Membership Matters as Published in the 2012-13 District Newsletter – “Spring Times”

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Membership chairs in each club are probably wondering what exactly their role is. Some of the questions you are probably asking are the same as those I’m asking myself as District Membership Chair….Will I have a committee to help or do I you look after this key area alone? Is the role about finding new members or is it about looking after the ones we have? What resources are available to help me? And they go on.

I believe the area of membership is a key position in each club – without members we are unable to do the projects we do locally, nationally or internationally. Without members we are not able to fundraise to support other worthy organisations and individuals in our communities or the work of The Rotary Foundation (TRF). Without members we miss the opportunity to expand our business and social networks.

There are a number of resources available to help club membership chairs and committees this year which will go some way to answering the questions you have. Throughout the year I hope to review resources and provide you with tips and links which will hopefully help you to strengthen your clubs.

As you begin this Rotary year I encourage you to take a look at clubs around you and benchmark that club against your own. Try a scatter meeting – talk to the members of the clubs you visit about their programs and see how the club feels to you as a prospective member. What do they do that feels good? Would you join? What can your club do differently so that it also feels good and members want to join, contribute and stay.

If I can help in any way please contact me on 03) 5143 0230. Other resources you might like to try are the RI website ([www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org)) and the publication “Rotary on the Move” ([www.rotaryaustralia.org.au](http://www.rotaryaustralia.org.au)). The February 2011 edition (pages 7 & 8) had an interesting article on engaging younger members and what clubs can do to make themselves attractive to potential and existing members. It can be found at [www.rotaryaustralia.org.au/uploads/2011](http://www.rotaryaustralia.org.au/uploads/2011).

Kerrie Schmidt  
District Membership Chair

August 2012

I have recently been reading part of a Membership Development, Extension and Diversity product package, presented at the 2011 Governors Elect Training (GETS) and the 2012 Zone 26 Assemblies. I thought I would share some of the material over coming months to help you / us build stronger clubs.

The package listed 15 tips for club success. Clubs are encouraged to choose 4 as a focus aiming to complete 1 each quarter. The first 7 tips are as follows:

1. **Proposal Card** At a Club meeting have every Member fill out a Proposal Card. Follow-up by assigning individuals to invite the proposed individual to a Club meeting or service project.

1. **Friends of the Club President** The Club President asks three (3) members as a personal favour to propose a new member within a month. When the first one does so, approach another the same way so as to always have three (3) members working on a personal pledge to the Presidents.
2. **Simultaneous Inductees**…Induct several new members into the Club simultaneously. This is especially good when they are the same age.
3. **Former Members**…Encourage the Membership Committee to develop a list of former Club members. Ask a current member to invite the former members to rejoin your Club or encourage them to join another Club.
4. **Community Projects**…A successful project attracts new members. Encourage Club members to invite their friends to participate in a worthwhile community project.
5. **Six-Month Plan**…Encourage every new member to bring in another new member within six months. A district in Arkansas, USA, experienced 17% growth using this plan.
6. **Five for One Team**…Divide the Club into groups of 5. Assign each group to bring in at least one new member within three (3) months. Make this a contest!

Some of these ideas you may have tried before but don’t ignore it just for that reason. The obstacles from last time may now be opportunities if we keep an open mind.

Please let me know how you go with these tips. The reminder will appear in next months’ newsletter.

Kerrie Schmidt

District Membership Chair

September 2012

Last month I drew on a Membership Development, Extension and Diversity product package I had been reading for tips to help us as a District to build stronger clubs. The report offered 15 tips for club success from which I gave you the first 7. Following are the other 8. I would encourage you to review this list in conjunction with the list from last month, choose 4 and focus on completing 1 each quarter. Let me know how you go!

