

Mentoring in District 5080

The Case for Mentoring:

Role of Mentor:

The Responsibilities of a Mentor:

The qualifications of a Mentor:

In a nutshell, we propose that the mentoring program take on a three-pronged structure:

1. The Club Culture - 1.1 General History
 - 1.2 The Culture of our club Meetings
 - 1.3 Our Club's Special Programs

2. The District Culture – 2.1 General Structure
 - 2.2 District Special Events & Programs

3. Rotary Culture - 3.1 The General Structure of Rotary
 - 3.2 The Terminology of Rotary
 - 3.2 Special Programs of Rotary

What follows is a description of the why, the what, the who and the how. It is critical that it fit your club; make what modifications you need, but maintain the overall purpose as you change things – that is to help the new member make that transition from raw rookie to knowledgeable Rotarian, well informed and fully engaged in the work and fun of Rotary

1. The Case for Mentoring:

It is the responsibility of every Rotary club to provide in-depth instruction/education/information about Rotary to every new member. How they do that is what we're discussing here. For the purposes of this program, it is assumed that every new/prospective member is subjected to a thorough orientation **before** being inducted. That is really where mentoring starts...but it's just the start. A member is a member until they are recognized as a person who needs information and then they are recognized as a person who is in need of a mentor. Whether the member is new, a transfer from a different club or a long standing person in Rotary, at some point they need mentoring. The only thing that long-standing membership in Rotary guarantees is many years of membership in a Rotary club. Without their engagement in and curiosity about Rotary, there is nothing that says they are knowledgeable, up to date about Rotary, truly understand what it stands for, what it's doing or where it's going.

When a prospective member is first introduced to a club and to Rotary, they will be overwhelmed by many things – the ritual that each club has, the expectations of the members, the goals and expectations of the club and the history of all the different layers within Rotary and how they might fit. And then there's the list of acronyms...something that Rotary seems to love. New faces are the least of it.

Mentoring should begin before a person is inducted but certainly it is needed after that. The duration of the formal mentoring is dependent on many factors, and the key outcome, if done properly, is a bonded network within the club that makes new members strong and mentors and the club stronger.

Not everyone is suited to being a mentor, so the selection of who becomes a mentor is important. Many clubs operate what they call the 'RED BADGE' program – a light orientation as much as anything, but may not have all the aspects of a full mentoring. Such a system can easily be incorporated into a

fuller program. What's important to understand right off the bat is that this is not a 'one-size-fits-all' program. Many elements need to be customized to fit the club culture and the membership. That's where the skills of the mentor come in.

2. **The Role of the Mentor:**

In 5080 we are proposing that each member designated for mentoring be assigned **2 mentors**: one for internal education and one for general Rotary education. In each case, the mentor needs to have solid, accurate knowledge of their area of responsibility and be a person who is comfortable in the role of 'being the expert' without being the 'know-it-all'.

- a) *The Internal Mentor*: should be able to answer questions about club history, leadership positions and how people reach those positions, and traditional activities of the club both within a meeting and outside of meetings. Where clubs have 'expectations' of members that are not always explicit, the mentor can make them clearly known. Anything that ties to the club, how it functions and how members play a part falls into this mentor's portfolio.
- b) *The External Mentor*: should have solid knowledge and even experience beyond the club level, if at all possible. This mentor needs to be able to answer questions related to District structure and functioning, Rotary Foundation and Rotary International generalities and how they all tie together. Obviously this role is more demanding but there are several resources available to make sure the mentor has training and help. From on-line training available from RI to the RLI program and print materials to individuals within the district, answers to questions can be obtained for almost any question that arises.

3) **The Responsibilities of a Mentor:**

Once mentors have been assigned by the club, they should introduce themselves to the new member and make clear what their roles are in the coming months. When a question arises, the member knows who

they can consult for answers. Any other informal meeting is entirely up to the parties.

Of course, it may be that the size of the club or the availability of suitable or willing/interested candidates for being a mentor dictates that you can't use the 2-mentors for each new member and especially if you hope to assign a new pair to each new member. In that case, we suggest that you form a small cadre of suitable and interested candidates who can take on the duties as a mentoring team: some responsible for the internal mentoring and the others for the external aspects. The key element is that there be 2 people handling interconnected but distinct aspects of the mentoring process.

Clubs may find a benefit in striking a sub-committee of the Membership committee for handling the mentoring program and even have them meet collectively a few times a year to compare successes and add improvements along the way. Assistance from the district committee on resources for such a sub-committee are available on request.

Below is a list of possible things mentors should do. You should feel free to add others as fits your club culture:

- Monitor comfort level and involvement of new member
- Accompany new member to meetings, make-ups or other club events sometimes
- Make introductions to club members
- Explain committees and suggest potential engagement that is compatible with interests
- Make sure they inform member of special meetings or events, attending as many of these as possible and acting as an informal host to member's family
- Monitor member's attendance and understanding of club rules
- Be available for answering questions and giving advice if asked

There are many good resources available, available through RI or on our District website.

4) **The Qualifications of a Mentor:**

In deciding who should be a mentor and which role they might fill, consider the following attributes:

- Has the person been a member for more than a year?
- Does the person have a high level of knowledge and interest about the club and Rotary?
- Is he or she willing and able to devote the time and energy necessary to help the new member fully participate in the club?
- What might the person have in common with the new member (hobbies, interests, profession)?
- Has the member served Rotary beyond the club? in the last 3 years?

5) **Areas for Mentoring:**

a) **The Club Culture**. Every club has a unique culture and as such every new member needs to understand what makes that culture unique. One would hope that there has been an exposure and even thorough discussion of what that culture is, prior to the member's induction, otherwise there could be misunderstandings and even embarrassment. The other aspect of 'club culture' is that other clubs may be quite different than 'their club' and it's important to understand possible reasons for and acceptance of those differences. Obviously the Internal mentor handles this segment.

b) **The District Culture**: Just the concept of a District and what its function is can be daunting to new members. It is not surprising to find many long-term members without a clear understanding of 'The District'. In fact, some even find the District an unneeded administrative body and fail to see how it helps clubs and members fulfill the work of Rotary and club members. Clearly, choosing a person with this outlook to be a mentor would not serve Rotary, the club or the member well. District culture is influenced by many factors – geography, the economy and area economics, and the demography are key among them. A person with service experience at the District level would be a good choice as a mentor at this level. Districts have special events that new members need to be made aware of, chief among them being: District Conference, District-wide

Training Assemblies and club visits by the District Governor. The District website has a calendar which shows important events and in many cases permits members to register for these events. They are great ways to learn about the workings of clubs and district and their interactions. Through them, one can learn about possible ways of engagement with many of the special programs that a District operates, like Youth Exchange, Interact, Rotaract, R.Y.L.A., Group Friendships exchanges and the like. This part of the mentoring can be undertaken by either the Internal or the External mentor.

c) **Rotary Culture**: This segment calls for a person who has had both longer term membership and a keen interest in the workings of the International organization. Many excellent resources are available for this, and one of the very best, written by Past RI President Cliff Dochterman, is titled '***The ABCs of Rotary***'. This segment of the mentoring role is for the External mentor.

Conclusion: The important thing to remember here – everyone can benefit from this process: new members get help in their initial engagement and established members get concrete evidence of their worth and usefulness.

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