



A ROTARY MEMBERSHIP GUIDE

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District 7910

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This membership guide is a collection of notes written for the District 7910 weekly newsletter during the 2015-2016 Rotary year. It is intended to offer an idea or thought each week aimed at stimulating discussions, questions and actions to effectively increase membership at all our clubs.

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I. The Object of Rotary

1. The First Object of Rotary

As we go about our hectic personal, professional and Rotary lives, we may forget the reasons we are committed to be Rotarians. Membership Corner will review the “Object of Rotary” and its four goals during the next four weeks. Rotary does have a clear statement of our *raison d’être*.

The Object of Rotary is to encourage and foster the ideal of service as a basis of worthy enterprise and, in particular, to encourage and foster the following:

1. The development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service
2. High ethical standards in business and professions, the recognition of the worthiness of all useful occupations, and the dignifying of each Rotarian’s occupation as an opportunity to serve society
3. The application of the ideal of service in each Rotarian’s personal, business and community life
4. The advancement of international understanding, goodwill, and peace through a world fellowship of business and professional persons united in the ideal of service.

Holy Rotar-ideology! What high minded lofty goals! What do they do they mean? How do we interpret them? How do we explain these goals to prospective members or even to our current members? It may be useful to translate these ideas into more common language and terms we can more easily relate. Here are a few thoughts. It may be useful to discuss these objectives at your assembly meetings and add your own interpretations.

Let’s take the first goal: Development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service. One of the more common goals for joining Rotary is the opportunity it provides for meeting and networking with people we want to associate with and to enjoy fellowship, fun and friendship. We may want to network for business or for personal reasons. Maybe we just want the camaraderie or the support structure the organization provides. These are all legitimate and rational reasons for joining Rotary. As time goes on, our Rotary engagement grows ever stronger and we become more committed to deeper Rotary objectives rooted in the other three goals.

How does your club leadership develop opportunities for fellowship? Are there occasions throughout the year to join together as members or families either for fun or for service projects? These events do not happen by accident. They require some initiative and planning. They are great as ice breakers for members but also for prospective members. What better way to show prospective members that Rotary is truly a fun and friendly organization than to demonstrate it through practice.

Why is this goal important? The folks who generated these Rotary goals were really genius. Have you noticed how much more committed members are when they working on Rotary projects when they are accepted as members of the Rotary family and when they have generated strong acquaintances and personal friends amongst the membership? Acquaintance leads to friendship leads to commitment! All

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strong organizations follow this same principle that commitment begins with the relationships between members. Club leadership should initiate many opportunities for social gatherings and fun events throughout the year to increase the camaraderie amongst members. Commitment to loftier Rotary Club objectives will surely follow.

2. The Second Object of Rotary

The second goal of the Object of Rotary is stated as: "High ethical standards in business and professions, the recognition of the worthiness of all useful occupations, and the dignifying of each Rotarian's occupation as an opportunity to serve society." This is another well-stated objective that is not so easy to communicate to non-Rotarians and, possibly, some of us as well.

What does it mean to us? How do we interpret the intention of the second goal of the Object of Rotary? Some clubs have new members review their professions and backgrounds through biographical sketches at club meetings, referred to as "classification talks." These are always interesting talks affording us the opportunity to learn about our fellow members.

Is there more to this second object? I believe the intent is aimed at Rotarians to share their knowledge, experience and wisdom gained through many years of working in their trades with society in general - especially, with those who can gain the most. Consider the vast amount of knowledge and experience we have and how much good can be realized by sharing that knowledge with others. Think of the real power of this object by sharing our life and career experiences with the young folks in our community, the K-12 and college students. These young folks hunger for knowledge about the world, industry, business and all the other career opportunities available to them. Rotarians have the opportunity, nay, the obligation to impart as much of our life experience to them as we can. We might reflect on how much we may have gained from learning from our seniors when we were young, impressionable and hungry for knowledge. Although we received guidance from our parents, we may have paid more attention to outsiders. There are many opportunities to accomplish this object through mentoring, reading to minors, reality fairs and sharing life experiences.

How do you interpret the second goal of the Object of Rotary? It might be useful to discuss these ideas at your club assembly meetings and translate them into more easily communicated terminology. They become powerful ideas to use when discussing Rotary with prospective members. Through the second goal, we build pride in ourselves, our members and our clubs.

What is your club doing to advance the second goal of the Object of Rotary?

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3. The Third Object of Rotary

The third goal of the Object of Rotary is stated as, “The application of the ideal of service in each Rotarian’s personal, business and community life.” This is the basis of the Rotary motto, “Service Above Self.” Quite a high standard! While that is difficult to live up to, when you add up the good works of Rotary in our clubs, district and around the world, we are doing a darned good job.

The ideal of service is the essence of Rotary and we are surrounded by opportunities to apply the ideal of service in our communities and internationally. How do we identify these opportunities in our personal, business and community lives? They may not be readily apparent to us as we go about our daily lives but there are many devoted folks in our local communities and in international organizations who dedicate their lives to helping people. Consider the many organizations devoted to helping the poor, the homeless, the indigent, the elderly, the sick, the hungry, the injured veterans and many other needy people. Have we reached out to them to offer support – either financial or hands-on? Do we invite them to speak to our members about community problems and issues? Have we tied our fundraising efforts to specific community needs?

We might consider asking ourselves whether we spend as much time thinking and planning “good works” as we do in fundraising. Our objective is to advance the Object of Rotary. The third goal of the Object of Rotary encapsulates the principle of Service Above Self. Let us spend more of our time reaching out. We sometimes lament the lack of public knowledge about Rotary. Satisfying critical community-service needs represents the best opportunity to gain public knowledge, image and support for Rotary. It will help to search out the folks doing this work and invite them to speak at Rotary meetings and to join Rotary. While time and financial constraints may be a hindrance, Rotary International has relaxed the attendance requirements and clubs can be creative in their application of dues and fees.

There are so many wonderful folks working every day to relieve pain, suffering and anguish. They are Rotarians and don’t know it. Let us seek them out and together we can advance the third goal of the Object of Rotary even more than we have.

4. The Fourth Object of Rotary

The Object of Rotary is to encourage and foster the ideal of service as a basis of worthy enterprise. The fourth goal defining the Object of Rotary is stated, “The Advancement of International Understanding, Goodwill and Peace Through a World Fellowship of Business and Professional Persons United in the Ideal of Service.”

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Think about this one for a few minutes! Wow! The worldwide accomplishments of Rotary are quite astounding, yet these are areas that most local Rotarians may not know as much about as we should.

However, we are strong supporters of The Rotary Foundation (TRF), which is the primary mechanism through which hundreds of international projects are funded. The worldwide impact of Rotary is huge. Of the 1.2 million Rotarians worldwide, 75 percent are outside the USA. Quite naturally, we tend to be more interested on our local community issues but the fourth goal of Rotary demands our attention be also focused on international good deeds.

Think about the progress made by Rotarians in these areas: the eradication of polio; peace scholars; exchange students; Gift of Life; GEMINI; disaster aid; water and sanitation; disease prevention; and countless other projects. Our district supports the funding of more than \$1 million a year in international projects through our support of TRF.

Last year, District 7910 averaged \$133 per Rotarian to the Annual Fund – SHARE - and we are in the top 25 percent worldwide. The top three clubs in our district were Wachusett Area, Montachusett Area and Fitchburg, averaging \$406, \$403 and \$371, respectively, per member, placing them in the top 1 percent, 2 percent and 3 percent *worldwide*! Congratulations. What an example for all us.

Everyone who contributes to TRF is a part of this worldwide effort and should be proud. Of course, the effort should be to have every Rotarian participating, which we refer to as EREY – “Every Rotarian Every Year.” This is not a heavy burden and should be considered as an absolute minimum member requirement.

The easiest way to contribute to TRF is through a credit card. If you contribute the equivalent of a latte and cookie each month at \$15, you would be exceeding the average Rotarian. Then, you could proudly proclaim that you are a part of the effort to advance international understanding, goodwill and peace and supporting the fourth goal of the Object of Rotary.

Is your club educating members about these programs? Does your club participate in international projects? Do all your members support TRF? Does your club communicate your international projects to the local community? The more your community knows about the full scope and good work of Rotary, the more able you will be to attract like-minded people to Rotary.

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II. The Value of Rotary

1. 21 Reasons for a Rotary Value Proposition

They are all valuable statements and can be used a part of your club's value proposition. Every club also has many other unique reasons to add to its value proposition. You may consider reviewing, discussing and critiquing at a club assembly. It is easy to read these statements and nod our heads in agreement, but it is also more effective to discuss openly and internalize these ideas.

1. Friendship: In an increasingly complex world, Rotary provides one of the most basic human needs: friendship and fellowship. It is one of the three reason why Rotary began in 1905.

2. Business Development: The second original reason for Rotary's beginning is business development. Everyone needs to network. Rotary consists of a cross-section of every sector of the business community. Its members come from all walks of life. Rotarians help each other.

3. High Ethical Standards: Rotarians practice a 4-Way Test (*see below*) that governs one's ethical standards. Rotarians are expected to be ethical in business and personal relationships.

4. Personal Growth and Development: Membership in Rotary consists of one's growth and education in human relations and personal development.

5. Leadership Development: Rotary is an organization of leaders and successful people. Serving in Rotary positions is like a college education, providing eadership, learning how to motivate, influence, and lead leaders.

6. Citizenship in the Community: Membership in a Rotary club makes one a better community citizen. The average Rotary Club consists of the most active citizens of any community.

7. Continuing Education: Each week at Rotary, there is a program designed to keep one informed about what is going on in the community, nation, and the world. Each member provides an opportunity to listen to different speakers and a variety of timely topics.

8. Fun: Rotary is fun - a lot of fun. Each meeting is fun. The club projects are fun. Social activities are fun. The service is fun.

9. Public-Speaking Skills: Many individuals who join Rotary were afraid to speak in public. Rotary develops confidence and skill in public communication and opportunity to practice and perfect those skills.

10. Citizenship in the World: Every Rotarian and Rotaractor wears a pin that says "Rotary International." There are a few places on the globe that do not have a Rotary Club. Every Rotarian is welcome—even encouraged—to attend any of the 34,644 Rotary clubs and 8,383 Rotaract Club in over 200 nations and geographical regions. This means instant friends in both one's own community and in the world community.

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11. Assistance when Traveling: Because there are Rotary Clubs everywhere, many a Rotarian in need of a doctor, lawyer, hotel, dentist, advice, etc., while traveling has found assistance through Rotary. The International Directory published every year has a name, phone and email address of every club president and secretary.

12. Entertainment: Every Rotary club and district has parties and activities that provide diversion in one's business life. Rotary holds conferences, conventions, assemblies, and institutes that provide entertainment in addition to Rotary information, education, and service.

13. The Development of Social Skills: Every week and at various events and functions, Rotary develops one's personal, social skills, and people skills. Rotary is for people who like people.

14. Family Programs: Rotary provides one of the world's largest youth exchange programs; high school and college clubs for future Rotarians; opportunities for spouse involvement; and a host of activities designed to help family members in growth and development of family values.

15. Vocational Skills: Every Rotarian is expected to take part in the growth and development of his or her own professional vocation, to serve on committees, and to teach youth about one's job or vocation. Rotary helps one to be a better doctor, nurse, lawyer, teacher, or whatever one does for a business.

16. Cultural Awareness: Around the world, practically every religion, country, culture, race, creed, political persuasion, language, color, and ethnic identity is found in Rotary. It is a cross section of the world's most prominent citizens from every background. Rotarians become aware of their cultures and learn to love and work with people everywhere. They become better citizens of their countries in the process.

17. Prestige: Rotary members are prominent people who are either current or retired leaders of business, professions, art, government, sports, military, religion, and all other disciplines. Rotary is the oldest and most prestigious service club in the world. Its ranks include executives, managers, and professionals – people who make decisions and influenced policy.

18. Nice People: Rotarians above all are nice people – the nicest people on the face of the earth. They are important people who follow the policy of, "It is nice to be important, but it is important to be nice."

19. The Absence of an "Official Creed:" Rotary has no secret handshake, no secret policy, no official creed, and no secret meetings or rituals. It is an open society of men and women who believe simply in helping others.

