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# Lessons Learned

## Level 3 Project



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# Lessons Learned

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## About Lessons Learned

You have reached an important milestone in your Toastmasters journey. Not only are you nearing the completion of this path, but you have completed a major project involving planning, leadership, and team management. The Lessons Learned project is designed to help you understand the steps to debrief team members and key stakeholders at major milestones and after the completion of your project.

## Resources

In this project, you will identify the discussion points of a large group meeting, encourage a culture of contribution and voicing opinions, and facilitate productive discussion that yields results. You will also learn to create a plan for future improvements based upon resolutions proposed in the meeting.

**Please note:** This project must be started *after* the completion of a separate, larger project on this path that involved completing a task with a team. Please complete a different elective if your most recent project on this path did not involve team members.

**Project Checklist**

**Evaluation Resources**

**360° Evaluation**

**Lessons Learned Response Log**

**Metrics Log**

# Introduction and Assignment

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## Introduction

Any project, including the organization of an event, can benefit from a lessons learned meeting. A meeting of this type gives you and your team the opportunity to evaluate the results of your work. By assessing feedback and applying it to future events, you enhance your growth as a leader and a communicator.

## Your Assignment

**Purpose:** The purpose of this project is to learn about and apply the skills needed to run a lessons learned meeting during a project or after its completion.

**Overview:** Facilitate a lessons learned meeting for a team with which you are completing or have completed a project. This meeting is separate from your regular Toastmasters meeting. Organize and facilitate a discussion. Record the results into a document you and your team members can use to facilitate the current project or future projects. If you haven't already, give team members an opportunity to complete a 360° evaluation of you as a team leader. Finally, present a 5- to 7-minute speech in your club about the lessons learned meeting or your leadership experience.

Your speech can be persuasive, humorous, informational, or crafted in any style that appeals to you and supports your speech content.

Throughout this project you will see icons in the margins next to the text. These icons indicate additional resources available online.



**Video:** Sign in to Base Camp to watch a video that supports this project.



**Interactive Activity:** Sign in to Base Camp to complete an interactive activity.



**Resource:** Sign in to Base Camp to view this resource online.



**Weblink:** Return to your digital project when you see this icon to link to a website or Base Camp location.

**For all assignment details and requirements, review the Project Checklist.**

# Learning in Lessons Learned

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## Assess and Reflect

To assess and track your knowledge, complete the activity below by listing what you already know and what you wonder about the topic today. Add up to five items to each list. After you complete your project, you will have an opportunity to review your answers and add what you have learned.

## Know

**For example** I know I can create a clear agenda for a lessons learned meeting.

## Wonder

**For example** I wonder how comfortable I am listening to differing opinions and suggestions for improvement.

## Competencies

**The following is a list of competencies that you will learn and practice in this project.**

- Identify the topics for discussion with your team following a milestone or completion of a project.
- Encourage an environment of contribution and voicing opinions.
- Facilitate a productive discussion that yields results.
- Create a plan for future improvements based upon resolutions proposed in the meeting.

## The Value of a Lessons Learned Meeting

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The ability to learn from experience builds strength and understanding in any environment. A lessons learned meeting is an opportunity to gather your team and stakeholders to discuss both positive and negative aspects of your project.

A meeting of this type can be held after any milestone when review contributes to the success of the project as well as when the project is complete.

Every aspect of a lessons learned meeting is enhanced by coming together as soon as possible after a milestone or at the conclusion. Small details are easier to remember when little time has passed.

During the meeting, take time to recognize and discuss successful elements and strategies. Identify and examine details of your project that did not go according to plan. Discussing even the smallest challenge can add to your team's understanding of how to avoid pitfalls in future projects.

## Prepare for a Lessons Learned Meeting

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**Treat a lessons learned meeting as you would any essential step in coordinating a large project or event. There are several steps you can take to support a well-run meeting.**

### Schedule

Plan lessons learned meetings with as much advance notice as possible to ensure maximum attendance of team members and other stakeholders. You can cancel meetings after milestones if they are not necessary, but setting firm dates ahead of time will guarantee time for follow up and review.

