



20 Ways to Boost Club Membership

Here are some simple, proven ideas to help your club grow.

If your Rotary Club is like most, membership growth is a constant challenge. One month, you pick up one or two new members and the next month, you may lose one. Even if your club is active and successful, some members will leave due to job transfers, career changes or for a variety of other reasons. That is why every club must be continually on the lookout for prospective new members.

Not only does increased membership add to your club's ability to conduct effective service projects, but additional new members bring fresh ideas and different perspectives. New members will expand opportunities for service both locally and internationally.

It is not always easy to attract new members. But the benefits they can provide are worth the effort. Following are 20 simple, proven methods for boosting your club's membership.

1. Take turns inviting guests. Members should take turns inviting prospective members to club meetings. At least one member should be expected to bring a guest every week. This effort could be conducted in alphabetical order, based on the members' first or last names. After the last member in the order brings a guest, go back to the member who started the order and do it again. It's a sure bet that some of those guests will want to come back and join. In addition, this consistent approach to growth helps get members in the habit of identifying prospects and asking them to join.

2. Organize teams. Organize teams of 4 or 5 club members. The goal of each team is to recruit one new member within 3 or 4 months. Each team needs one member who is active in the community, one knowledgeable about Rotary and one who is prepared to make cold calls to sell Rotary.

3. Go public. Ask one or two members to work on a public relations campaign, sending news releases about your club to local newspapers, radio and TV stations or put up a billboard or use truck ads to promote Rotary. Make sure to include a contact phone number, e-mail address or web site.

4. Feature great programs. Once you succeed in getting guests to a meeting, make sure they like what they see. Organize interesting club meeting programs that will make those guests want to come back for more.

5. Educate members. The more your members know about Rotary, the better they will be able to sell Rotary to prospective members. Make sure your club meetings feature regular Rotary education segments. One program every month should be on a Rotary topic.

6. Start a speaker's bureau. Just as outside speakers promote their causes to your club, your members can visit other organizations and talk about how they are helping the community, eradicating polio and sending more than 7,000 Youth Exchange Students around the world. While they're speaking, they can hand out club your club brochure.

7. Look up old friends. Pull out some of your club's old membership rosters and circle the names of those who have left the club. Give those members a call, their situations may have changed since they left and they may be ready to return to your club. If for some reason they are unable to rejoin, ask them for the names of some people they think would make good members.

8. Make the most of your service projects. Every time your club conducts a service project (which is hopefully often); promote Rotary to those you're serving. If your club invites the parents of scholarship winners or outgoing Youth Exchange Students to club meetings, give them information on Rotary and encourage them to join. If your club makes a contribution to a local charity, ask the staff members to visit your club.

9. Knock on doors. Round up a few of your members on a weekday morning and visit stores and businesses in your community, especially those near your meeting place. Drop off a club brochure or newsletter and invite

the owners or managers of those businesses to an upcoming meeting.

10. Set up shop. Does your city or town have community fairs or trade shows? If so, consider renting a booth and handing out information on Rotary. Set up a television and VCR and play the "This is Rotary" video available from RI. A good video is worth several thousand words.

11. Learn from others. Scan your district bulletin and other publications for news of clubs that have recently grown. Pay those clubs a visit and find out how they increased their membership. Observe how they handle their meetings and welcome guests to the group. Also, attend the district conference, district assembly, district leadership seminar and most importantly ensure your club is well represented at the district membership seminar.

12. Sing your praises. Don't be bashful about your involvement in Rotary. Whether at work or at play, talk up Rotary to those around you. You never know when you might strike a responsive cord with someone just waiting to get involved. Always wear your Rotary pin.

13. Increase your circulation. Does your club send a bulletin to members before every meeting? Why not increase its circulation? Send copies to prospective members, to media professionals and to former members. Add a personal note on each, inviting the recipient to attend the next meeting.

14. Recognize recruiters. When a member successfully recruits a member, publicly thank and recognize him or her for a job well done. Do something special to show that member (and everyone else) just how important it is to bring in new members. You could ask both the recruiter and new member to sit at the head table, send a hand written thank you card to their home and recognize their work in the club newsletter.

15. Roll out the welcome mat. Whenever guests come to a meeting, make them feel right at home. Encourage your members to introduce themselves and talk up the club. Many clubs assign one or two longtime members to accompany the prospect and make sure he or she gets a good introduction to your Rotary Club. First impressions are important.

16. Use Rotary business cards. How many times a week do you hand out business cards? Hand out a Rotary card at the same time. Every time you hand out a card, you'll be introducing another person to Rotary. Include an invitation to attend your club on the back of the card with details of when and where your club meets.

17. Put prospects to work. If your club is planning an upcoming service project, ask several prospective members to get involved. Why wait until they join the club? Perhaps hands-on involvement in a service project may be just the thing to prod some good prospects into making a commitment to Rotary.

18. Plan a fun event. Not sure you want to put prospects to work before they join? Then how about organizing a party or other fun event? Invite as many prospective members as possible, along with all members and their spouses or significant others. While having a good time is the main objective of the get-together, you can also work in some Rotary education and even a soft-sell invitation to join.

19. Just the fax. Ask your members to round up as many business cards from area firms as possible. (Most members probably have quite a collection in their desk drawers.) Come up with a nice letter inviting the managers of these businesses to a free lunch at your next club meeting. Then, using the fax numbers from the cards, fax the letter to them and follow up the next day with a phone call.

20. Put your club on display. Are there any vacant storefronts on a nearby street or in a nearby shopping mall? If so, contact the owner and ask if your Rotary Club can use a front window to display a poster and other information on your Rotary Club. Make sure to provide the names and phone numbers of some club leaders who can be contacted for more information.