20. The Opportunity to Serve: Rotary is a service organization. Its business is humankind. Its product is service. Rotarians provide community service in both local and international communities. This is perhaps the best reason for becoming involved with Rotary: the chance to do something for somebody else; to sense self-fulfillment that comes in the process; and the return of that satisfaction to one's own life. It is richly rewarding.

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21. The Opportunity to Become Part of Positive Change: Rotarians and Rotaractors are involved with challenges facing society including peace and conflict prevention/resolution, disease prevention and treatment, water and sanitation, maternal and child health, basic education and literacy, and economic and community development. The Rotary Foundation has adopted the six areas of focus to initiate funding to promote, enhance and encourage environmental/social stewardship.

2. Rotary is Hope

As we ring out the old year and ring in the new, we can hope for a more peaceful world and a more prosperous and successful Rotary year. We have now concluded the holiday season, when most of us have enjoyed the company of friends and family, when many of our hopes and dreams were satisfied, and as we look forward with optimism toward the future.

Perhaps that was not the case with many who have endured losses, hardships or major health issues. We know there are many people in our country who struggle to make it through life. And every day in all the media we see the hardships of many in foreign lands. What are we to do?

Sometimes we may feel that our individual efforts are insignificant in light of the vast problems of the world. Through Rotary, however, our collective efforts are multiplied many times. We can and do provide hope to thousands of folks throughout the world.

Through the efforts of our members and The Rotary Foundation, we fund thousands of projects in America and dozens of countries throughout the world. In addition to the funds we contribute to TRF, members of every club work hard each year to raise even more funds for myriad community projects, scholarships and charitable organizations. Each of these projects contributes to raising the hopes of many people. Collectively, the combined efforts of more than one million Rotarians throughout the world act to raise the hopes of many.

We can look forward with optimism to 2016 and beyond. We can hope to double the number of Rotarians to do more good. Logically, it does follow that the more members we have, the more good we can do. Let us start with our own clubs and resolve to double the number of members. We can hope to attract more folks who want to do good and contribute to Rotary.

Club presidents are now half way through their Rotary year. Have you assigned a Membership Committee chair? Have you reached a consensus with your members to increase your membership? Have you developed a target list of prospective members?

We can always hope!

3. A Rotary Thanksgiving

Happy Thanksgiving! It's a refrain exchanged among millions of Americans on this truly all-American holiday. The tradition began with the pilgrims at the end of their second year in Plymouth and continued

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sporadically and unofficially for the next 240 years until Abraham Lincoln declared the last Thursday in November 1863 as a national holiday. He was urged by Sarah Josepha Hale, the editor of a women's magazine, who had strived for more 25 years to have Thanksgiving declared a national holiday. Even then, it had to be declared each and every year and continued in that manner until President Franklin Roosevelt finally declared it a permanent national holiday in 1941.

Of course, we know why the pilgrims were thankful. The half that survived that first terrible winter were thankful to be alive and thankful for the invaluable help of the Wampanoag, who taught them how to survive.

What do we have to be thankful for? In the 395 years since the first Thanksgiving, we have even more to be thankful for. Our country has been blessed with incredible bounty and wealth. Our free institutions and our democratic form of government insure our continued growth and development. Millions have been lifted out of poverty, our health has improved and our life expectancy continues to expand. Individually, many of us have stories of incredible good fortune, whether in terms of family, health, wealth, happiness and general well-being. Happy Thanksgiving, indeed! We have so much to be thankful for.

Unfortunately, that is not the case for millions of Americans. There continues to be so many of our fellow Americans who are down and out - the downtrodden, the sick, the elderly, the needy, the hungry, the homeless and so many more. There are millions who are out of work and in need of help. Rotarians throughout our district and country provide support through our efforts at food pantries and hundreds of other worthwhile community projects.

But is it enough? Can we do more? These are questions in my mind when I hear of the reluctance, the difficulty and the inability of many Rotary clubs to add more members. Sure, membership is a tough job. But it should be at the top of our club agendas despite the difficulties. Yes, there are issues regarding dues, fees, meals, venues, attracting a more diverse group, retaining members, fundraisers and more. But isn't that what we are supposed to be good at - identifying problems and solving them? More members will allow us to increase our fundraising, develop new projects and provide more support for many of the needy in our communities. Let's quit talking about it and get on with the job.

As Rotarians in this time of thanksgiving and during the oncoming holiday season, we should reflect on our collective good fortune and resolve to do more to help our fellow citizens. Growing our clubs with good Rotarians will help us accomplish that.

4. A Rotary Value Proposition

The "Rotary Value Proposition" has been discussed before but it is such a powerful message that we should keep developing the idea until we all are comfortable with the concept. What is the "value" of Rotary and what is it that makes us different and more valuable than many other similar charitable-service organizations? How do we articulate the idea of Rotary in a way that resonates with ourselves and others?

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Recently, I had a very interesting and educational discussion with Carl Treleaven, past district governor of [District 6950](#) in the Tampa, Florida area. He shared some ideas on a value proposition, which I will paraphrase for you. Yes, we certainly are a service organization and "service above self is our motto, but we are much more. The idea of Rotary is that service is based on our professions to better serve mankind and to solve problems that no one else can. One of the base principles of Rotary is the idea of classifications, which is simply a way of developing a network of skills. Many of us do not pay much attention to this concept but it can be powerful in strengthening our clubs.

Rotarians bring three key assets to bear in our collective efforts to better mankind:

High ethical standards

Business and professional skills

Network of contacts worldwide

Together, our organization of 1.2 million members located throughout the world can be mobilized to address and solve problems better, quicker and more efficiently than any other organization. We demonstrate continually this capability with thousands of projects and millions of dollars every year. Polio eradication is among the finest examples of a successful worldwide project.

Think about this. This is really an unbeatable proposition. We can find the right people who are willing to either fund or devote their time and energy, or both, to find and solve problems that better humanity and do it better than any other organization. Hoohah!

So what do we offer prospective Rotarians?

The opportunity to associate with people of high ethical standards and character.

The opportunity for leadership, for mentoring young people, for networking and to serve mankind either locally or internationally.

The opportunity for fun, friendship and fellowship.

I am sure you can add several benefits of being a Rotarian, which may be specific to your own clubs.

So practically speaking, what does all that mean? Every club should reexamine their classifications and determine which ones are missing. How can we fill those missing classifications? Which ones do we need and which ones do we want? How do we prioritize them?

Mr. Treleaven describes a Rotary club that had a total of eight members six years ago and nearly turned in its charter. The club brought in two new members and decided to pursue aggressively their missing "classifications." They distributed cards from a deck to each member and each card had a desired

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classification. They assigned the responsibility of finding and attracting that “missing person” to their club. Today that club, [Wesley Chapel](#) in Lutz, Florida, boasts almost 100 members and is flourishing.

5. Rotary Honors Veterans

Each year on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, we celebrate and honor all the veterans - those alive and those who sacrificed their lives - throughout our history. November 11 was once honored as Armistice Day, the day on which the “war to end all wars” ended in the surrender of Germany to the allies in 1918 in a small railroad car in Compeigne, France. Twenty-two years later, a vengeful Germany forced a humiliated France to surrender after only six weeks of war in the very same railroad car – so began World War II and so much for the “war to end all wars.”

Since that time, millions more young Americans served our country in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan and many other areas. In order to honor more appropriately their service, Armistice Day was converted to Veteran’s Day in 1975, to begin officially in 1978, by President Gerald Ford.

World War One ended 13 years after Paul Harris, with three other gentlemen, began the Rotary movement, which was aimed at correcting the ills of the world, developing our communities into better places, and serving others above self. During the next 105 years Rotary developed into the world’s largest humanitarian organization with 1.2 million Rotarians in almost every country.

Of Rotary's five Avenues of Service, Community Service is the one on which Rotary Clubs spend most of their time and energy. Of course, the other Avenues of Service are equally important as we also devote resources toward Club Service, International Service, Vocational Service and Youth Service.

Within the realm of Community Service, there are many constituents including the poor, the hungry, the sick, the indigent, the elderly, the needy, countless community-service organizations, and the veterans. Do we spend enough time thinking about how to help and assist veterans? Many return from foreign battlefields in need of a helping hand, a job, or simply our thanks for a job well done. Many return with deep scars - either mental or physical, or both - and need our help. Every community has a population of veterans whom should be recognized and appreciated.

This month, the Rotary clubs in Acton-Boxborough, Auburn and Southborough organized breakfast or dinner events honoring veterans. Other Rotary clubs held similar events honoring veterans. Honoring our veterans is a wonderful way to serve our communities. It is a way for Rotary clubs to be recognized as servants of the community. And it is a way for our clubs to improve their public relations and to attract prospective Rotarians.

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Let us resolve to increase our focus on veterans next - and every year.

6. How To Describe Rotary

You are approached by an interested person who asks, “What is Rotary?” How do you respond? We all have a few direct responses depending on our knowledge of Rotary. But do we also have an effective response? Are we able to capture the essence of Rotary in just a few minutes, to interest the person enough so they will inquire further? I will present a few thoughts as well as challenge our district’s membership to present their own ideas and suggestions on the “What is Rotary?” question.

This may be something that we have printed and distributed to all members. PETS (Presidents Elect Training Seminar) is just around the corner and may be an ideal forum to discuss alternative answers to the question. If one has a half-hour to delineate all the various features of Rotary, we may all have great answers to the question. But if one has only three or four minutes to capture the imagination and interest of an inquiring stranger, then the “elevator speech” has to be both concise and include the most relevant aspects of Rotary.

So as a direct and immediate response, how about this?

“Rotary is a worldwide organization of 1.25 million members in 34,000 clubs in 200 countries. We are the world’s premier service organization focused on improving communities and people’s lives throughout the world. We have been in existence for 110 years. Each year, our Rotary Foundation raises more than \$100 million for a multitude of good works throughout the world. As a premier example, Rotary is responsible for leading the global fight to eliminate the scourge of polio throughout the world.

“We are organized into separate and autonomous clubs, such as ours in Everytown, USA, where we also focus on local community improvements, youth scholarships, and programs for the needy, the elderly and veterans. We are a non-political, non-secular organization made up of local leaders, business and professional folks, and retirees. We meet weekly, featuring an interesting speaker, and we devote a lot of time toward fun, fellowship and friendship through networking.”

Your next statement may be an invitation to attend a Rotary meeting or event. Or the person may ask a follow-up question that requires more detail. In any event, our purpose is to capture enough attention to open the door for more questions and interest. Responding to a direct question about the nature of Rotary may appear to be a simple task. However, many folks may become totally tongue-tied and ineffective. The inquirer may lose interest and we may have lost a prospective member.

What are your ideas on an appropriate response to the question “What is Rotary?”

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7. Does Fellowship Matter?

A couple of weeks ago, my wife asked me why our club never had a holiday party and I did not have a good answer. So we organized one, which our club enjoyed last Thursday evening. Almost 40 members and their spouses attended and it was a good time had by all. Maybe next year, we will plan a little further ahead and we may have more members attend.

A few members left saying we should do this more often. True – we should! Why not? Fun, fellowship and friendship are three important reasons to belong to Rotary. Of course, we spend a great amount of energy, time and resources on the betterment of our communities, but we also need to build upon the fellowship of our members. Club leaders should think a bit more about how the members relate to each other. Why is that important?

In every organization, loyalty to fellow workers or members is often stronger than it is to the organization. Most people will devote themselves to a cause one step at a time. Devotion to the cause will happen first, through loyalty to fellow members, then to the larger organization, and finally to the overall cause. As is in every human endeavor, there are zealots who are devoted to the cause first and fellowship be darned, but they are the exceptions.

Listen to soldiers from every country and every war who all spoke of their willingness to sacrifice everything for their buddies in the foxhole, in the cockpit or on the ship first before their flag and country. That is fellowship in the extreme .but it also exists in more moderate organizations such as Rotary. Increase the fellowship and the result is friends. Then, the fun will happen.

For those of us who have visited many clubs, can you tell the difference between those clubs where there is a decided level of fun, fellowship and friendship and those just plain “blah” clubs? Sure you can. And most assuredly, so can visitors and prospective members. So in addition to all the good work we do as Rotary clubs, let us spend a little more time thinking about how we can increase the level of fellowship in our clubs. This is how we get to meet other members, new members and spouses. This is how we get to learn about members’ families and interests. This is how we get to build stronger relationships with all the members. We just may become a bit more committed to the club goals and the objectives of Rotary through those relationships.