1. **Rotary Guest Day**…Develop a list of potential members and distribute invitations to those on the list. Host a meal and information evening for those who accept the invitation.
2. **Survey**…Conduct a survey to help members consider contacts they know who might be potential members.
3. **Classifications**…The Rotary Club of Trenton, Ontario, Canada, reads a list of unfilled classifications at each meeting to prompt members to think about potential members during their daily interaction with a wide variety of people. The Rotary Club of Trenton gained 20 new members through this strategy.
4. **Club Forum**…Hold a Club forum on membership development to discuss ways to seek out potential members. Follow those ideas through.
5. **Increase Efforts**…Consciously change the club’s practices to be more attractive to the new generation.
6. **Diary**…Encourage Club members to keep a 24 hour diary of everyone with whom they interact. Select potential members from that list.
7. **Contest**…Have a Club contest to see who can bring in the most members. Remember rewards for success and effort!

1. **Bring a Friend Day**…Encourage all members to bring guests to Club functions. Designate one meeting a month as “Bring a Guest” meeting.

Kerrie Schmidt

District Membership Chair

October 2012

As membership chairs our aim is to ensure that Rotary continues to grow. Our ability to make a difference in the world depends on our growth and that growth needs to be in more than just numbers. We need to keep and attract people that share our vision and passion. We need to keep and attract the people that want to belong – that not only come to our meetings but to the working bees, the auctions and art shows, the tree-planting, the raffles, the car-parking …all those activities we do that enable us to make a difference in the world. Most of the questions I’ve had about membership this month have been around attendance - how many meetings people need to attend, what happens if someone misses so many meetings and so on. My answer is simply to use common sense – if the person makes a valuable contribution and has been given tasks that allow them to contribute then encourage them. Encouragement will often lead to more regular attendance at meetings if the person is genuinely able to be there. If they can’t they are still demonstrating the ideals of Rotary. To learn about the current Rotary rules on membership please visit [www.rotary.org.au](http://www.rotary.org.au) but remember to think outside the square. It’s a balance of quality and quantity!

For those looking for ideas for sources of new members or just a way to stimulate some discussion around how your club operates, I would encourage you to subscribe to the “Rotary on the Move”\* newsletter. The latest edition confirmed what we already know – D9820 has something special to offer. Our District has gone against the Australian and New Zealand trend experiencing growth of 1.9% for the period 30/6/2011 – 30/6/2012. While this is in part due to the formation of RC Casey there are other success stories in this District which I encourage you to share either through the District website (there is a membership section) or as a contribution to the “Rotary on the Move” newsletter.

Since most of my calls and emails this month have been around attendance I thought I would conclude the column this month with the following exert from a Membership Development, Extension and Diversity publication appropriately called “Ignite”. It summarises my message to you. It is the first of three tips offered for membership retention…

An assignment. Please give everyone a task! Activity is the genius of Rotary. It is the process by which we grow like the muscle of my arm. If I use them, they grow stronger. If I put them in a sling, they become weaker. Every member deserves a responsibility. As Club President or Committee Chair you may feel that the new member is not qualified for responsibility. Take a chance on him or her. Think of the risk Rotary and your Club took when they elected me to this role or you to your position. It is a privilege to be asked to take on a task so please honour someone by asking. An assignment should be given the day they join. Any later and you will lose them.

Of course, the new members will not know everything. They likely will make some mistakes. So what? We all make mistakes. The important thing is the growth that will come of activity. They will have the fellowship of the other members. They will become one of a vast body of Rotarians throughout the world, men and women of integrity and faith who love Rotary and seek to move forward this work.

Kerrie Schmidt

District Membership Chair

\* Past editions of the “Rotary on the Move” Newsletter can be accessed via the following links:

http://www.rotaryaustralia.org.au/membership\_newsletters.php

or <http://www.rotm.rotarysouthpacific.org/>

If you wish to receive an electronic copy of this Newsletter, or you know of someone who would like to please email the editor, Issa Shalhoub at shalhoubissa@shoal.net.au

November 2012

Why Membership Growth? In a way the answers seems obvious…

* The future of Rotary depends on membership growth.
* To advance humanitarian efforts and service.
* New Ideas
* New Leadership
* More Enthusiasm
* More Hands to Help
* Increase of Public Image

Logically, a club that has a high turnover in membership, or one that does not attract new members will not be able to provide service to the community or fellowship to its members.

