Creating a PARADIGM SHIFT for Rotary Membership Growth

Rotary Zone 24/32 Webinar – May 8, 2018

Presenters Script

**WELCOME – Jackie Hobel**

Hi Everyone…. Thank you for being with us today.

My name is Jackie Hobal and I am the Rotary Coordinator for Zone 24 West and will be your host for today’s webinar program.

Our behind the scenes Webinar Producer is Dave Haradon, Past Distinct Governor from Zone 32, District 7450 in Philadelphia.

This webinar is another in a series of Rotary Membership Webinars for Rotary Zones 24 and 32 to help each of us strengthen our organization while making a difference in the lives of our fellow Rotarians and our future Rotarians.

Today’s program is titled “Creating a Paradigm shift for Rotary Membership Growth”

Our presenters all from Rotary District 5050 will be…

Lindagene Coyle, District Governor

Rob Prosch, District Membership Chair, and

Sean Hogan, President of the Pacific Northwest (also known by the acronym PNW) Passport Club.

Lindagene, thanks for being with us today and take it away…

**INTRODUCTION - Lindagene Coyle**

Thank you Jackie

Welcome and thank you for joining us as we present actions that have worked to successfully increase membership. Rotary is making a difference all over the world and everyone has a responsibility for that success. Rotarians are needed to perform service above self at the club, district, and global levels, making positive membership growth a priority.

Let me start with introductions. I am Lindagene Coyle, District 5050 governor, Vice President Emerita, (that means I am retired) Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Surrey, British Columbia. In a moment I will provide a bit of information about our district.

**Rob Prosch**

* Is Dean of Aviation for Everett Community College in Everett, Washington.
* Has a passion for education and service.
* Serves as secretary and is on the board of directors of his Club
* Is the District 5050 Membership Chair

He will explain the need for a shift in focus and actions for success in membership growth.

**Sean Hogan**

* Is a lawyer with Buckley and Hogan
* Is Past District Governor 2012/13
* Is the District Web Master, and
* Zone 24 Public Image Coordinator

Sean is the Charter President of our newest Rotary club, the Pacific North West Passport Club. Sean will provide a history and explain what a Passport club is and its attraction to the members.

On the screen is the geographical layout of our district. Approximately half of our clubs are located in south west of British Columbia and half in northwest Washington state

Our motto is 50% American 50% Canadian = 100% Rotarian

As you can see on the graph, membership goes up and down which is normal.

There is usually a significant dip at the end of June and December as clubs update their membership lists at the end of each semi-annual period. Please notice a steep rise in membership as more clubs commit to actions with Membership Making a Difference.

Now Rob will share with you a process that is being successful in increasing membership in a number of clubs. of clubs. Rob on to you

**MEMBERSHIP GROWTH PROCESS – Rob Prosch**

In 2014, preparations were made to incorporate the Membership Matters program in our membership efforts. Rotary District 5060 had incorporated a program utilizing the Siegel and Gale research for Rotary International that focused on why individuals join Rotary and why they remain part of Rotary, specifically fellowship and friendship and opportunities to serve their local communities.District 5060 was gracious in allowing us to use their program and provided training for our district leadership. We implemented this training district wide in 2015. Membership reports were given through the Peace Arch Journal, our monthly district wide newsletter**,** celebrating clubs who had added members each month. Club surveys, created by the District, were encouraged and supported by the district. These surveys focused on the perception of members regarding their engagement and the environment within the club. However, many of the clubs either did not participate or did not have enough individual member participation to provide viable results. Only clubs with high participation results received the results of the survey. Though some valuable insights for some clubs were gained through these surveys, such as improving the welcoming environment of a club or engaging new members in their passion, the overall district survey results were problematic due to the lack of participation.

In my new role as the District Membership Chair and in consultation with Lindagene, we felt that it was time for a paradigm shift. A paradigm in the context of Rotary membership is the patterns, mindset, habits, and structures used to attract new members to Rotary and engage them in our clubs. We needed to think strategically and differently about membership to counter the declining membership numbers in our district. Current training and supports were not working and we needed to change the mindset or paradigm of our district members.

