

## SAN FRANCISCO CLUB REVEALS FORMULA FOR GROWTH AND RETENTION OF MEMBERS



Members of the Rotary Club of San Francisco Evening take a break during a project in Guatemala with Hug it Forward.

*Photo Credit: Courtesy of Danielle Lallement/Rotary Club of San Francisco Evening*

Members of the Rotary Club of San Francisco Evening meet at a wine bar after work, share a social outing, and promote all their activities on social media like Meetup and Facebook.

As the first evening club in the city, it has attracted many young professionals from Silicon Valley tech firms whose work schedules keep them from joining a more traditional club that meets for breakfast or lunch. But more than that, the evening format has helped the club grow by 30 percent since it received its charter in mid-2013.

Danielle Lallement, who was its charter president, says the club has been successful because it accommodates members' preferences.

"The majority of our members are in their 30s and 40s, and their financial and work obligations outside the club are great, so we cater to their needs," she says. "We are extremely flexible with our members, their attendance, their payment options, and expectations."

For example, almost half the members are citizens of countries other than the U.S., so leaders dropped the pledge of allegiance at the beginning of meetings. In addition, members can easily schedule recurring dues payments online, and a PayPal credit card reader is brought to meetings to facilitate dues payment. Early on, members also decided they wanted the last meeting of the month to be a social event. Members have attended the San Francisco Ballet, visited a karaoke bar, played miniature golf, and worked with a golf pro to improve their swings.

Members are asked to attend at least half of all meetings but aren't pressured if they can't, especially if life events like marriage, a baby's arrival, or an increased workload claim more of their time. Club officers frequently use Skype or a conference line to join board meetings they can't attend in person.

## **SPREADING THE WORD VIA SOCIAL MEDIA**

Lallement was a member of the Rotary Club of Sparks, Nevada, before a job change brought her to San Francisco. After discovering that the city lacked an evening club, she hooked up with a core group of other former Rotary members and they began attending networking events to get the word out. They met at the San Francisco Food Bank for their first service project and announced it on Meetup, attracting several new members as a result.

"Depending on the event, we would have at least two new people find us," she says. "Advertising on social media has been a big promoter for us."

In addition to posting its activities on Facebook and Meetup, the club uses Eventbrite to promote and sell tickets to social events. And club members stay connected through Twitter and LinkedIn.

## **IMPORTANCE OF PROJECTS**

Lallement, who is a registered nurse, also knew that service is important, because young people want to "get their hands dirty." With her Nevada club, she had taken part in a de-worming project and a polio immunization trip in Ghana, helped to repair cleft lips in India, and handed out bed nets to fight malaria in Zambia.

The San Francisco Evening club has partnered with the nonprofit Hug It Forward and five other Rotary clubs to mix and pour cement for a high school in Guatemala. The club was also awarded its first district grant last year for a Seed for America project that provided free training in computer programming to students in San Francisco. Other projects closer to home have included cleaning up trails and digging trenches at San Francisco's Mount Sutro and joining with Interact club members to build houses for Habitat for Humanity.

Though the club was the first evening option in the city for Rotary members, it's no longer the only one in the area. Its success has led to the creation of the Rotary Club of Rafael Evening, and two provisional clubs Mid-Peninsula Evening and San Francisco SOMA.

"The idea has really taken off," Lallement says. "There's no reason this can't be done anywhere."

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By Arnold R. Grahl

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