I believe that there are 3 elements to membership growth. The first is obvious – attracting new members. The second was the focus of last month’s column - the retention of new and current members. This month I thought I would touch on extension of membership into new clubs.

PDG Dennis Heslin is your contact for this and I’m certainly not encouraging you all to go out and form a new club to the detriment of your current club or community. Membership Growth cannot be solved solely by the formation of new clubs. We need to overcome the loss of members from our existing clubs first or we will only be compounding the problem! What I am suggesting is that you take a look at your club as an outsider would. Is it appealing? If there was a second club in your area would you go to it in preference to your own? Why? How many of your fellow members would also change to the other club? It may be worth talking to PDG Dennis about extension in your area – it could be that there is an opportunity but that we have blinkers on. Are we so focused on growing our own club and holding onto traditions that we are missing the people that we don’t appeal too?

Back to the subject of retention (since this is the area we as a district seem to struggle with most). I would encourage you to:

* Introduce a mentoring system if you don’t already have one;
* Assign the person to a committee and a task when they join. Of the 2, the task is the most important;
* Offer education - most people want to learn. Take the time to show them where resources are and explain things to them. Encourage everyone to attend the various educational events that are held across the district throughout the year.

Why? Simply because the negative effects of membership loss are significant.

* Decreased participation in programs and projects.
* Reduced giving to The Rotary Foundation.
* Diminishing opportunity for fellowship.
* Fading public image.
* Difficulty in attracting members.

As always, if you have any feedback or stories to share please let me know.

Kerrie Schmidt

District Membership Chair

December 2012

It’s hard to believe that we are half way through the current Rotary year and that Christmas has been and gone. Many of you will have been involved in a Rotary community service project during the Christmas and New Year period which gave you a chance to share some time with friends and to help make a difference to those less fortunate. Did you use these opportunities to talk about why you are a Rotarian? Did you invite others to be? If you didn’t, ask yourself why not.

In November last I was invited to attend the Future Leaders Seminar in Adelaide. It was a fantastic forum in which to network with other Rotarians who represented districts from all over Australia and it was encouraging to see the diversity. The seminar concentrated on leadership, membership, public relations, communication and The Foundation. Not surprisingly these are the main issues we talk about at District and club level.

As we all know, membership and public relations are closely linked. At the Seminar we considered the two areas together in the context of brand, public image and public relations. Some would argue that the order of these is inverted; that public relations affects our image and that our image determines our brand. You need to decide the order for yourselves. The point is that we are all Rotarians first; what office we hold or will hold it in the future (and we all need to share that responsibility) is important for the club, but not to the outside world. As a club and organisation we need to agree “our” brand and to market it in such a way that people recognise us before any other service organisation. Is your club a brand you’d be proud to sell and want people to buy?

Since the Rotary year commenced our net membership has increased by 25. The challenge now is to get at least this many more by the end of the Rotary year. I believe we can do it and when we do our numbers will be where we were at June 30 last year and we all know we can do better than that.

Some of the people you did or will ask to join Rotary will decline because of other commitments. Don’t quit but don’t harass them either. Think, is it the way I approached the subject? Have they heard or seen something about my club that may have discouraged them. If the answer is “no” (and be honest with yourself), gently find out what and when the other commitments are over time and what presses their buttons. The next time your club has an activity that matches, encourage them to come along. You’ll need to start a database but it’s worth doing. And remember, by not asking we have a lot of potential Rotarians who will remain just that….potential. Go on – ask! What’s the worst that can happen? What’s the best?

Around the issue of “busy-ness”, I have spoken with DG Tony about the formation of an e-Club in D9820. Both he and I see this as a way of engaging with people who have much to offer but genuinely are busy and can’t get to what we regard as a “normal” meeting. E-clubs are for business and professional people who are unable to attend a weekly meeting in person but want the opportunity to meet, to participate in service projects and to share Rotary friendships. At present I am one of those people. Potential members of the e-Club are a potential resource for your club and Rotary and would include nurses, paramedics, police, the disabled, the isolated,…anyone really who has restrictions on their time and ability to attend a regular weekly meeting outside their home or workplace. If you are interested in helping set up an e-Club or know people that you think could be members please me know.