So what can club leaders do? Maybe a first step is a holiday party, but there are other holidays to celebrate throughout the year. How about family picnic days in the spring and summer? Or evening dinner non-business meetings with spouses? Or regular meetings where spouses are invited? We could think about inviting prospective members or friends of Rotary to these events as well. These events should be dispersed throughout the year

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8. Why Are We Rotarians?

It becomes a far easier task to attract new members when we are able to articulate the reasons we joined or, indeed, why we continue to remain Rotarians. So there's the question! Why did you join Rotary? What are you doing in Rotary? Why are you here? Do you like being with other Rotarians? I mean, what really turns you on?

Are you interested in helping others less fortunate than you? Is it the opportunity for networking and expansion of business contacts that attracted you? Is it simply the opportunity to meet friends once a week or on other occasions for a nice meal, a good speaker or socializing? It may be a great opportunity to meet with folks from other clubs or countries or even visiting other countries. Or is it because you have reached the stage in your life where you just want to return some of your good fortune to your local community?

Could you be one of those retired empty nesters who seeks to develop young people through RYLA, Interact, mentoring or an exchange student program? Maybe you are just retired and want something useful to do with your spare time – and money! You might be at the beginning of your career and are looking for a support structure to help you develop your own self-worth, leadership skills, public speaking skills or the ability to carry out some special needs.

Can you add to the list of reasons to be a Rotarian? Whatever your reasons, and there are many, it would be helpful to articulate them clearly. Utilize an assembly meeting to get your members to discuss the reasons to belong to Rotary. Your passion will become obvious and contagious when you are talking with prospective members.

Rotary research shows that most new members are interested in networking, building friendships and developing leadership skills. These goals are connected to the first two Objects of Rotary (developing acquaintances and honoring vocations). When those initial goals are satisfied, new members become more interested in serving others, developing their community and in serving local and international humanitarian needs which are related to the next two Objects of Rotary (community service and international understanding).

Understanding our own motivation to be Rotarians will help us articulate the meaning of Rotary to others. Open up the discussion at your club and your members will become better advocates of Rotary. Assign a scribe to record all the inputs and organize them into a selling tool. Do it now!

9. The “Whys” of Rotary

Rotarians represent about 0.1 percent of the total U.S. population - and much less than that of the world population. What is it that attracts us elite folks to this wonderful organization? Is it because we enjoy what we do or how we do it? Or is it because we believe in what we do? More importantly, how might we attract other elite folks to Rotary?

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Our usual approach is to tell prospective members what Rotary stands for and what Rotarians do. Our motto is “service above self” and we aim to improve the lives of others, to foster peace initiatives, to help the poor and needy and to develop our communities. We are an organization of more than one million people throughout the world in 34,000 separate local clubs who meet weekly. We network and we strive for fun, fellowship and friendship. We conduct fundraisers to support our beneficial efforts.

There are several other descriptive terms we use to talk about what we do in Rotary. However, it seems we have been unable to attract more than a miniscule percentage of folks to Rotary. Maybe our approach needs to be modified.

What if we turned the approach around and tell folks why we do what we do. People join organizations not only because of what they do but also because they believe in the same things they do. That is why we joined Rotary and that is why we continue to stay in Rotary. We do it because we believe and we do it for ourselves. Of course, we enjoy helping others but we do it because we believe in it.

In our initial approach to interested folks or prospective members, what if we appealed to their beliefs? We might ask them if they believe in improving the local community, in helping the poor, the hungry, the needy, the homeless and the veterans, in promoting peace throughout the world, in eliminating polio as a scourge of mankind, in developing youth through leadership and scholarship programs, and in many other ways of challenging the status quo. And, how would they enjoy engaging in these activities while networking with folks of similar beliefs in a fun and interesting venue?

Let us engage folks from the point of view of our belief system rather than from a litany of what we do and how we do it. People want to believe in the “whys” of what they do. We want folks who are deeply committed to devoting their time, talent and treasure to achieving the goals of Rotary. Simply rounding up members to attend meetings will not help us achieve our objectives. We will attract good members by aligning our goals with their beliefs.

What do you think about this approach?

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III. The Need for Members

1. Membership Issues

The Membership Corner notes have been issued weekly for the past eight months for your review. Hopefully, we have covered most of the aspects of membership as a key part of every club's strategy. It may be useful to pause for a few moments to review the notes and to elicit your response.

Have the membership tips been relevant, useful and effective? Have you been able to implement effectively the membership strategies in your club? What other membership information would be helpful as you pursue membership objectives in your club?

The most important point made in these notes is the criticality of membership as the key objective of Rotary. Clubs need to focus on the development of strategies that are consistent, continual and aimed at maintaining and increasing their membership levels. Other points have focused on quality and diversity being more important than numbers. Potential sources of new Rotarians and possibilities of contacting those folks were reviewed. The development of a club vision, a club story and a value proposition as key elements in attracting prospective Rotarians were presented. The retention of members has also been discussed. Here, the development of exciting club agendas, venues, cost structures, speaker schedules are all important.

The four Objects of Rotary and their relevance to the membership issues of Rotary were reviewed. The first goal of Rotary related to "acquaintance" and its impact on fellowship, friendship, trust and commitment was discussed. Advice for membership chairs and club presidents on goals, objectives and strategies for pursuing membership was presented. The importance of developing consensus and help from members about membership objectives, timing and target list of prospective members was reviewed.

Many of these points will be reviewed and reemphasized in future Membership Corner notes. All the past notes are [archived](#) on the District 7910 website, within each weekly newsletter, and can be retrieved for further review. In the meantime, there should be no lack of necessary and sufficient information for any club to engage in a successful effort to improve their membership.

The only other ingredients are: "The Will to Do It!" and the "Urgency to Do It Now!"

2. Membership Please!

The Rotary year is one-third over and will be half over in a few weeks following the holiday season, which will quickly pass. How are we doing? The club presidents have settled in after their honeymoon period and now fully realize the magnitude of their job and how to do it. Now it is time to lead and

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energize your clubs towards the major goals of Rotary. We need a strong membership effort and more participation in the good works funded by support from The Rotary Foundation.

In last week's newsletter, Ralph Hammond, chair of District 7910's Foundation Grant Coordinator Team, published a summary of where our district and each club fits in the worldwide ranking of RTF support. (To read it, [click here](#)). Find your club and decide whether that is where you want to be. The Rotarians of District 7910 should be proud to note that we have financed and supported almost 500 projects worth upwards of \$7 million since 1997 and have more than \$1 million of projects going this year.

It should be pointed out that this newsletter has developed into its most readable and interesting form in many years. It is easy to read, very navigable and contains news of many clubs in which we should all be interested. Sadly, only about 30 percent of us even bother to open the Newsletter and less than that spend more than a couple minutes reading it.

Club presidents could help to advertise the merits of the newsletter to their membership. There may be reluctance on the part of some because the newsletter is associated with the term "District."

What is the District? It is simply a group of Rotarians who spend untold hundreds of hours of their precious personal time trying to help clubs, train Rotarians, organize events, report to Rotary International, take care of necessary finances and reporting, organize project paperwork, keep track of RTF funds, conferences and forums, and handle dozens of other responsibilities. The work and time devoted to Rotary is not done for personal gain or glory – it is done for the good of Rotary and Rotarians!

We should all be proud and thankful for the work of the "District" and support it enthusiastically. Why not?

I had the pleasure of speaking last week to the Rotary Club of Chelmsford and offering a few tips on how to energize a membership effort, which is summarized below. There is a very useful Rotary International brochure titled [Strengthening Your Membership: Creating Your Membership Development Plan](#), which all club presidents should purchase (for only \$2.50) and read. Of course, we are all interested in strengthening our clubs as a long-term objective, but in the short-term we need to kick-start our membership efforts. While short-term in nature, I am convinced that if these steps are followed, they would lead to long-term results.

Consensus: Organize an assembly meeting *now* and get the members to understand the urgency of a membership need and to secure a general agreement on the club-membership objectives – numbers, timing, who, etc.

Continuity: We need to establish a membership committee and chair for multi-year periods transcending the annual leadership changes. We cannot afford the wasted time reinventing the membership wheel year after year.

Consistency: While every club is different in demographics, size, history, projects, venues, dues and fees, interests, etc., they should have their own *value proposition* espousing their story and the values of

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Rotary. They need to develop a story about what makes their club tick. What makes them unique among the many other organizations competing for an individual's time? It needs to be a strong enough story to convince others to join Rotary and share their *time, talent and treasure*.

Process: At either the same or another assembly meeting, it is incumbent on all the members to contribute to a target list of prospective, desirable members. Every member knows someone who fits the characteristics of a Rotarian – school administrators, business folks, town and city managers, charity leaders, religious leaders, retirees, neighbors, friends – i.e. anyone who is of good character and willing to accept and contribute to the Rotary way. Small clubs should have a minimum of 10 prospects, mid-size clubs, 15 to 20, and larger clubs, 20 to 30 prospects. This is a list that needs to be refreshed from time to time - and not left to stagnate.

Contact: Now, your membership committee has a working list from which to conduct its efforts. Pick one or two more socially oriented folks to approach a prospective member. Develop an opening statement, *a la*: "Hi, I am from the local Rotary Club and one of our members suggested you may be interested in learning more about Rotary; "Will you be interested in spending a few minutes with me to talk about our local Rotary Club?"; or "We could really use your help with some of our charitable projects. Will you help?" You get the picture. Add your own thoughts.

Finally - Close the deal: Ask them to join you as an honored guest at your weekly meeting or a project or an event. Meet them again, invite them again and ask them to join. And, lastly, get them integrated, involved, introduced and educated ASAP. Commitment will follow and a lifetime Rotarian will result.

3. A Conversation About Membership

I attended a very interesting and inspirational Assistant Governors Area Meeting last Friday during which several approaches and issues regarding membership were reviewed. It is always inspirational to hear the many ways Rotary clubs approach community service, membership and public relations. And I always walk away with the same thought in mind, "If only everyone knew what we do, how we do it and the fun we have while doing it, they would run, not walk, to join Rotary." Alas, this is not the case. Why not? And indeed, what should or could we do about it?

First, let's discuss the issue of membership and why we should be concerned with adding members. Some folks seem to think it is a numbers game and a recruiting effort, neither of which is sufficient justification for adding members. Some clubs are satisfied with having a few members to maintain more personal relationships. On the other hand, it seems self-evident that having more members allows clubs to conduct more community-service projects. There are more hands on deck to help, more financial support, more contributions to The Rotary Foundation, more energy, and more fun, friends and fellowship. So to a certain extent, it is a numbers game. More importantly, it is also clear that we are looking for Rotarians in spirit - not just more people.

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We also discussed the Rotary principle of classification, which distinguishes us from most other service clubs. We should be seeking those particular classifications that will aid our clubs the most. The idea of generating “target lists” of prospective Rotarians was discussed at length. Instead of adding names willy-nilly to the list, we should be thinking about the types of folks we want or need in our clubs.

There was much discussion about the issue of venues, timing and costs of attending meetings. Some clubs are having a major problem with this and are experimenting with alternate meeting agendas, locations, meal changes and sunrise or evening clubs. While every club has to address this situation in its own way, it is imperative that we maintain the idea and the principles of Rotary while making changes. We need to maintain consensus, continuity and consistency in our zeal to conform to member preferences. We still are a part of Rotary International and there are rules to follow. Dramatic variations on the basic legacy Rotary meeting can result in loss of connection and communication, so change must be done carefully.

Public relations and publicity also came up as a significant issue. It was suggested that Rotary International should be spending considerable resources in advertising and marketing the Rotary idea throughout the spectrum of media outlets. In fact, this was done for a three-year period in a multi-district effort just a year or two ago. The Rotary logo and message were carried on buses, billboards, TV and radio throughout New England. There were few responses and fewer members added as a result. This was a very expensive project and each district invested a considerable amount of money, which was matched by RI. However, neither the districts nor RI prints money. The funds were generated by our contributions and we just cannot afford that level of investment annually.

