**Suggested Steps to Increase Your Club’s Membership**

***From District 5710 Membership Team – May 2023***

District 5710 is committed to expanding membership throughout our District. By adding more members, we can do more good in the world and have a bigger impact in our local communities. We need to make boosting membership a priority and we can do so by implementing tried and true tips from other Rotary Clubs. Here below is a list of tips from the Rotary Club of Edina/Morningside, written by Tom Gump, which have proven so effective in boosting their membership that they have taken their “show on the road” and are sharing them with other clubs. As Tom states, in Rotary’s membership game, everyone’s a winner!

Start today to utilize these tips to grow your clubs as follows:

1. **Create a list of all the great things about your club.**

List your star members, the advantages of your meeting location, the kinds of projects and events you host, and so on. The list can serve as a template when sending an email or letter to a potential member. Make sure to tailor any correspondence so it addresses the specific interests and wants of any potential member. For instance, if someone is interested in international work, your email or letter should focus on that.

1. **Keep a list of potential members.**

Keep a list on paper or the desktop of your computer. Either way, it makes you think about those people who might be a fit for your club. Discuss the list at board meetings, not just the concept of bringing in new members, but the specific names and who’s going to contact them and when. And don’t overlook some obvious suspects, such as members’ spouses, Youth Exchange host parents, and even former members, etc. Sometimes people need to leave for a reason and then later they have more time and just have to be asked to come back.

1. **Know your club’s strengths.**

Most things are strengths is you target the right audience. If you meet in the morning, you are probably a good fit for someone working 9 to 5. If you meet at noon, you’re more likely to appeal to retirees or parents of schoolchildren. If someone doesn’t fit your format, recommend them to another club. It boosts Rotary’s capacity to make a difference in communities around the world and with any luck, they might send you a potential member some day.

1. **Make membership growth your club’s top priority.**

Make membership growth a priority and make sure every member understands that. New members bring new energy to a club and it means more people to serve on committees, work on projects and events, and raise money for the Foundation.

1. **Look to young Rotarians for fresh perspectives.**

Want some suggestions about attracting younger members? The Roc City Rotary Club in Rochester, New York, chartered in February 2016, targets recent college graduates and young professionals by keeping dues low ($120 annually) and meetings infrequent. They meet once a month, during a happy hour at a local pub, and have a solid turnout at each meeting. They attract young people who want to get involved but crave flexibility. The club plans service projects three months in advance so members can plan ahead, regularly schedules speakers for Adulting 101 (paying off debt and how to buy a house). They focus on being a club their members look forward to each month.

1. **Appeal to local volunteers.**

The Evanston, IL, club held its inaugural “Heads Up, Evanston” event which is equal parts community outreach, game show, and “organizational speed dating.” They encourage participants to connect with each other during and after the meeting and find new ways to collaborate and partner based on what they have heard each other say. They follow up by sending all participants a PDF with everyone’s contact information as an added convenience. The participants in this service-oriented dating game are local not-for-profit organizations, about 25 per annual session. Representatives from each organization get exactly tow minutes to give a commercial or news item about themselves. The time limit is rigidly enforced but is fun since people do their best to finish before the dreaded sound of an old Bee Gees tune or the theme from Rocky. The Heads Up gathering includes a modestly priced lunch and post gathering mingling around tables lade with promotional materials. The event is also a way for the club to provide “a service to the community, a way to offer unique value as a forum for leaders.” It also is an opportunity for “awareness building about what Rotary is and what we do.”

1. **Talk about Rotary wherever you go.**

Talk at work, family gatherings, neighborhood get-togethers, and parties. You will be amazed how easy it is after you practice awhile. You may get a lot of ‘nos’ but it is never not a good time to invite a potential member to a meeting. Gump’s club recruited and inducted three new members during the holiday season and he also landed a new member at a Chipotle. You never know where you will meet your next member and if you want younger members, hang out where they hang out.

1. **Make a list of club members’ responsibilities.**

It is important to engage with potential members beforehand. They will want to know how they can fit in with your club and what opportunities there are for serving. The list should also include information about dues, attendance guidelines, and other club expectations, and it should emphasize the many benefits that come with being a Rotary member.

1. **Realize there is no finish line.**

Even if your club is the optimum size, it’s no reason to stop recruiting. There are always reasons people leave, for example, job transfer, family issues, or conflicts at work. As Gump says, you’re either growing or you’re dying as a club.

1. **Emphasize service.**

Some people will be put off by weekly meetings and the cost of the meal as they feel their money could be put to better use. One tech savvy club in North Wales relies heavily on social media to promote itself, its projects, and Rotary. It collaborates closely with other clubs in their district and relies on high-wattage events to raise its profile. They host a family fun event that attracts between 3,000 and 4,000 people and everything is branded so there’s no mistake who’s organizing it. They also held a Christmas Lights Switch event that drew 10,000 people and gained six new members on their first event. The club raised money for End Polio Now and other charities.

1. **Celebrate when you get a new member.**

You have to make potential members feel wanted. Gump’s club makes a poster of the individuals after they’ve been voted in and put it at the front of the room at their next meeting. They love it and some ask to take it home, one even wanted to mail it to his mother. While celebrating new members, don’t forget that clubs also stay strong by retaining current members. If you ensure that they are having a good experience and realizing the full value of their membership, the clubs current members will be proud to invite a guest to a meeting, and those guests will want to join an attractive and welcoming club.

1. **Be persistent.**

At times, it will take more than one or two requests to get someone to attend a meeting. Keep asking. Gump’s workout partner tried for two years to get him to attend a meeting, but he joined after attending just one meeting.

1. **Be vibrant.**

Gump once dressed as a turkey the week before Thanksgiving and encouraged people to come to a meeting to see it and some actually did! It’s all about making club meetings and events fun and vibrant. Other simple things we’ve done is make outrageous centerpieces for our meeting tables. It gets people talking. For example, at Easter we put baskets in the middle of the tables with plastic eggs and inside the eggs were blue and gold M&M with the Rotary logo on them. At St. Patrick’s Day, we had shamrocks with members’ pictures on them; same thing at Christmas, but on foil trees. Gump’s club is so welcoming, sometimes it just takes getting a potential member to the first meeting and then they join. Balloons, posters, streamers, it all help and it really does work.

1. **Embrace Diversity.**

District 5710 has put together a plan to support diversity in our district and it includes ideas on what clubs can do to increase membership through a more diverse membership (see District Membership Tab). Gump also shares examples of what other clubs have done in their Districts to acknowledge underrepresented groups such as LGBTQ, for example. The Rotary Club of San Francisco Castro received a ton of support from their district to form a new club for this reason. Many members had already been participating in Rotary events and projects and they did not want to let not being chartered get in the way of their service. It is essential that Rotary embrace diversity if it intends to grow. Rotary has an opportunity here, they need to be open and affirming to everyone. If we’re interested in bringing peace to the world, that peace has to start with us.

1. **Get them in the door.**

Sometimes that is all it takes to get someone “hooked” on Rotary. Get them in the door, invite them to a meeting or even a service project and introduce them to the Rotary organization. There are many success stories of an enthusiastic Rotarian trying to get a potential member interested in Rotary, let yours be the next.

For a full copy of Tom Gump’s article Rotary Club of Edina/Morningside, Minnesota, click on the link below:

<https://d.docs.live.net/ac17f23a70382d7d/Documents/Rotary/Tips%20for%20increasing%20club%20membership%20%20Rotary%20International%20(1).pdf>