I am also keen to know if clubs have engaged with the corporations in their area as a way to increasing membership and engaging with their local communities. I’m not talking about corporate membership in this instance but about getting these corporations to support what we, what you do. Research has shown that corporations still have money to give to worthy community organisations but they want something for that corporate donation. They want to show their clients that they are environmentally aware, socially responsible and connected to the community. That’s where Rotary comes in; we offer a forum for these organisations to be partners in programs and projects. I would encourage you to get corporate entities in your area to support Rotary as their charity of choice. Consider hosting an event similar to the International Women’s Day event ín Melbourne on 8 March 2013. Yes it is a contentious topic but wait – it’s not just about women it’s about getting organisations to attend a Rotary event, to take their clients to a Rotary event and as the organisers say “it’s about strengthening Rotary, strengthening Diversity and Strengthening Communities”. If you would like to participate in the Melbourne event I have just referred to, contact PP Kerry Kornhauser on 0411 597 690 who has offered to assist Rotary clubs to link in. The Melbourne event will be streamed for those that are interested.

Kerrie Schmidt

District Membership Chair

January 2013

I wondered how to begin this month’s column for days with so much of the news, our conversations and our thoughts dominated by the fires in our district. Rotarians were asked to support the fire-fighters based at Heyfield, many of who were volunteers from outside this district. A real demonstration of this year’s theme “Peace through Service”! As well as our work to support the fire-fighters we were also asked to support the members of the communities affected by this latest tragedy. None of these tasks were arduous but they were essential services which we Rotarians are good at – catering, pitching tents and helping with fencing. No doubt more service opportunities will follow. As you go about helping others, remember to let people know that you are a Rotarian and that this is what Rotarians do!

Last month I drew your attention to the International Women’s Day event being held at the Crown Palladium on Friday 8 March 2013. The event, and it is an event, is held annually to enable corporations to feel good about supporting community service organisations and sharing what they do with their clients and staff. For Rotary, it is a way of us connecting with corporations to secure sponsorship and people, both vital for our survival. Clubs in D9800 have benefitted from the event and I encourage you to join in. Please seriously consider hosting a dinner or cocktail function on the same evening. Invite local businesses and their clients. Tell them what differences you make in your community and beyond and how they can help. Find out from these organisations what presses their buttons on social responsibility and share the project or programs you have that match with them. Also let them know that Rotary does offer great local, national and international networking opportunities. Rotary is a business – we are a business like any other and our product is the service we give to others. I’ve included an ad and a profile on the speakers in this newsletter so that you can see that the event is serious about diversity in Rotary. Alternatively check out their website <http://www.rotarywomen.org.au/>

E-Clubs were also a focus last month and I hear you asking “why the sudden interest in an e-Club for D9820?” The main reason is that potential members don’t come to us as they used to and so we need to take Rotary to them. There is a lot of information about e-Clubs on the internet – a couple of links I found helpful were:

<http://www.rotary.org/en/Members/RunningADistrict/membershipanddevelopment/Pages/eclubs.aspx>

<http://www.rotaryeclubofmelbourne.org.au/>

<http://www.rotaryeclub9600.org.au/Joomla/>

Potential members of our e-Club would be:

* People who travel a lot and can’t make regular mid-week meetings but would be available for project work;
* People whose work schedule is restrictive or unpredictable and they don’t feel they can or should commit to a club;
* Young people who are comfortable with technology and have reduced time and interest for “meetings”;
* Younger mothers with limited spare time;
* People who have difficulty in getting to traditional meetings due to physical disadvantage, access to transport, or live in remote communities;
* People less interested in the social and networking components of traditional Rotary but want to contribute to the community; and
* Former members who left because of time constraints or cost but still assist with club projects

Finally, could I ask you to start thinking about this year’s District Assembly if you haven’t already. Service Avenue’s Chair Alan Collier will be looking for clubs to show-case projects they are involved in. The Assembly is also a great forum to showcase Rotary to potential members.

