



2013 – 2014

## Growing Your Rotary Club by Retaining and Attracting New Members



### An Information Guide for Club Presidents and Members Committee Chairs

*Our number one **focus** and **commitment** to our clubs, our district and to the countless people who Rotary serves, is to have **strong, vibrant and active clubs**. In order to do this, we must keep our current members active and engaged while we attract new ones.*

Suggestions and tools for your Members Committee:

1. **The Structure and Emphasis of your Members Committee.** Divide your committee into two groups, each with only one focus: **Membership Retention** and **Attracting New Members**. Each emphasis is crucial for a strong Rotary club. This document provides information that deals specifically with these two membership areas.
2. **Membership Goal.** We suggest each club set a goal of at least **one net member gain** during your year. Be sure to review this membership goal with your committee. The average club loses 10% to 15% of its members each year due to a variety of reasons. Is that the trend in your club? Review retention and recruiting tips and develop a plan of action to slow down member attrition and attract new members. Need help? Contact the District Members Team, your Assistant Governor, or the District Governor (see last page for contact information).
3. **Membership Survey.** Conduct a formal or informal survey of your members. You may want to do a longer survey during your first club assembly early in the year and then a shorter one to follow up on any changes you may have made. Share the results with all members and develop a plan of action to address problem areas. There is a sample survey on the District Website at [www.rotary6000.org](http://www.rotary6000.org) under *Club Service / Membership Development* that you can customize for your club. Do whatever best fits your club's personality. The main objective is to get honest answers from your members!

4. **Explore New Membership Options.** Should you offer spouses a discount?... try out an associate or corporate membership? ... hold one meeting a month in another location?... explore a satellite club option? Be creative! See page 7 for more details.
  
5. **What is your Public Image?** What can your Public Relations committee do to help get the word out to highlight your achievements? Can you advertise on a local billboard or wall of a large building? Is the Rotary wheel on all of your projects? Have you sent public service announcements to your local radio station? Usually they will run them at no charge. You can download ads, billboards, radio spots and more from [www.Rotary.org](http://www.Rotary.org). Search under Public Relations.
  
6. **Attend the Fall Training Seminars.** These seminars are time well spent in learning new information and networking with Rotarians from other clubs. Several members from each club should attend one of these sessions i.e. board, committee chairs, officers. The meetings are September 24<sup>th</sup> in Ankeny and October 10<sup>th</sup> in West Liberty. See details in the District newsletter, website and emails.

# **Membership Retention**

Our greatest asset is our current members. **They are our “CUSTOMERS!”** One of the priorities of the Members Committee is to focus on retaining and nurturing your current members. In a survey done in our zone, the main reason people drop their membership is their lack of engagement. It is crucial to let Rotarians know they are valued and their continued membership is deeply appreciated. Clubs with a high turnover lose more than just a member; the club loses the institutional knowledge they have invested in those members through club meetings and trainings at the club and district level.

## **Suggestions on Retaining Current Members**

- Think of our members as customers who need to be nurtured and appreciated.
- Survey your “customer’s” needs and expectations by conducting a membership survey. Find out what motivates your club members. Some questions you might ask:
  - A. Why did you join Rotary? What keeps you engaged and interested in continuing your membership? Would you join our club today? If yes why? If no, why?
  - B. What do you see as some of our club’s strengths? *Note to leadership: Do you believe these strengths are communicated to prospective members?*
  - C. Are you aware of our club’s goals and important achievements?
  - D. What challenges does our club face? Examples: food quality, meeting location, quality or types of programs, members not feeling welcome, too many inactive members, low attendance. *Note to leadership: Is there anything you can address immediately to help you retain and attract new members?*
- Build specific programs or events to nurture and serve your “customers” i.e. a family event, a theme for a month.
- Have a meaningful induction of new members with an updated welcome packet of club and district information. Be sure the sponsors are present and participate in some way. Allow time for the new members to introduce themselves to give personal and vocational information.
- New member orientation is essential. This is an excellent opportunity for the new members to get well acquainted with each other, learn about your club’s projects, and get a brief snapshot of the impact Rotary has in the world.
- Engage new members by assigning them to a committee immediately.

- Mentor new Rotarians. Put a procedure in place where all new members have a mentor for at least 6 months.
- Increase the number of active people on committees. The participation of everyone is needed but it's important to match Rotarians to their skill and interest area.
- Existing members need to know how vital they are to your club's success and the part they play in the club's goals and on-going projects.
- Support current Rotarians by reaching out, mentoring and networking with each other. Show them you care!
- Assign a club member to attend a district event and ask them to share the results with the entire club. Our largest event of the year, the District Conference, is informative and motivational. The President, President-Elect, Board, and Committee Chairs should be strongly encouraged to attend. If you need to offer scholarships to make it more affordable it will be worth the knowledge and excitement those Rotarians bring back to your club. It is vitally important for your club to support the District Conference in some way.
- Have an occasional social, non-traditional meeting that includes fun events.
- Have the Retention Committee review the attendance sheet. Who has missed several meetings? Follow up with those Rotarians by showing concern.
- Target members who are not involved or may have a "reason" to drop their membership soon (Ex: new retirees) and develop a plan to retain them.
- Regular club communication keeps everyone involved and informed i.e. good club bulletins, mass emails, "minute for Rotary", announcements
- Conduct an informal exit interview when someone drops their membership. This information will be valuable as you strive to grow your club.