### Review

As the team leader, review feedback before your meeting to help you prepare and develop your agenda. Collect responses from internal team members and other participants if your project included an event.

Surveying participants immediately following project completion is an excellent way to assemble responses and can help you define topics to address in the lessons learned meeting.

## Set an Agenda

A clear agenda enables you to address all ideas, thoughts, and concerns while staying within the time allocated for the meeting.

The agenda can include:

- Well-defined meeting goals
- A suggested sequence of team discussion, brainstorming, and analysis
- Any potential action items

Use the Lessons Learned Response Log included in this project. Put your agenda items in the far-left column. This resource provides space to note responses to each item when conducting your lessons learned meeting.

# Conduct a Lessons Learned Meeting

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## Reflect and Discuss

A lessons learned meeting involves reflection, analysis, and discussion. It is an opportunity for everyone to contribute their unique perspective. Support all participants in sharing issues they observed throughout the project, and let them know that their input is valued. Create an environment of productivity and openness.

## Set the Tone

Your first and most important job as the leader of a lessons learned meeting is to set the tone. Begin by thanking all of your team members and stakeholders for their hard work and participation. Identify the parts of your project that were generally successful while allowing time for other opinions and feedback.

For example, if your project was an open house for your club and your attendance was at or above your expectations, mention the attendance. Your goal in setting the tone is to encourage other meeting attendees to lead with a positive aspect of the project before addressing challenges. In that way you encourage a balanced conversation instead of a session focused on negative comments.

## Review Your Expectations

Invite your team to share their initial expectations for the project. Do this by asking each team member to describe their version of the ideal project or imagined, perfect outcome (not necessarily the actual results of the project).

Once each person has had the opportunity to share initial expectations, assess what elements of their ideal project were realized. Identify the organization, implementation, or facilitation methods that worked well throughout the course of your project.

## Share and Discuss Feedback

Use the following methods to support a varied and thorough discussion.

- Share feedback received from external project stakeholders.
- Prepare a list of questions to direct the discussion.
- Stay neutral—all feedback, both positive and negative, can provide valuable insight.
- Take notes or ask a team member to record comments.
- Impose a time limit to give everyone a chance to share their input or respond to questions.
- Review concerns, issues, or unexpected circumstances that occurred during the planning and implementation of your project.

## Review and Analyze

Once everyone in the group has given their feedback, analyze and discuss the information. If applicable, have your team contribute ideas toward the development of an action plan for future projects.

Project management or spreadsheet software can be a valuable tool to analyze the information collected during your lessons learned meeting.

# After the Lessons Learned Meeting

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## Create a Record

Record all ideas, suggestions, and comments presented in the meeting. Disseminate the meeting notes with team members via email, shared drive, or printed document. Encourage all lessons learned meeting participants to add suggestions to the record, even after the meeting is over. Use this record as a reference when organizing future projects.

## Use Metrics

Metrics are measurement standards to assess efficiency, progress, and performance. After your meeting, complete the Metrics Log with the information you collected.

# Apply the Lessons Learned

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Applying feedback to future projects or events is the most important aspect of the lessons learned process. A lessons learned meeting allows your team to celebrate successes and identify what worked well for use in the future.

Implementing proposed improvements can benefit the outcomes of your future projects. Continue to learn from both your successes and challenges. Take time to compare new feedback with what's been gathered from past projects. The comparison will allow you to see where your team improved or where additional help is needed.

# Review and Apply

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Before you complete the assignment, take a moment to read through the questions you see here. If you are not able to answer them comfortably, review the project.

- How will you identify the discussion topics for a lessons learned meeting?
- What are some strategies for encouraging a safe environment for all types of feedback?
- As a facilitator, what are the best methods for supporting a productive discussion?
- How can you use the information you gain in your lessons learned meeting to plan for improvements in future events or project?

# Complete Your Assignment

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## Project Checklist

Now that you have read through the project, plan and prepare your speech or report. First, review your assignment.

### This project includes:

- Facilitating a lessons learned meeting
- Documenting the results of the lessons learned meeting
- The 360° Evaluation resource
- The Lessons Learned Response Log
- The Metrics Log
- A 5- to 7-minute speech

The following list includes tasks for this project. Please remember, your project is unique to you. You can use the checklist here or complete the digital version in your project on Base Camp.