Kerrie Schmidt

District Membership Chair

Membership Matters

February 2013

It was good to catch up with so many of you at this year’s conference and to share with you all that was on offer; great speakers on interesting subjects, the fabulous destination and venue and what proved to be another brilliant social occasion.

One of the great things about being a Rotarian is our ability to attend a Rotary conference. Over the course of every conference we enjoy high profile, quality speakers and we gain a better understanding of Rotary programs and community service opportunities and of course, we build a wider group of friends. In some organisations within the business community, participation at a Rotary conference or attendance at a Rotary World Convention is considered “Professional Development”. Now that I have your attention on this point just think how this might be attractive to young professionals. They should be Rotarians!

This month I revisited some of the *“Membership Minute”* publications produced by Rotary International (RI). These are available on the membership page of the RI website at

[www.rotary.org/en/members/generalinformation/membershipresources/pages/ridefault.aspx](http://www.rotary.org/en/members/generalinformation/membershipresources/pages/ridefault.aspx)

One article that grabbed my attention was in October’s publication (October 2012) where a relatively new member was given the challenge of setting up a new Rotary club. This was achieved with even bigger and better outcomes for Rotary and the community. How was it done? The Rotarian given the challenge puts it down to three things:

1. They didn’t hesitate to visit people at home or work to talk about membership;
2. They didn’t wait for the invitee to get back to them and tell them they didn’t have time: the Rotarian insisted the invitee try Rotary and persisted until they understood what Rotary was all about and the good it would do the invitee to join; and
3. They conveyed their passion for Rotary and the invitee could feel that passion.

I also read PDG Noel Trevaskis’ “Rotary on the Move” newsletter for February 2013. For those not aware, Noel has been invited by DGE Tim Moore and PDG Brian Norris to facilitate sessions at this year’s President’s Elect Seminar (PETS 2) and Assembly in Traralgon. Those that know Noel will know and understand his passion for Rotary. Those that don’t will do after you’ve attended the Assembly and heard what he has to offer. One of the articles in the February newsletter (Page 5) was entitled “Reasons to Belong” and was what a Rotarian wrote down after a friend asked him why he should join. It’s an adaptation of what we’ve heard before but still worth the read. I’ve summarised the main points in the attached table which clubs might choose to put into a localised brochure or customise to pick just several points that will really hit home when you invite the next person to become a Rotarian. Remember when you ask the next person though to share your passion for Rotary and to sell them the benefits of membership to them.

Kerrie Schmidt

District Membership Chair

** Why Join Rotary?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Professional Networking:** | Rotary broadens business and professional networks introducing people to other like-minded business people. |
| **Ethical Environment:**  . | Rotarians benchmark their personal and professional behaviour by asking themselves a series of questions about all they say and do:   1. Is it the truth? 2. Is it fair? 3. Will it build goodwill and improve relationships? 4. Will it benefit everyone involved? |
| **Good Citizenship:** | Attending regular Rotary meetings lets you learn about what’s happening in your community. It also means you can learn how you can make a difference. |
| **Service Opportunities:** | Rotary provides unlimited opportunities for you to help others locally, nationally and internationally addressing concerns with health care, hunger, poverty, illiteracy and the environment. |
| **International Awareness:** | Rotary helps you learn and understand humanitarian issues through international aid projects and exchange programs. |
| **Friendship:** | Rotary allows members and their families to enjoy a range of social activities with other like-minded people. Rotary also provides a network of contacts in almost every city in the world. |
| **Family Foundations:** | Rotary provides innovative training opportunities and mentoring for young people and professionals through youth exchange, educational exchange and scholarship programs. |
| **Entertainment:** | Rotary is about having fun. Meetings aren’t all about business. Members and their families participate in a range of localised social events designed to suit all ages and interests. Rotarians also have the opportunity to attend conferences and conventions locally and abroad. |
| **Leadership:** | Rotary is an organisation of successful professionals. Team-building, fundraising, public speaking, planning, organisation and communication are some of the skills Rotarians exercise and enhance. Through Rotary leadership you also to learn how to motivate, inspire and engage with others. |
| **Diversity:** | Rotary is not political, not religious and not gender biased. Membership is open to people of all ages, all cultures and all professions. |