## ***Attracting New Rotarians***

- ***Attracting people to Rotary works better than recruiting people to Rotary.***

Attraction works because it “pulls” the right kind of people to Rotary. When we attract the right people, they will attract others.

- Younger people may not be interested in a club that just meets for lunch. They will more likely be interested in a club that does cleft pallet repair, brings water to rural third world countries, is teamed up with Bill Gates to end polio forever, mentors children, buys new safety equipment for local fire fighters, or builds playgrounds.
- Mentally prepare an enthusiastic Rotary “elevator speech” to be given to someone on the spur of the moment.
- Wear your Rotary pin throughout the week. Be proud of it!
- Tell others why you are a Rotarian and invite them to a club meeting. Hopefully the club meeting will do the selling!
- Hold an open house or social gather in the evening as a means of attracting prospective members.
- Invite young business owners and professionals to come to club meetings.
- Follow up with individuals who have presented a program at your club and extend them an invitation to return any time.
- Develop a brochure that promotes your club. Place the brochure and Rotary pamphlets and materials in member’s businesses or other visible locations.
- Watch for new hires in local businesses that are announced in newspapers, through social media, or word of mouth.
- Follow up with former club members and invite them to rejoin Rotary.
- Thank the prospective member, both verbally and written, for visiting your Rotary Club and let them know they are welcome to come again.
- Focus on attracting females age 30-54. The goal is to have a 50-50 gender mix.
- Does you club need more diversity i.e. ethnic, ages, vocations?

- Put emphasis on the service aspect of Rotary (locally, nationally, internationally).
- Promote business networking as a benefit of Rotary and provide opportunities for this to be done.
- It is more effective to ask “*Would you like to become part of our Rotary club*” rather than simply asking them to join Rotary.
- Membership boils down to a genuine, sincere ask. It is amazing the number of people who say they’ve never been approached about Rotary. That’s our fault, not theirs!

Remember who asked you to attend a Rotary meeting? Now it’s time for you to pass the gift forward to others.

# ***Rotary Club Pilot Programs***

## **Is it time to try something new?**

Rotary International has authorized clubs to try one or more pilot programs. The purpose of the Club Pilot programs is to give more flexibility to current and prospective members and make club membership more attractive to younger people.

### **Overview of the 4 Authorized Rotary Club Pilot Programs**

**Satellite Club** – allows a Rotary club to conduct multiple club meetings during the week, with each meeting taking place at a different location, on a different day and/or time.

- This flexibility allows Rotary meetings to accommodate member's work schedules
- Must have a main club as sponsor
- The sponsor club and all satellite clubs must have a combined meeting at least once per quarter.

**Associate Member** – allows an individual to become associated and acquainted with a Rotary club, its members, programs, and projects on a trial basis before making the decision to become an active member.

- The intent is for the Associate Member to join the club after the trial period
- The Rotary club sets guidelines for length of trial period
- Clubs have considerable leeway in determining the “rules & regulations” of an Associate Member.
- Associate Members do not pay RI dues

**Corporate Member** – allows a corporation or company to become a member of the Rotary club and to appoint up to 4 designees as the individuals who can attend meetings, serve on projects & committees, vote, and be a club officer.

- One of the members must be from the senior executive group of the firm
- The other members must be managerial staff employed full time by the firm.
- Only one of the members will be formally inducted into the club. The other designees will be listed as official members of the club but will be listed as designees on RI rosters. RI dues must be paid by/for each corporate member.

**Innovative & Flexible Rotary Club** – has a major focus on letting clubs self-determine their operations to better fit the needs of their members and community.

- Clubs are authorized to make changes to the Standard Rotary Club Constitution and to their club Bylaws in any area other than RI membership dues requirements.

## ***Attributes of a Vibrant Club***

- Welcoming to everyone. Have a greeter at the door to welcoming everyone to the meeting and pay special attention to guests.
- Warmly introduce guests and thank them for coming.
- Be respectful. Start and end on time. Be sure the room is comfortable and the food is up to par.
- Engaging. Every member needs to be involved in some way whether the responsibilities are large or small and to be assured their services are valued. When members do not feel engaged they will quietly drop their membership.
- Provides value. Is the time, money, energy, programs, and projects worthwhile?
- All members are thanked and acknowledged for their service to the club.
- Networking is fun and encouraged.
- Quality meeting place that is convenient.
- Visit other clubs so you can meet other Rotarians and share ideas.

***We are here to serve you. If you have any questions, please contact one of us.***

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