More importantly, it was concluded that the most effective public-image and public-relations efforts were done at the club level. Several clubs have demonstrated that is indeed the case. They continually send information about their club activities to all the local media outlets and generate as much publicity as they can. It was also pointed out that every service project generates multiple touch points. For example, projects involving youth through the Scouts, Interact, Rotaract, Boys and Girls clubs, scholarships, Reality Fairs, veterans, elderly, charitable organizations, End Hunger Now programs, and so many more projects all generate touch points with the individuals involved as well as their parents, friends, relatives, teachers, administrators and many more people. What better form of public relations is there? Are we taking advantage of it? Getting the word out at the local, club level is effective and powerful.

Finally, we are not in a “recruiting” game. We are attempting to attract and engage people in the Rotary way. We are a fantastic organization that does great things at both the local and the international levels. Telling our story at the club level to as many folks as we can will gain prestige in our communities. Inviting people we know to attend our meetings, to assist us with projects and to become friends of Rotary will gain members.

So generate your target lists based on your club needs and send out your club representatives to invite them to your clubs. And most importantly, when they become members, concentrate your efforts on

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introducing them, mentoring them, educating them, getting them involved in club efforts and integrating them into Rotary. They will become Rotarians in due time.

4. WWPHD?

What Would Paul Harris Do? Imagine Paul Harris in his Chicago office in the year 2016. He is reviewing the status of the Rotary organization he created 111 years ago. The organization has grown into a worldwide giant of 1.2 million members in 200 countries made up of 34,000 clubs. Of this, he is justifiably proud but he has concerns about its future viability. While millions of dollars are raised annually for hundreds of projects throughout the world, membership has stagnated at the 1.2 million mark for the past 25 years and has actually declined in the home country of the United States. Despite repeated exhortations from R.I. Presidents and District Governors, clubs have not been ready, willing and/or able to grow their memberships. Why? And what would he do about it?

What changed during the late 90's and continues to the present day? Did Rotary change or did the environment change? Has there been a cultural shift? Do young people or older folks care less about belonging to humanitarian service organizations? Are people in general less interested in charitable efforts? Has the technology changed? As Paul Harris ponders these questions, I wonder what answers and solutions he might develop. At first he may consider that the changes in our environment, our culture, our demographics and our technology have come at a dizzying pace during the past 25 years. Those of us who grew up in the 40's, 50's and early 60's remember a slower paced life where change occurred at glacial speed. During the 70's - 90's, change started to accelerate and now it seems we race through life where everything changes continually and at a very rapid pace. He observes that Rotary has also changed while its fundamental objectives and basic operating parameters remain the same. Rotary has established tighter controls over its global humanitarian projects, developed more help for districts and clubs and has become more professional. He would also note that communications through electronic media has progressed light years beyond where it was at the turn of the century. Despite all these changes, people are still driven to do good in their communities and throughout the world. Which factors impacted the stagnation of Rotary membership the most? Or is it all of them? And more importantly, what would Paul Harris do?

My guess is that he would first insist on each and every club do a deep dive into educating every member on the four Objects of Rotary insuring their translation into very practical actions. He may base that approach on an observation that many members have not learned or have forgotten why they joined Rotary. Secondly, in recognition of the tremendous changes, cited above, he would encourage changes at the club level to increase more fellowship, the development of exciting club agendas, venues and meetings, the employment of classification techniques to identify and attract prospective members, the professionalization of the member induction and education efforts and the ramping up of efforts to educate, communicate and encourage younger folks about Rotary. In observance of the increased time and money pressures on younger professionals, I think he might encourage a major overhaul of the

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weekly meeting schedule routine of Rotary clubs. While still maintaining a high sense of charity, younger folks may not be interested in the legacy aspects of the traditional Rotary meeting. He would encourage clubs to continually change their agendas and venues to adapt to the new world environment.

Those are just a few thoughts about “What Would Paul Harris Do?” The more important question is “What Will You Do?”

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IV. Rotary Club Meetings

1. What is Your Club's Story?

Every club has a story! What is yours?

Every Rotary club has its own unique history, distinct objectives, and specific projects. Clubs vary in size, resources, makeup of the membership, venues, meeting structure and community focus. How would you describe your club? And why may it be important?

A typical answer to "What is Rotary?" may be that we are a "Service Organization" and "Service Above Self" is our motto. Really? Duh! If that represents the full understanding of the meaning of Rotary, then we will not be successful in attracting new members to Rotary.

There are many ways to volunteer and provide service through church groups, food pantries, shelter organizations and a host of others, without having to attend meetings and pay dues. We need to do a better job of demonstrating the benefits of Rotary in language communicated easily to prospective members.

We may sometimes agonize over developing statements of "Rotary Value" when it is really right in front of us.

How does your club interpret the "Object Of Rotary," "Service Above Self" and the five "Avenues of Service" into community action? Therein lies the "Value of Rotary" to a prospective member.

Of course, there are many folks attracted to Rotary simply because our goals and reputation matches their values and desires. But the vast majority of folks do not know much about us. It is really incumbent on all clubs to develop their unique story. What makes you special in your community? Which organizations do you support? How many student scholarships do you provide? What is your history of good works? How do you raise funds to support your good works? What are your fellowship programs? Have you organized Interact and Rotaract clubs in your high schools and colleges? Have you focused on the needy, the veterans, the elderly and the sick folks in your community?

No matter how small or large your club may be, you all need to develop a powerful story that describes your club's accomplishments, goals and strategies. While this is not an easy task, a few creative and persistent members will be able to translate your story into a document for all members to utilize when they are discussing Rotary with a prospective member.

Remember, we have to convince a prospective member that the benefits of joining Rotary will far exceed their costs of time, money and effort. A conscientious effort to develop your club's story will go a long way towards accomplishing that goal.

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2. Is Your Club Like a Symphony Orchestra?

Be careful – it is a loaded question.

Last week, my wife, Diane Sturiale, and I attended a concert at Tanglewood. It was a beautiful evening and the music was wonderful. I was struck by the contrast of the orchestra before and after the conductor arrived on the scene, with his little, white baton, and it reminded me of some Rotary clubs.

Prior to the conductor's arrival, the various members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra were tuning their instruments and practicing their parts of the concert. It sounded like total confusion – a cacophony of noise being generated by the horns, the strings, the percussions and all the other instruments. One wondered how they ever could play anything akin to music.

Then, magic! The conductor entered stage right, walked to the podium, bowed to the receptive audience, and turned to the orchestra. Total silence. And then the music began. Everyone was in tune and the music flowed from the orchestra to the audience in the shed and far beyond, to all the folks spread out over the lawn. It was simply beautiful!

Have you noticed how some club meetings are totally disorganized? The meetings do not start on time, there is some fumbling with the opening remarks, members are talking in the background, committee chairs do not offer explanation of their activities, club banners or flags are not present, introductions of guests are not crisp, members arrive late and leave early. Whereas other clubs meet on time, the president is well-organized, the flags, banners and other information are all set up, the bell is polished (buy a tube of Flitz – it is magic for polishing your bell), the pledge is recited, a patriotic song and an invocation are recited, members are polite and friendly and welcoming to guests and new members, committee chairs offer quick, concise reports about their activities, the food and venue are great, there are exciting agendas for future projects and speakers, the speaker is interesting and informative, and the meetings end on time.

A few days ago, I had the pleasure of speaking to the Rotary Club of Acton-Boxborough about membership. The meeting, attended by 20 of 30 members, started at 12:15 p.m. sharp with the ringing of the bell, the pledge, an invocation, the Four-Way Test, Happy Dollars, and a couple of reports by committee chairs. Following an excellent lunch at the Boxborough Holiday Inn, there were more committee reports about upcoming events. Then, I had the opportunity to share some membership suggestions. Acton-Boxborough is a very active club with an incredible number of fundraisers and projects – visit their excellent [website](#) for more information. They are certainly like a symphony orchestra after the conductor arrives on the scene.

When the president rang the bell, the music was soothing to the ear! It was great to see their club brochure describing all their activities and projects. The Five Avenues of Service were clearly explained through all the individual projects within each Avenue. And finally, their newest member has already been tasked with chairing a project. Congratulations Acton-Boxborough – that is how to run a Rotary Club!

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Some clubs may be like symphony orchestras before the conductor arrives – total chaos - and many clubs are like the orchestra after the conductor (nee president) arrives on the scene – serene, organized and purposed. How do you rate your club? Which club do you think prospective or current members would be most interested in joining or staying? What steps should you consider to improve the nature of your club? Every club should think about what could be done to improve.

That is the name of game – grow and improve; improve and grow. The better we are, the more we will be able to convince others to join our Rotary cause.

3. Advantages of Visioning.

During the second half of 2013, District 7910 began the Visioning Project. Several members were trained by experts in the process and they began to take several willing clubs through the visioning process. To date, about 17 clubs have gone through visioning and a few more are scheduled to complete the first phase of visioning in 2016.

Bill Domings of the Rotary Club of Westborough deserves special praise for his leadership of the visioning-team effort. The visioning process can be an extraordinary tool for clubs to manage their future. As we are well aware, all clubs undergo changes as the years go by. Older, experienced members leave for many reasons, leadership turns over each year and younger members join who may have different ideas but with little knowledge of either Rotary International or the club's history.

How do we maintain a continual and consistent pursuit of RI and club objectives in an environment of change? The visioning process helps to collect and align the ideas of club members into a consistent set of objectives regarding community projects, fundraising, membership, youth projects, international projects and Foundation objectives. It also help clubs determine priorities and rank order their objectives within the interest, scope and resource constraints of the club. And, very importantly, visioning helps to develop the club's plans for the next two to three years. When a club has established a leadership steering committee and visioning objectives, it is more able to continue its growth objectives as its leadership and membership change from year to year.

How we have done during the first couple years of visioning? During interviews with 15 club presidents of clubs who have undergone visioning, it became very clear that all clubs regard the process as extremely beneficial. It did indeed help to focus the members on specific objectives and priorities and to provide a degree of consistency in effort from year to year. On the downside, it is also clear that the changes in annual leadership are still a factor in many clubs, leading to a loss of knowledge and interest in the objectives developed during the visioning process. Those clubs that had assigned a club-visioning champion progressed further than those that did not. Again, consistency ruled the day. The Visioning Committee has recognized that need and will assign a member of that committee to continue liaison with participating clubs.

Membership objectives developed during visioning were all very aggressive, with many clubs aiming to almost double their numbers. This remains an aggressive but attainable objective. It will, however, require a real commitment by clubs to follow through on their objectives of club improvement and

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membership development. Attracting new members is a multi-faceted objective. Clubs have to become attractive in terms of interesting meetings, good venues, interesting speakers, great community-development projects, fellowship and fun places to be. Then, attracting new members will become easy.

4. Are Your Rotary Meetings Exciting?

Wednesday noon and it is time to go to another Rotary meeting. Gee, I wonder who is speaking today and what he/she will talk about? Haven't we heard the same thing before? Do you think we'll have the same old lunch menu? Will the meeting start on time and will the speaker have enough time to cover the subject? Would it be embarrassing if only half the members show up? Isn't this getting to be old hat?

Have you heard these complaints before? Are you having any difficulty in getting your members to attend meetings? Are you retaining all those new members you just brought into the club? Maybe it is time to think about changing the format and content of your Rotary meetings. Have you asked your members for their opinions and are they forthcoming with good ideas for change?

Many clubs have addressed these issues and are experimenting with different venues, menus, speakers, meeting times and formats. It is essential to find out what the opinions of your members are and what their interests are.

Change is necessary to keep up with the various interests of your members and the different perspectives of new members. While "same old, same old" is good for tradition, it may not be good for the future and for the growth of Rotary. Legacy features of Rotary meetings are important to many senior members but may also not meet the changing requirements of newer members. What can we do to mix it up once in a while, to keep the interest level high and to entice all our members to attend each and every meeting – or at least most of the meetings?

The weekly Rotary meeting is the cornerstone of our organization. This is where we bring together all the talent, energy and ideas of our members. If they begin to lose interest in the meetings and fail to attend, the organization would begin to weaken. It would also make the task of attracting new members so much more difficult. Club leadership is responsible for developing a mechanism for members to offer their ideas – and when there is reasonable support, they need to act on those ideas. Here are a few thoughts gathered from discussions with folks in several clubs as well as my own:

Some members may not be able to continue attendance at the noon-type meetings and/or may not be able to afford the lunch costs. Consider altering your schedule to include either a breakfast or an evening meeting once a month or an evening meeting to which spouses/partners/guests are invited.

