a Toastmasters Photo Release Form for members. (Google it.)

General Content:
- Don't install more content than you can keep current. Usually 5 custom pages is the max. Keep the main menu to no more than 10 options or it looks overwhelming.
- Every inch of website is valuable real estate to promote your club.
    - Remove excess content. Remove the word "club," remove the district, division and club numbers. Guests don't care.
    - Use your real-estate to promote your unique brand.
- Don't use jargon (grammariam, ah-counter). Guests don't know, nor do they care.
- Don't use Toastmaster abbreviations. Guests don't know; don't care.
- Mention of the Distinguished Club Program establishes credibility and status but do give a 1 or 2 sentence explanation appropriate to a guest - for instance, "it's how we track the growth of our members and their achievements."
- If your Facebook is active, consider adding your feed to the website to help keep the website fresh as well as adding LIKES to your website. More info here: https://developers.facebook.com/docs/plugins. (The same is true if you'd rather a different social media feed.)

Colors, Fonts and Website Elements:
- Choose 1 or 2 Toastmasters colors. Use them throughout for a professional, cohesive feel. Keep it clean and simple.
- Don't install a busy page-background, it's distracting. Don't use moving gifs, they're distractions. Keep it classy over cutesy.
- The primary Toastmasters font is Arial. Font size must be easy to read. The FTH font size 14 is more suited to those over 30 years old and size 16 is better for the over 50-something reader. Use only two or three font styles and sizes. A **bold** font, used occasionally, catches attention.
- Use a good contrast between background color and font color, however, a black font on a white background can be harsh. Consider a dark gray font on white background.
- Don't underline – underline is associated with a hyperlink. Instead, change the font color for attention.

Improving your Search Engine Ranking
- List your club correctly and accurately on Toastmasters.org, Find-A-Club and include your website there. Toastmasters International has a good ranking. Piggy back on that.
- Name each club photo to include the name of your club – the name is stored in your source code and read by search engines.   Search engines can't see what your photo is but you can define it using Alt-Tags.
- Use your club's name and city several times on each page – search engines read content. You might also choose 10 to 25 key-words and repeat them many times so you appear higher in those searches.
- Use the Google Map of the building you meet in, not just the address. For instance, the Google map showing Lexmark International has a higher search engine ranking than 740 New Circle Road. Piggy back on your corporation or venue host.

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Evaluation – it improves our speaking and it will also increase guests in your meetings.
- Use Google Analytics to track which pages are working for you and when visitor spikes occur.
- Turn on the web counter. Reset it every year and set a goal. My goal is average 100 hits per month. When I fall short, I use that opportunity to determine ways to increase the count. If guests aren't coming to your website, they probably won't come to your club.
- Ask for feedback from district directors and successful webmasters with a professional marketing zeal. FreeToastHost offers an "*Evaluate My Website*" forum on the support and development site.

Lastly:
- *Every* club will benefit from a website, even those that are corporate or restricted – you still need to make yourself known and communicate your message.
- Verify your website overall look on different devices – laptop, tablet and phone. Photos especially, must occasionally be altered to be responsive.
- Update your site on a regular schedule to keep content current. Just updating photos is all that is needed to give it a fresh look. Occasionally verify all links and update/remove dead links.

A few of the websites I've helped, just in case you need a few real-world examples:

URL	My evaluation:
https://midwaytm.toastmastersclubs.org/	- Good example of CALENDAR and MEET OUR MEMBERS pages. - Maroon borders make the sides feel closed-in, open is better. - Using "page variables" keeps meeting info current.
https://londonky.toastmastersclubs.org/	- Color scheme is pleasant. - Not as up-to-date as I'd like. - Love the club-made YouTube video.
https://ukbigblue.toastmastersclubs.org/	- Good use of club branding - Not as up-to-date as I'd like. - Very welcoming, especially for a young audience.
https://www.downtownlunchbunch.com/	- Love the unique URL and use of the Facebook feed. - A few pages are a little text-heavy. - Great use of cropped member photos.
https://lexmark.toastmastersclubs.org/	- A nice example of a corporate club and a more formal feel. - A few pages are text-heavy; may be more than a guest wants to read. - Good mix of in-person and online meeting photos.