Before you can begin the Lessons Learned project, you must have completed a separate, larger project on this path that involved completing a task with a team. Please complete a different elective if your most recent project on this path did not involve team members.

Invite the team from your previous project to your lessons learned meeting.

Use the steps described in the Lessons Learned project to conduct your meeting.

Give your team members an opportunity to complete a 360° evaluation of you as a team leader.

Schedule your speech with the Vice President Education.

Write a speech about your experience during and after the lessons learned meeting.

Rehearse your speech.

When all components of your assignment are finished, complete your self-reflection by adding what you have learned to the last column of the Know-Wonder-Learned activity.

# Evaluation Criteria



Review the criteria for the evaluation in this project. Your evaluator will use the following scale:

5 – Exemplary 4 – Excels 3 – Accomplished 2 – Emerging 1 – Developing

## Clarity

- 5 – Is an exemplary public speaker who is always understood
- 4 – Excels at communicating using the spoken word
- 3 – Spoken language is clear and is easily understood
- 2 – Spoken language is somewhat unclear or challenging to understand
- 1 – Spoken language is unclear or not easily understood

## Vocal Variety

- 5 – Uses the tools of tone, speed, and volume to perfection
- 4 – Excels at using tone, speed, and volume as tools
- 3 – Uses tone, speed, and volume as tools
- 2 – Use of tone, speed, and volume requires further practice
- 1 – Ineffective use of tone, speed, and volume

## Eye Contact

- 5 – Uses eye contact to convey emotion and elicit response
- 4 – Uses eye contact to gauge audience reaction and response
- 3 – Effectively uses eye contact to engage audience
- 2 – Eye contact with audience needs improvement
- 1 – Makes little or no eye contact with audience

## Gestures

- 5 – Fully integrates physical gestures with content to deliver an exemplary speech
- 4 – Uses physical gestures as a tool to enhance speech
- 3 – Uses physical gestures effectively
- 2 – Uses somewhat distracting or limited gestures
- 1 – Uses very distracting gestures or no gestures

## Comfort Level

- 5 – Appears completely self-assured with the interviewer
- 4 – Appears fully at ease with the interviewer
- 3 – Appears comfortable with the interviewer
- 2 – Appears uncomfortable with the interviewer
- 1 – Appears highly uncomfortable with the interviewer

## Interest

- 5 – Fully engages audience with exemplary, well-constructed content
- 4 – Engages audience with highly compelling, well-constructed content
- 3 – Engages audience with interesting, well-constructed content
- 2 – Content is interesting but not well-constructed or is well-constructed but not interesting
- 1 – Content is neither interesting nor well-constructed

## Topic

- 5 – Delivers an exemplary speech about some aspect of experience as a leader and the impact of the lessons learned meeting
- 4 – Delivers a compelling speech about some aspect of experience as a leader and the impact of the lessons learned meeting
- 3 – Shares some aspect of experience as a leader and the impact of the lessons learned meeting
- 2 – Mentions some aspect of experience as a leader and the impact of the lessons learned meeting but does not fully address
- 1 – Speaks on a topic other than some aspect of experience as a leader and the impact of the lessons learned meeting

# Complete Your Project

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Once you have delivered your speech and received your evaluation, take a minute to review what you recorded under “Know” and “Wonder” in the Assess and Reflect section at the start of this project. Then add what you have learned while working through this project. Add up to five items.

## Learned

**For example:** I learned how to apply what I have learned to improve procedures and outcomes in future projects.

# Before You Move On

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## **Review Your Learning**

Review all the material in this project.

## **Deliver Your Speech**

Plan, practice, and deliver your speech.

## **Receive Your Evaluation**

Receive your evaluation and complete any other tasks required by your club.

## **Assess and Reflect**

When all components of your assignment are finished, complete your self-reflection by adding what you have learned to the last column of the Know-Wonder-Learned activity.

## **Congratulations!**

If you have completed every task, CONGRATULATIONS! You have completed your Lessons Learned project and you are ready to move on to your next project.



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