How about organizing meetings where high school athletic teams, honor students, outstanding teachers, veterans, outstanding community contributors, doctors, nurses and people who have really made major

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contributions to relieving pain, suffering and misery for our fellow citizens are invited to be honored or to be asked to speak?

There are hundreds of major businesses and corporations around eastern Massachusetts with thousands of brilliant folks who would like to tell us about their vocations and their businesses. Let us ask the leaders to come in and tell us about their companies.

There are universities and colleges with great professors and teachers. Let us ask them to come in and tell us about what they are teaching our kids.

We could ask financial advisors to come in and talk to us about investment planning and retirement planning – not as salespeople but as information sources.

How about town managers to talk about city and town issues?

How about beer, wine and olive-oil tasting experts?

How about the pluses and minuses of the federal Affordable Care Act?

How about speakers that have absolutely no message at all but are there to simply entertain us – such as actors or comedians?

Many of the most interesting people I have met are fellow Rotarians. The second object of Rotary speaks about our vocations as an opportunity to serve society. We should strive to have each of our members act as principal speakers to describe their vocations, careers and personal interests to the other members. One of our obligations as Rotarians is to apply those unique talents to work to better our communities. There have been many interesting speakers, but those I have enjoyed the most have been fellow Rotarians. There will never be one type of meeting or one set of speakers or one agenda that will equally satisfy each and every Rotarian. But each club needs to examine their members' needs and establish meeting formats that satisfy most of the members most of the time.

We need to keep experimenting with our meeting agendas to maintain members' interests and to encourage attendance. Meetings need to be fresh, exciting and interesting. This will also assist your club's Membership Committee chair and members in attracting new members to the team.

5. What is Your Club's Vision?

The time for annual revitalization of our Rotary clubs is rapidly approaching. All the new presidents will attend pre-PETS (Presidents-Elect Training Seminar) and PETS. They will learn a great deal about Rotary and gather considerable information about how to guide their clubs through the next year.

Despite the training, many presidents-elect will begin their year wondering how they will conduct their club throughout the coming year. While being president of a Rotary club is an honor and an exciting

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experience, it can also be a daunting challenge. Some clubs do not have a steering committee and a long-term plan that new presidents can rely on for guidance – especially, during the critical first few months of their term.

Three years ago, District 7910 began an ambitious effort to help clubs ease the transition of leadership changes through a process termed “visioning.” A group of folks were trained to conduct visioning exercises with clubs to help them develop long-term plans for their clubs. Since then, 17 clubs have gone through visioning exercises with the district’s training team.

Visioning is a very exciting experience for Rotary clubs. A few members of the training team conduct a visioning exercise with several members of a club during which a shared commitment towards goals and objectives is achieved, a long-term direction and plan are developed and a plan to optimize resources is agreed to. The visioning exercise helps to develop a continuity of leadership, a consistency in programming and a consensus toward purpose and action. Once a club has gone through the visioning process, the new president can begin the year knowing the plan and with confidence that the members are behind that plan.

The visioning process helps club define their objectives in community service, international service, The Rotary Foundation, youth service, public image, vocational service and membership. I had the opportunity to interview 15 presidents on their clubs’ experience with the visioning process. In all cases, they praised the process and said their club had benefited from the experience. For those clubs who had assigned a visioning champion to ensure continued progress, good results have occurred. The visioning process does require a club to convert the vision to action plans and the assignment of chairs to carry out the plans. The club visioning champion is the person to ensure this happens through successive leadership changes. A point of interest is that, in all cases, the clubs that have gone through visioning developed aggressive plans to increase membership.

The visioning process is a continual one. It is not something done once for all time. It is a process that needs to be refreshed periodically. Time passes, club leadership changes, membership turnover occurs and community environments change. As Mike Tyson said, “All plans are great until the first punch in the face!” As times and events change, plans need to evolve and be refreshed. One of the first actions of new presidents should be to review the current plan of their club with all the members and to determine any required updates with all the members. If there is no current plan, then one should be developed with the help of the district visioning team. Although membership objectives are a key part of the total club plan, they will not be achieved unless the club has a comprehensive plan in all the other key aspects of a successful Rotary club.

It is not feasible to just bring in new members. They should be brought into Rotary in support of your vision for the future. What is your vision for your Rotary club?

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6. Is Your Rotary Club Positive-thinking, Can-do, Action-oriented – Or Not?

What is the attitude of your Rotary club? Is it one of “can-do – will-do” or “can’t-do – won’t-do”? An organization’s attitude is made up of all the individual attitudes and biases of its members. What are the comments heard from your members? Are they: “We tried that before and it doesn’t work; “we’ve always done it this way;” “they’re asking us to do too much and I don’t have the time;” “we don’t need more members - the club size is okay as is;” or any combination of the above? Or are they: “Sure, I will do it; “when can I start;” “I have an idea I would like to explore;” “wow, this is fun;” “let’s get more members so we can do more good?”

What is the tenor of your club meetings? Are they somber, morose breakfasts, lunches or dinner? Or are they upbeat, happy, pleasant gatherings of friends? While these may be extreme views, it is important to understand where on the spectrum of positive and negative attitudes your club resides. Our clubs are made up of a wide variety of well-intentioned folks who range between “can” and “can’t do.” It is up to the leadership to identify the “can-doers” and the “won’t-doers” in order to make progress.

In the corporate world, managers work very hard to instill the attitudes of positive, can-do, action orientation in their teams. Negativism has to be rooted out, or the organization either stagnates or, worse, deteriorates. Obviously, our volunteer organizations approach these issues differently, but the objective also remains the same.

From the point of view of membership, it is axiomatic that we need to add members. This is the prime objective of Rotary International as stated by our district governor, but more importantly, it simply makes good sense. In order to accomplish all the objectives of our Rotary organization, we need more members who will add their time, talent and treasure to our total effort.

Repeating a theme from prior Membership Corner articles, this is not a numbers game of adding people. It is obvious that efforts to simply add warm bodies are not effective. We need to attract high-quality Rotarians with the methods pointed out in prior articles.

How often have we heard the laments that our community is too small to find more members, that times have changed and people are not interested in joining service clubs, the costs are too high, the appropriate venues are not available, younger folks do not have the time or money, and on and on? These comments are like fingernails on a blackboard – *screeeeech!*

Sure, there are issues, but they can also be addressed. Of course, membership is a tough job, but it can also be done. It takes commitment and effort – but, most importantly, it also takes a positive attitude.

Every club needs to identify all the issues and address them one by one. All problems can be solved with the right attitudes of positive thinking, can-do attitude and action orientation. How is your club doing?

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V. Membership Strategies

1. Attracting and Vetting New Members to Rotary

It can be argued that attracting new members to Rotary is the most important task of Rotary clubs. It is through new members that we are able to grow and continue good works. It is through new members that we are able to replace attrition for many reasons. It is through new members that we are able to introduce new technology and new ideas.

It may be comfortable to maintain the status quo, to continue the habits of many years and to continue the many warm relationships, but the status quo also implies sliding backwards. The reality is that members leave for many reasons, clubs become stagnant, the old habits may not resonate with changing attitudes in their communities and senior members may tire of repetitive assignments to officer and/or chair positions. Of course, it is important to continue the major projects and good works of Rotary clubs. But it is equally important, if not more important, to develop and maintain a vibrant, energetic effort to continually attract new members.

Attracting new members is a multi-faceted endeavor. Clubs have to be attractive in terms of interesting meetings, good venues, interesting speakers and great community-development projects, with good fellowship and fun places to be. In other words, clubs have to have the basics in place. Then they will be able to attract folks of the appropriate mindset and ethics to the world of Rotary.

Your club has gone through the basics. You have developed a “target list” of prospective candidates with the help of all the members. Now it is time to consider whom to invite. How do we vet prospective members? Should we accept anyone into Rotary? The prospective member and Rotary should have reasonable expectations of each other. These expectations can only be met when we know what they are.

Prospective members should be made aware of what Rotary is all about – history, benefits, organization, dues, financial expectations, meetings, attendance, participation, projects, etc. We should gather information about the prospective member’s ability and willingness to meet our expectations in terms of meeting attendance, dues, foundation, participation, etc. Obviously, the idea is not to scare each other off at first sight with extraordinary demands, but instead to simply set the stage through orientation meetings, through invitations to meetings and/or to have prospective members participate in club functions. Let them know what we are all about and let us find out a bit about them so that membership in Rotary is regarded as a real prize and honor and not a total surprise. It is only through an effective vetting process that we can expect to improve our retention rate of new members.

There will be instances when we will discover someone we think will not make a good Rotarian. I believe it is important that during the “mutual discovery” process we do not lead individuals to believe they will be automatically accepted into Rotary. No one ever wants to be in the unfortunate position of either informing someone they were not accepted as a member or in receiving that message.

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The membership process requires stalwart Rotarians. It is not an easy process. It requires patience, endurance and persistence. While there are few successes and many failures, it is of the utmost importance to every club. It requires the total backing of the club leadership and membership.

Once new members are inducted, it is up to the members to pitch in to welcome, educate, mentor and befriend them. It is also up to the leadership to ensure they are asked to participate in club duties and projects.

2. What Does a Membership Chair Do?

By definition, job No. 1 is to attract new members into Rotary. But really is that all? And, by the way, how? It may be that the job is much more important and it can be argued that it is the most important job in the Rotary club. If we think the only task before the membership chair is to bring in new members, we may continue to observe the same results of the past. That is, new members enter the club, sit around for a few months, attend fewer meetings, do not get involved, fail to be embraced by all the members, do not attend any district events, and finally leave Rotary, totally disillusioned. Check your club records. How many new members have been inducted into your Rotary club during the past 10 years and how many of them are still in Rotary?

A more broadened description of the membership chair's job may include some of the following four ideas:

First: They should be instrumental in influencing the development of the club's mission, its vision and the club story – in short, the Rotary club's "value proposition." That would be the club's statement of what it is trying to achieve, its *raison d'être*, and the reason that folks want to run, not walk to join the effort. The membership chair is not expected to do this alone, but they should also encourage the club leadership to ensure it gets done.

Second: They should ensure all the issues of club meeting agendas, venues, meals, costs, etc. are addressed and resolved so that prospects, visitors, speakers and new members enter into a Rotary environment that is warm, friendly, receptive and welcoming. Nothing will turn off a visitor faster than a cold, unreceptive atmosphere. Visitors whose names are mispronounced, not introduced well and are not welcomed will not return. Think about it: How would you like to be treated when you enter a new, unfamiliar environment?

Third: The membership chair needs to demand help from all the members in terms of how many new members the club wants, which classifications they desire, who are the local folks they would like to have enter the club, and how they are going to ensure the new members are properly inducted and welcomed. The club leadership has to be encouraged to achieve a consensus of members on all these issues. Most importantly, the members need to develop a list of prospective Rotarians for the Membership Committee to work on. This is the first step of the vetting process. Further vetting will be done through club visits and other introductory meetings with members.

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Fourth: The membership chair needs to encourage the club leadership to ensure that new members are properly educated, mentored and involved in club activities as soon as they join Rotary. This cannot be left to chance because chance doesn't work very well. These issues are probably the most important factors that determine the longevity of new Rotary members.

Yes, the membership chair's job is to bring in new members, but they also need to insist on help in all of these key areas from the club leadership and all the members.

Growing our Rotary clubs is serious business and requires serious attention and focus.

3. A Challenge to Incoming Presidents

Congratulations to all the incoming presidents in District 7910. You have completed your PETS training and are prepared for what will be an exciting and challenging year. You still have three months to develop your plans. There are so many items to consider that you may get bogged down in details.

It may be useful to focus on the important few items and to rely on your organization of committee chairs to take care of the many details. Of course, it is critical that you do have a slate of officers and committee chairs to carry on the work of the club. Your club asked you to take on the role of president and is incumbent on them to support you by assuming the responsibilities of committee chairs. But, assuming you have that structure in place, what might be considered the important few items?

The foundation principles of Rotary are wrapped up in the four Objects of Rotary. Look them up and understand them. The first one is especially important: "The development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service." What does that mean? The most common attraction of new Rotarians is the opportunity to join an organization, which will provide networking with people they want to associate with and enjoy fun, friendship and fellowship. It may be for personal or for business reasons or it may be for the camaraderie or the support structure which Rotary provides. As time goes on, Rotary engagement strengthens and we become more committed to deeper Rotary goals. It is important to note that the first Object of Rotary pertains to all members, not just new members.

So here is the challenge for incoming presidents. Look for all the opportunities in your clubs to develop "acquaintance" in the form of fellowship, fun and friendship among members. Start with biographical talks by members. This provides the members the opportunities to learn about the amazing skills, attributes and backgrounds of everyone in the club. Schedule non-business meetings in different venues with spouses, partners, friends and families, to develop familiarity and fellowship relationships. Plan on picnics or dinners during which members can meet each other in a social environment. Plan open assembly meetings to learn what your members want to have happen in their club.

All strong organizations follow the same principle that commitment begins with the relationships among members. Acquaintance leads to friendship, which leads to trust, which leads to commitment!

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Of course, you will have many other projects, fundraisers and programs to worry about during the year. Rely on others to get those jobs done. The president cannot do everything. It is more important for you to develop the basic underlying foundation of the club through strengthening relationships. That is your challenge!

4. Rotary's New Membership Leads System

(Editor's note: Rotary International has improved its Membership Leads system for both districts and individual clubs. In this week's Membership Corner, we provide advice from RI on how to use the new system. In the January 4 issue, Tom Sturiale will return to this space.)

As your regional membership officer (RMO), I'm dedicated to providing you with information, resources, and strategies that will support you in strengthening membership in your districts. One of the ways that I hope to provide you with useful and relevant information is through a monthly RMO message such as this one. These messages will provide you with important membership updates, new resources and publications, and interesting strategies that other districts are incorporating to create vibrant and engaging club experiences.

In this article, we're focusing on the new Membership Leads program. We're excited to announce that Membership Leads is now live on www.Rotary.org! Membership Leads routes prospective members to you to help you grow your membership. By signing in to your [My Rotary](#) account on the RI website, you can see a list of your prospective, referred, and relocating/returning members all in one place! It's one way Rotary International is helping clubs to connect with prospective members in their community who want to create positive change.

To learn more about how the membership leads process works, please visit:

[Connect to Membership Leads](#) (informational resource for club and district leaders)

[How to Manage Membership Leads](#)_(for clubs)

[How to Manage Membership Leads](#) (for districts)

Membership Tip of the Month

Have you encouraged clubs to consider inviting Rotary alumni, program participants, and their families to their club holiday celebrations or service projects? This is a fun way to get to know Rotary alumni and program participants, and foster relationships for future membership.

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5. Membership Tips for New Presidents

This is an exciting time for all the incoming presidents. You just completed Pre-PETS and are about to go through the intensive PETS sessions. Information is coming at you like water through a fire hose. You never thought it was going to be this complicated. You are now beginning to understand how complex the job of being president of your Rotary club is going to be. You will also begin to appreciate the job your outgoing president has done. You may begin to have some doubts about your ability to handle the job. However, you still have four months before the mantle of the president is passed on to you. With the help of the current president and some time to absorb all the information, you will do fine. However, it will be important to utilize the next four months appropriately in order to start your new year on the right foot.

During PETS you will learn all the details about the Rotary Foundation, club administration, community service, membership development, district organization, club finance management, international projects, fund raising, social media, PR, and much more. You will meet dozens of folks from many other clubs. The next four months will pass quickly and you will then be faced with the job of presiding over the weekly meetings, the monthly board meetings, insuring the various projects are on schedule and all the myriad details of running a Rotary club are being overseen. You will find there is little time for planning. That should be done now.

Most of the club functions will continue as they have in the past through your club's organization of committee chairs and club officers but many of these positions change from year to year. So you will have to exercise leadership skills to name new chairs and insure the club's business continues. A very effective process to help with club continuity is to establish a steering committee made up of the past one or two presidents, current president and next president. You will find having the advice and guidance of the past leaders to be very helpful.

One of the most difficult challenges of every club president is to insure an effective membership process is in place. At PETS you will be asked to commit to an increase in membership. Of course, every president will commit to an objective of "y" members and "x%" increase and not have any idea as to how those objectives will be met. To make matters worse, when you are faced with the details of running your clubs on a weekly basis, one of the last items on the agenda will be the membership challenge.

Here are a few tips on insuring that your club's membership effort gets off to a flying start the day after you take office this July 1 and continues throughout the year and beyond.

- First, and immediately after PETS, ensure you have a membership chair and committee installed in your club. In the smaller clubs, many folks do double duty and that person may even be you.
- Second, conduct an assembly meeting, with the help of your current president, and reach a consensus with all the members about the objective of increasing the membership of your club, to include the number, timing and type of members to be added.

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- Third, at another assembly meeting, get all the members to participate in developing a target list of prospective members for your club.

If you complete these three tasks by the end of this June, you can be assured you will have an effective membership process in place and you will be free to concentrate on all the other club-management tasks. For more details on the total membership process, consult past Membership Corner articles.

Good luck and have a great year!

6. Are Speakers Potential Rotarians?

Most of the Rotary clubs in our district invite a speaker to our weekly meetings. What criteria do we use to invite these folks into our clubs? Of course, we are interested in learning about many different subjects. We may have speakers from various charitable organizations, local government representatives, business leaders, bankers, lawyers, doctors, accountants, or a whole host of folks from many different career fields. If each of the 52 clubs have 30 or so speakers each year, we would have upward of 1,500 opportunities to meet, observe and partially vet many potential Rotarians.

Obviously, many of these folks either may not have any interest in Rotary or may not be a good fit for Rotary. But it strikes me that it is possible to develop a membership strategy based on a careful targeting of speakers.

This may be of particular significance to smaller clubs that may be having a difficult time in adding new members. One possible scenario might be for the club leadership and membership chair, who may be one and the same in small clubs, to think about the types of people they would like to have in their clubs.

Consider the classifications you have in your club and those you would like to have. Consider the various projects you have supported in your communities and those you may support in the future. Consider the characteristics of your clubs and how you might strengthen it for the future. Develop a membership strategy aimed at filling talent and experience gaps in your current membership. Then, develop a target list of speakers from those classifications you would like to add to your club.

Often, we invite speakers to our clubs to fill up the schedule rather than as a strategic move. Rotary is a powerful draw to folks who want to speak to our clubs. The speaker event is an opportunity for the club to meet, observe and partially vet the speaker and for them to be introduced to Rotary.

Larger clubs rely on different members to chair the membership effort and the speaker events. Club leadership should ensure there is cooperation between those two separate efforts. There may be specific membership targets that may be achieved through careful selection of speakers.

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Speakers represent a great opportunity for us to expand and strengthen our clubs. Think about it. Plan it. Try it

7. Strategy to Increase Membership

Let us assume your club's leaders and members have decided to increase your Rotary club's membership. Let us further assume your club has a few issues regarding size, venue, costs, objectives and meeting agendas - and maybe a few other issues. It has been a very difficult environment in which to attract and induct new members. What to do? Maybe an effective first step would be to separate each of the major issues and address them, one by one.

Let us take the issue of size, first. Maybe you are a startup club or a club that has dwindled in size over the years. This may be regarded as a strength since all the members are very close, dedicated and committed to the task at hand. It should be an easier task to get all the members working together to achieve your goals. It should be easier to rally the members around the issues and work together as a team.

Maybe you have had some difficulties in selecting a proper low-cost venue for your meetings. Until you reach your goal of a larger membership of 20 or 30 members, an alternative approach might be to rotate meetings around member's homes with catered sandwiches, host-presented meals or potluck dinners. Meeting venues may be available at a local firehouse, senior center, church or library meeting room. There may be many other possibilities. The point is that once the issue has been pinpointed and addressed, you will be able to work on a solution. Meet to develop all the alternatives, prioritize them and decide on a course of action.

A more difficult issue may be the absence of a unifying club objective, which impairs your ability to attract new Rotarians to your club. Your club size or lack of a major Rotary-type agenda also may negatively impact your ability to attract good speakers to your weekly meetings.

First things first. Weekly speakers may not be the most important thing on your agenda. A significant unifying Rotary-club objective probably is. It may be building a handicap access for the widow Jones, a fundraising pancake breakfast, a scholarship award for the talented kid with limited funds, a food pantry, or whatever. The objective should be something that the members can support and may be attractive to one or two or three influential folks in your community.

Now, you may be in a position to work on the main objective – attracting a few good members to your club. Start with a classification survey. Identify all the classifications in your club and think about a few classifications you would like to add – an accountant, a banker, an insurance person, a teacher, a doctor, a real-estate person, or any number of other classifications. Next, develop a list of potential members who may fit your model classifications. Now, work on an approach strategy to talk to these folks and invite them to your club.

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What might your strategy be? It seems you have to be totally honest about the state of your club and what you are trying to achieve. You have the entire Rotary International story to relate but you also need to have your local Rotary story stated clearly. You are a small club, are anxious to grow to a size large enough to become a major influence in your community, and want them to be a part of your effort.

Ask them. If you have done your homework, you would be talking to an influential person of good character who wants to do good things for the community and is willing to spend some of their time, talent and treasure for your cause. Of course, they will say “yes” with enthusiasm!

Lastly, this is not easy work, but persistence and determination will finally pay off. After all, what is your alternative?

8. Membership Hints

Hello Fellow Rotarians. It is time to start up the Membership blog once again.

I took a year off for quiet contemplation and now feel energized to begin anew. Membership has once again surfaced as a critical issue for our district. District Governor Jim Fusco has set membership increases for each club as one of the very important objectives of the coming year.

I will try to offer some ideas, thoughts and suggestions to help club officers and membership chairs increase their memberships. These may not apply to all clubs in the same manner, but they may help to keep membership in the weekly conversation of every club. I hope that anyone with additional ideas or suggestions will forward them to me.

Membership is one of those very simple but difficult-to-attain objectives. It is simple in that we all know how we are supposed to accomplish the objective. All we have to do is to identify prospective Rotarians, get them to attend a meeting and then ask them if they would like to join one of the preeminent humanitarian organizations in the world. Nothing to it – right? Then why is it so difficult to achieve?

Some possibilities are offered:

Clubs do not maintain membership as one of their primary goals.

Membership is not recognized as a continuing, never-ending process.

Clubs have not established a total-member commitment to the objective.

Membership chairs and/or committees have not been organized.

Clubs have allowed other issues such as, fees, dues, venues, programs, etc. to get in their way.

We simply do not have the kind of club which will attract anyone to join.

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There may be many other reasons but the outcome is clear. Our membership has declined and we are not keeping up with attrition. Think about where your club would be five or even 10 years from now if you continue your present course.

I will conclude this first blog with one suggestion. Each club president should open a conversation with all club members to gain a commitment to the need, the objective and an organization to establish membership as an ongoing continual effort. Let's recognize the problem, establish the objective and assign the right folks to work on it. This is a survival issue and should command very serious attention.

Details to follow!

9. Attracting and Retaining Members

Attracting and retaining members is the most important criterion in determining the effectiveness and long-term success of your Rotary club. A strong statement – is it really true? What do you think?

I believe a Rotary club's approach toward gaining and retaining members is a reflection of the following: the management team; the club's value proposition; the ability to conduct needed community projects; the public-relations efforts; the ability to maintain an effective outreach program; the willingness to target, contact, communicate and market the idea of Rotary to prospective Rotarian candidates; and the members' acceptance of the idea to promote an ongoing membership process. In other words, unless there is a solid Rotary foundation and a commitment to the idea of increased membership with objectives and strategies, gaining membership will be a frustrating experience.

Every club is at a different point in its age, experience, development and status. You have to begin with what you have and where you are. The club leadership needs to carefully assess status of the club and what needs to be done to further the club's development along all these avenues. However, you cannot wait until all the t's are crossed and the i's are dotted before you actively pursue membership efforts.

Maybe new members are exactly what you need to break out of old habits. New members add energy, new ideas, new contacts and new technology. Start taking action now!

1. Identify your most outgoing personality and assign them the task of chairing the Membership Committee.
2. Have the members make up a list of prominent clergy, local politicians, retired businesspeople, educators, etc.
2. Write up a brief list of your major Rotary achievements and why you need that particular new member. Identify your dream objectives.

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3. Approach the prospective new members and ask them to join your club's effort to better the community and mankind.

4. Convince them that you need them.

Don't wait until next week to begin. Start now! Get your entire club committed. This is hard work and takes some planning. A small group of dedicated Rotarians will make considerable progress. 10. You Are Just Named Membership Chair – What Now?

10. You Are Just Named Membership Chair – what Now?

The club president has just asked you to chair the Membership Committee - and to *double* the size of the club during the next two years. You gladly accept the challenge - and then ask yourself, "Oh, my! What do I do now?"

Don't panic. Here are some suggested steps to get you started down the path of success:

- Develop a goal. (The president has already helped you with this: Double the size of the club in two years.)
- Develop objectives
- Set a strategy in place
- Develop a tactical action plan

'GOST' - Goals, Objectives, Strategy and Tasks

This framework will help you to understand the overall goal - specifically, what you are trying to achieve, how you are going to accomplish it, and who is going to do what and by when. This is much more effective than exhortations from the podium. Short-term efforts, no matter how effective they may seem, are by their nature short-term and without lasting effects. Your club needs a long-term plan. So first, gather a few creative minds and work on the plan.

1. Set a goal

- We will double our membership from 15 to 30 in two years.

2. Develop objectives

- We will add one to two members every two months
- We will strive to gain representatives from local government, faiths, education, retirees and professionals.
- We will increase our retention rate from "X" to "Y."
- We will streamline the approval-and-induction process.

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- We will immediately engage new members in a club activity.

3. Develop a strategy

- Our committee will consist of four to five members and meet once a month.
- We will develop a Rotary Value statement describing Rotary and our club's goals and accomplishments.
- We will develop, with all the members, a target list of prospective members reflecting the diversity of our community.
- Two-person teams will contact prospective members to review Rotary and their potential interests with them.
- We will maintain a record of all contacts and their status

4. Develop a tactical action plan

- We will gather all the tools, brochures, publications and associated information to properly describe Rotary and our club.
- We will develop a schedule of who is going to contact whom and by when.
- The chair will report progress to the club once a month.
- Each new member will be assigned to a senior member for mentoring.

This is a suggested outline of a plan to get you on track. There are many blanks to fill in as you approach your goal. But you need to get started by putting your thoughts down on paper.

Your committee members need to know what is expected, what to achieve, when to do it, and who is going to do what by when. The target list and the contact schedule are the most problematic issues. Don't dive in without a plan.

So charge on, Membership chairs! Gather your teams, put on your thinking caps, start meeting, get off your duffs, and take action!

11. How to Approach Prospective New Members

As in all things concerning membership, there is not just one way or a best way to approach a prospective new member but it seems this step may be the most problematic for many of us. Why are many members reluctant to approach a prospective member? Are we shy? Is it that we just don't know what to say or how to ask? Do we fear: that the new member may not fit in; that they may hold it against us if they don't like Rotary; that other members may not agree with the choice; that they may damage our personal reputation within the club? How do you answer this question?

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It is critical to the success of our clubs that we have a process we are comfortable with. Someone has to do it. Who? How? What to say? Are we selling or are we buying? It is very clear that not all members want to get involved nor would they be very effective in the prospective-member contact process. So let us not waste our time wishing it were not so. It is! Surely there are a few members in each club with the requisite personal skills to open up a conversation with a prospective member. Let us get them to do the job.

We will take for granted in this note that all clubs have prepared the requisite information about Rotary International, and have a great story to tell about their club's goals and achievements and their fellowship programs. We will also assume they have a great venue, good food, a well-organized agenda, meetings that start and end on time, functioning committees and friendly and welcoming members. It will be obvious to any prospective member that Rotary is the place to be - and this club is where they want to spend their time, money and energy to make the world and especially their community a better place.

So how can we reduce the burden on our reluctant members of approaching a prospective member? Let us suppose that we have at the very least polled our members for names of folks who would be good Rotarians. We should expect no less from our members. This can be done either through assembly meetings, individual polling or by private write-ins. However, it is done, it is imperative that the Membership Committee or its chair develop a list of potential candidates who should be vetted. Of course, the criteria of classification and diversity should be met. But for clubs with less than 40 or 50 members, can this be a major issue?

What if the Membership Committee chair selects two-person teams to approach folks on the candidate list. They could use as an opening remark that it was suggested by others that the prospective candidate would be a great asset to the local Rotary Club, and that he/she is needed to help the club achieve its goals in education, youth development, helping the needy, the elderly, veterans and in supporting local charitable organizations or whatever the club has identified as its signature objectives. The candidate needs to hear that not only do you want them – but also that you need them! Of course, during the initial conversation we would explain Rotary International, present various information pieces, which abound on the Rotary website, and describe in some detail your local club.

If a positive connection is made, invite them to a meeting and introduce them to the members. Arrange a followup visit soon. Address all the candidate's questions. Welcome them back to another meeting. If they decide to join, ensure the approval process is quick and efficient. Welcome them with open arms and make sure they meet all the members. Lastly - and very importantly - ask them to help on a specific committee and/or project, take them to any district event or another club, and get them involved immediately.

If we can get a new member invested in the Rotary Way early in their membership, they would surely stay in for the long term.

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12. What Do We Say to a Prospective Member?

You are asked to call or to meet a person named on your club's target list of prospective Rotarians. What do you do? What do you say? How do you approach him/her?

Those are the questions I hear from many Rotarians. We might all approach this task in a different way, but there are also some constant themes that are appropriate. I will present an approach that you can try. Obviously, you would have to tailor the communication to your own local club. It would be great if you would develop your own version of an "elevator" or "introductory" talk and send it to me. Maybe we can compile an assortment of approaches to be distributed to everyone.

How about this for a short introduction? "Hello Sam, my name is Tom and I am a member of the Rotary Club of Framingham. It was suggested by one of our members that you may be interested in learning about our Rotary Club. If you have some time, I would like to tell you about Rotary. You do – that is great! I will be happy to meet with you for a few minutes at your convenience."

At your first introductory meeting you might say: "Rotary was begun under the direction of a businessman, Paul Harris, in 1905 in Chicago. He started Rotary, which derives its name from the early habit of "rotating" club meetings among the various offices of the early members. Rotary has grown into one of the world's largest, most benevolent and most active service clubs, with more than 1.2 million members in 34,000 clubs in 200 countries."

"Our Framingham club of 50 members is one among 51 clubs in our district of Central Massachusetts, with a total of 1,500 members. We have more 10,000 members in 500 clubs in the Northeast. While all clubs are independently managed, we act with common Rotary themes. Our overriding objective is to make the world and our community a better place.

"We meet weekly at Ken's Restaurant on Route 9 in Framingham, from 12:00 to 1:30, for lunch, fun, fellowship, networking and a speaker. But since we are busy folks, we expect no more than 50 percent attendance.

"Locally, each club supports many community efforts through fundraisers of many types – pancake breakfasts, craft fairs, auctions and carnivals. We use the funds to support high school scholarships, community charities, Boy/Girl Scouts clubs, senior citizens, food pantries and international projects. Our objective is to make the community a better place to live - and to have fun and satisfaction in doing it. As Rotarians, we all find that the more we give, the more we get.

"The best way to gain an understanding of Rotary is to attend a meeting. Would you like to come as my guest next week, and meet some of the members?"

At this point, you may simply respond to any questions the prospective member may have. You may want to invite the prospective member to another meeting or a Rotary function. Assuming there is some mutual interest, the following is more information that you may share in subsequent meetings.

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“We have shared with you a quick glimpse into Rotary on an international and local level. It is a dynamic environment, where every member has the opportunity to get involved at any and all levels of service, where one can get to meet folks from many avenues of life locally and internationally, where one can really give back to the community among like-minded people, and where one can derive tremendous personal satisfaction in making the world a better place.

“Rotary clubs have a mantra of five Avenues of Service – Club, Vocational, Community, International and Youth Service - and we are very active in each area. Club service deals with the running of the clubs – weekly meetings, speakers, committees, fun, fellowship and friendship. Vocational service involves guidance of young people, mentoring and sharing life experiences with students. Community service aims at helping local charities, food pantries, senior-citizen support, Scouts, Boys/Girls Clubs and veterans. International service supports the Polio project, water and sanitation projects, computer projects in Zambia, visiting teams to Central America for local building projects, and countless other projects. And lastly, youth service supports children of all ages, Headstart, Interact Clubs in middle and high school (junior Rotary Clubs), Rotaract clubs in colleges, student exchanges with foreign countries, youth-leadership programs and high school scholarships. Every year, Rotary Youth Leadership Awards sends 175 high school juniors to a three-day training program at a local college. Through RYLA, our district has spent almost \$500,000 training 3,500 future leaders during the last 20 years. Our Framingham club alone has invested well over \$500,000 in high school scholarships of \$4,000 to \$5,000 each during the last dozen years.

“In the last 15 years, the members of our district have contributed more than \$6 million to local and international projects through The Rotary Foundation. Rotary is best known for its worldwide effort to eradicate polio, and has been largely successful, with polio now remaining in just two countries – Pakistan and Afghanistan. Nigeria was just declared polio-free. Our international-service objectives fall into six distinct areas – peace resolution, disease prevention, water and sanitation, basis education, community development, and maternal and child health. There are literally thousands of projects supported by Rotary Clubs throughout the world dedicated to these objectives.

“Each Rotary club is a great organization made up of scores of incredible people devoted to improving the world one step at a time. We would like very much to have you as a part of our family. Will you be interested in joining our Rotary Club?”

13. Whom Shall We Invite to Join Rotary?

Who would we like to join Rotary and how do we find them? Why were we selected? How did we happen to join Rotary? Has the process changed over the years? Are new members beating a path to our doorstep?

On a personal note, I learned of Rotary as a high school senior in Oneonta, New York, when several of us were invited to a meeting of the local Rotary Club. We were impressed with the caliber of the members.

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They were dressed in suits and ties and represented the movers and shakers of the town – doctors, lawyers, business men (no women members in 1953), educators, bankers, accountants and several others. I thought someday I might be a Rotarian.

Somehow, 51 years flew by while I served in the U.S. Navy, attended college, pursued a career, raised a family and retired a couple times. In 2004, I wanted to become more engaged in the local community and to meet folks outside my work environment. So I called the Membership chair of the Rotary Club of Framingham, inquiring about membership. I was admitted, became involved, and have enjoyed the experience, achieving great personal satisfaction ever since.

New members may not be beating a path to join Rotary for a variety of reasons. We welcome those who do, but we also may have to step up our game, take the initiative and become more action-oriented in attracting new members.

I have suggested in previous articles that each club create a target list of prospective members involving all members of the club. Of course, we need to consider our club's vocational, ethnic, gender and age makeup as well as our desired mix of members. Then, we can more appropriately target the folks we would like to have as members.

We all know folks from many walks of life – professionals, businesses, corporations, local politicians, trades people, educators, clergy, retirees, etc., who may be good prospects. During your club's assembly meeting, conduct an interactive session to poll your members for names of folks they know. It does not have to require either a personal recommendation or a personal contact - although either would be desirable. It is more important to just get the names.

What about all the past, present and planned speakers? Consider targeting your future speakers list as prospective members. How about all your past members who may consider rejoining Rotary? Every club has a variety of fundraiser projects and charitable activities, during which they establish contact with hundreds of folks, many of whom may be great Rotarians. What about the dozens of RYLA's, ESSEX students, scholarships, Interactors and Rotaractors of the past many years? While many have moved on, several have returned to their hometowns and become prominent citizens. Have you kept track of these young people? Imagine how they would feel getting a call from a Rotarian asking them about their interest in Rotary? Have you considered corporate memberships?

This is not an easy task and requires some real leg work. But it is an essential task in an effective membership process. We can continue to go on willy-nilly, adding members on an unplanned basis, but an organized approach will lead to a more effective club membership and contribute to a long-term membership process. Obviously, clubs need to grow at a pace that makes sense to them, but also the fear of growing too rapidly may be ill-founded. Clubs could consider satellite clubs, sunrise clubs, e-clubs, and cocktail-hour clubs for young professionals. Would it not be more desirable to have more members than we planned on rather than the alternative?

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14. How to Satisfy and Retain Members

It requires considerable effort to attract, induct and integrate new members into Rotary. But it takes even more ingenuity and leadership to satisfy and retain them. Of course, we lose members for legitimate reasons such as job changes, illnesses and moves. But the majority of member departures is lack of satisfaction. They are not engaged, lose interest and eventually stop attending meetings.

What are the reasons? There must have been some reason for joining Rotary in the first place. It may have been the desire to network for business or personal reasons, to give back to the community, to associate with like-minded people, the opportunity for fellowship, or any number of possible motivations.

However, becoming a Rotarian requires a much longer time. Becoming integrated into any organization takes time. Club leadership needs to think about that. Have you maintained records of the folks who joined your club and who have departed? Do you know the reasons? We expend great energy in attracting new members and then what do we do? Do we greet them with open arms each week, do they join an action-oriented committee, do they attend a district event, do we ask them to share their biography with the club, are they included in fellowship events, do we really know what they are interested in, and are they introduced to all the members or are they educated in Rotary? Or, do we allow them to sit quietly awaiting an opportunity to join in? Do we follow up with folks who begin to drift away from attending meetings or who do not participate in events?

New members want to be involved and recognized. As new members, they may be a bit reticent to approach members and introduce themselves, to volunteer for activities and projects they may not be interested in or know nothing about, or to seek personal recognition. That is your job as a current member or a club leader! You need to embrace them. You need to find out what they are interested in. They are your club's future. Welcome them and make them feel wanted and needed. Tell them you need their help. Ask for volunteers, but a little gentle encouragement may help. Who can resist a request by a senior Rotarian who approaches you and says, "I really need your help and I need it now!" There are many things to do in any club, so begin integrating new members by asking them to perform small duties and then add to their responsibilities.

A past district governor in Rhode Island told me of an effective method for integrating new members. She had her clubs issue a "Dance Card" to new members. The card had listed six to eight critical achievements required for each new member to be performed during the first 6 to 12 months after joining the club. When completed, the new member was recognized and honored at a second induction-type ceremony with his or her permanent badge. New members felt as though they had earned their membership and valued it even more.

In our zeal to add new members, let us not forget our primary responsibility is to insure our current members are satisfied with the direction of our clubs.

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15. How to Attract Younger Folks to Rotary

This is a question with which many clubs struggle. We all stand up and salute when the call goes out to attract young people. But then what do we do? Are we active in our efforts to attract young folks? This subject will be a clarion call of the District Membership Forum on October 14.

Is this one of your club's focus efforts? Does your club really want to have an influx of "young" members? Will they upset the comfort level of the senior members? Would the tenor or personality of your club change with a higher percentage of "young" members? What do we even mean by "younger" members? Indeed, why should we even concentrate on "younger" members?

Who are these so-called young members? We have heard the terms Gen-X (born between 1966 and 1976), Gen-Y ('77-'94) and Gen-Z, ('95-'12) more popularly known as the Millennials. They were born during the Vietnam era, the Reagan revolution and the post-Soviet breakup and war on terror. These are the new generations. They were born in different time periods than most current Rotarians. They have different habits, interests, time frames, social orientations and work ethics than we do – that is, not worse, just different. It will require some understanding of their wants, needs and desires to attract them to Rotary.

The Gen-Xers are now engaged in established careers. Their children are grown and out of high school or finishing their college studies. They may be beginning to have some extra cash and a little more time. The Gen-Yers are just starting out and short on time and money. The Millennials are just beginning or ending their primary education and have neither the cash, time nor interest. But they all have a highly tuned sense of social justice and want to help their fellow citizens and the needy of the world. They are very energetic, keen on computer technology and proficient in social media.

Rotary must grow to return to the membership levels of just a few years ago. In the U.S., we have declined from a level of 445,000 members to 360,000 since 1996. Rotary clubs have gone through a significant and positive change since 1987, when women were allowed as members. Women are 53 percent (190,000) of the total U.S. Rotary membership. We have already transitioned from an "Old, White Men's Club." If we begin transitioning to a more diverse, younger organization, we would have to be cognizant of the needs and desires of new members. They may not be able to deal with the financial requirements of dues and meals or the time requirements of noon lunch meetings. They may not be able to afford the time for long meetings. They may be more interested in shorter, more productive, action-oriented meetings. They may be less interested in the "old boy" traditions of pledge, anthem and invocation, and more interested in direct, action-oriented programs of social welfare.

There are several iterations of all of the above, and it would be up to clubs to sort them out if we are to be successful in our efforts to bring in members from the "new" generations. There are many opportunities for us to contact young folks such as, our exchange-student alumni, past RYLANs, scholarship recipients, Interact and Rotaract students and descendants of Rotarians. We have to figure out how to maintain contact information and how to attract these young folks to Rotary. In our district

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alone, there are hundreds of these alumni. Let's get busy and start calling on them to invite them back to Rotary.

16. A Prospective Member Protocol

What process does your club utilize to introduce prospective members and new members into the club? It should be done in a formal and consistent manner of which all members are aware. We should strive to conduct some level of information for Rotary International as well as the specific club and district goals and objectives.

First-time visitors to the club meetings should be introduced as friends of or visitors to Rotary, not as prospective members. This is to ensure that we are not placing the visitor, and possibly their host, in the difficult or awkward position to make a hurried decision about joining Rotary. The purpose of the visit is to acquaint the visitor with the Rotary club, its members and the nature of the Rotary meeting. If we do our jobs correctly in terms of education, encouragement and familiarization, the visitor would decide to join Rotary in due time.

How should we educate prospective members? Some clubs have formalized the process to include class-like educational sessions, including the history and mission of Rotary, the benefits and responsibilities of membership, club objectives and projects, opportunities for involvement, club and district organization, and The Rotary Foundation. Of course, if you are working with just one or two folks, an informal session or two would suffice. Whichever method you choose is immaterial, but it is important that some level of education is imparted. Rotary and the prospective member should have reasonable expectations of each other.

There are several educational tools available from Rotary International, including the [Prospective Member Information Kit \(423-ENB\)](#) and the [Prospective Member Video Kit \(424-ENB\)](#). These include brochures such as "Rotary Basics," "This Is Rotary," "What's Rotary" and "Welcome to Rotary." There are others that you can look up on the RI website. Your club should order them and have them on hand to distribute to prospective members.

Every club has a member-retention problem and part of it stems from the lack of Rotary education for new members. Building a solid foundation of knowledge and then getting the new member involved quickly in projects they are interested in will help immensely in retention.

Now that you have familiarized the prospective new member with Rotary and your club and introduced them to the members, and they are convinced to join Rotary, it is time to induct them into Rotary. It is important that this should be a formal ceremony where the new member is introduced and inducted into the club by a senior member. There are sample induction ceremonies available at the [RI website](#), if you need them. We want to honor new members and make them feel important and needed from the first moment of their membership. You should have all the documents, information brochures, pins,

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name tags/badges, etc. available at the same time. The sponsoring member should introduce the new members and the new members should be asked to say a few words about their personal and professional achievements. If this sounds like a big deal, it should be! This should be an occasion that new members look back on and reflect on as important event.

Now, the real work of developing a Rotarian begins: mentoring, more education, involvement in club and district activities and projects, introduction to all the members, classification talks, fellowship events, assignment to committees, assignment of responsibilities and engagement across the board. Failure to follow up in all these areas will result in a disinterested and uninvolved Rotarian who will eventually lose interest, fail to attend meetings and finally drop out. So get your act together, attract some new members and formalize your process to bring them into your Rotary club.

17. How to Propose a New Member to Rotary

Why do people join organizations – any organization? People have altruistic as well as personal reasons for joining organizations. Of course, there are those who are primarily interested in the idea of service to others, volunteerism, charity, and all the wonderful things we do in Rotary. But most folks join organizations because they want to build relationships, they want to experience a positive experience and they are interested in solving problems. They may either have personal and business networking objectives or be retired and interested in helping others. In any case, we need to be selective in whom we ask to join and to be reasonably certain of a person's fit in rotary before we ask them to join.

Ask, Ask, Ask is a Rotary way of pursuing a prospective member. We want to know if we want to build a relationship with the prospective member and the prospective member wants to know if they want to build a relationship with the Rotarians in your club. How do we both find out the answer to that question?

Ask prospective members to join your Rotary activities or meetings as a guest – *not* as a prospective member. Let them become familiar with your Rotary activities and even participate. In this way, they are becoming involved in a non-judgmental manner while you are gathering enough information to fill out a "Propose a Member" form. Do not introduce them as prospective members – that is a *fatal flaw*! It puts them in the awkward position of having prematurely to make a decision. It puts the sponsoring member in the embarrassing position of having proposed a member who may either not accept or may be rejected by the Membership Committee. Why do it? Let the prospective member ask first a few questions about your club and/or Rotary as a guest.

Ask them to attend an information meeting with several members and learn more about Rotary and your club's activities. At this point, they and you are still considering each other. If a decision of the prospect is to not join or if the club decides not to accept, then *no harm – no foul*. Both of you can walk away with positive feelings of each other. And maybe the relationship can again be pursued in the future.

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Ask the prospect to fill out an application for membership if at this point both of you have decided that a good match has been determined. You have now vetted each other and increased the probability that a long-term relationship will work. Now is the time to begin the education and integration process into Rotary.

So Ask, Ask, Ask is a good process to pursue when seeking new members for your Rotary clubs. Try it.

18. Acton-Boxborough – An Example of an Excellent Membership Effort!

Diana Nestorova, the dynamic leader of the Rotary Club of Acton-Boxborough, shares the story of her club's successful membership efforts during the past year. It is clear that a clearly thought-out, one-step-at-a-time approach will yield excellent results. Here in Diana's own words is her story:

"Over the course of my Rotary year as a president, we identified the classifications that we needed in order to make our Acton-Boxborough Rotary family a complete entity: a teacher, a medical practitioner, an engineer, and local broadcast company. We accomplished it all on March 30, when we inducted four new members and one corporate member (with two associate members). How it all started:

"February 23 was the 111th anniversary of Rotary International. We wanted to commemorate it with a special event and we had a Meet and Greet evening on February 24. The reviews from the evening:

"We had a lovely Meet and Greet at Le Lyonnais, the French restaurant of our own Joan Labrosse and her husband, Gerard Labrosse, who opened their beautiful restaurant and provided savory cheeses, crackers, fine wine, soft drinks, coffee and dessert. The food was exquisitely presented and we all had a jolly-good time!

"It is always a fun event to thank the supporters and friends of Rotary and to meet new people from our community. Everybody had a good time socializing and meeting our guests and our members in a non-formal setting. We had *14 guests*.

"At that evening, we introduced Rotary along with its history, objectives and values. Our guests were informed what we do as a club and heard our members' history with Rotary and the variety of ways to participate. We talked about club service, vocational service, community service, international service, and youth service

"After the evening, our guests agreed unanimously on the pleasant time we all had: the captivating explanation of the Rotary history and its 111th anniversary on February 23; the Four-Way Test; Avenues of Service of Rotary; and our club's many different projects and functions. We all made sure to manifest the beauty of Rotary with its boundless opportunities!

"After that Rotary evening, we followed up with our guests in the hope to attract the "Rotary breathing" potential members. And we did! The president and the Membership chair met personally with some of

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the attendees and, on March 30, we inducted four new members and our very first corporate member - Acton TV - with one principal and two associate members. District Governor Jim Fusco honored us by attending and inducting the new members. It made them feel very special. In the closing of the induction meeting on March 30, I included my personal feelings on why we need Rotary members:

"When a tree stops growing, it is ready to die. A Rotary club is like that – it is moving ahead only when it is growing. Rotary's greatest strength will always be the individual Rotarian. No other organization has such powerful human resources offering their skills, talents and hard work to make a difference in our community and the world. We found seven of them and now we have to engage them. It is our promise that we will make our new members an essential part of the ever-so-powerful family tree of Rotary."

Thanks Diana. It is a wonderful story. Are there any other clubs who would like to share their membership-effort stories?