In 2017, at the meeting to develop a Vision and Strategic Plan for the district, it became obvious that membership growth was the top priority. Membership was integrated into every part of the plan. As part of the strategic planning, our philosophy became taking district supports to the areas and clubs versus a “come to the district” model. We determined that an area representative for membership would be needed to accomplish this model. As this was discussed with the 12 Assistant Governors, each responsible for the clubs in their area, ranging from four to six clubs, they chose to be on the District Membership Committee and serve as the membership area representatives in addition to their other district responsibilities.

With Assistant Governors as the membership representatives for their areas, the district would be able to provide each club with direct membership support. Similar to the district, club visioning emphasized membership growth and has become integrated into club strategic plans. For several years, the district has offered a team of district leaders to assist clubs in developing a vision or priorities for action. However, strategic planning for each club was left to the club leaders.

Under this new structure of the district membership committee, the traditional work of the committee also had to change. Supporting the Assistant Governors and clubs has become a central focus of the district membership chair. A stronger foundation of committee work to “push” on the culture and processes of membership in each club has been developed with encouragement for clubs to think and share “Outside the Box” practices that are proving valuable in membership growth. Practices such as mentoring structures for new members, preparing personal elevator speeches about Rotary, increasing the number of socials and community services activities and inviting potential Rotarians to participate, and creating Rotarian buy in for attracting new members are some of the focuses that push on Rotary club culture. Though these practices sound simple, many of our clubs are hesitant to change their culture or structures to attract and engage new members.

Under our philosophy of local supports, we have taken membership training to the clubs with seminars in each area.The membership seminar training implemented this Rotary year was based on personal responsibility and buy in by Rotarians to attract new members. Additionally, our district governor has focused on membership during her club visits and the district membership chair has provided many trainings at the club level.

Too many of our members believe membership growth and retention is the responsibility of the club membership committee. Part of the messaging for area and club training has emphasized individual responsibility to share Rotary and provide them methods to do this, including personal preparation to share Rotary, and taking small steps with potential Rotarians, such as inviting them to a social or community service activity versus an invitation to a club meeting. Membership in Rotary is a partnership, in essence a marriage, between the club and the new member. A win-win scenario must exist to ensure retention of the new member. Each new member must feel they can exhibit their passion for service and the club must feel that the new member is contributing to this partnership. As part of a Rotarians personal preparation, we focus on how to share Rotary through elevator speeches, answering, “What is Rotary,” and, “Why did I join Rotary.” It is members’ concise personal stories of Rotary that attract new members.

The Assistant Governors play a vital role in ensuring local club support for membership. Not only do they retain the usual obligations of their role in the district, they chose to be the district membership committee. A process for following up with the Rotary International membership leads was developed and maintained. Rotary International membership leads are sent to the district leadership when a potential member expresses interest in joining Rotary through the Rotary.org website. District 5050’s follow up on membership leads is led by the District Membership Chair, who assigns membership leads to the appropriate Assistant Governor. The Assistant Governor follows through with the membership lead and determines the best club fit for the potential member and typically visits the club with the individual, assisting in creating greater connection with the club leadership and membership chair. The Assistant Governor follows through with the individual and club and informs the district membership chair of the outcome. The district membership chair maintains the Rotary International Database for membership leads.

Additionally, each Assistant Governor coordinates and organizes an annual area membership seminar and as part of their club responsibility meets quarterly with the club membership chairs to share best practices, answer questions, and problem solve membership issues.

As the Assistant Governors visit each club, they emphasize membership and let the club leadership know they are the first point of contact for membership questions, concerns, and ideas.

After two years of presenting Membership Matters, the district membership chair created Membership: Making a Difference. This program is a follow up to the Membership Matters material and builds on those concepts. Membership: Making a Difference focuses on Attraction versus Recruitment, membership engagement

… versus retention, emphasizes individual responsibility to share Rotary, and encourages participation in an online survey created from the Membership Matters material. Additionally, the content of the seminar includes creating personal elevator speeches answering, “What is Rotary?” and, “Why did I join Rotary?” It also commits the members to inviting one person that they know to participate in a “small step” of attraction, for example participation in a social event, community service project, or fundraising activity. It describes the relationship building that must be present and how we need to better engage new members by allowing them to exhibit their passion. Club, area, and district wide presentations were created and delivered in various lengths ranging from 30 minutes, which is a typical club presentation to 4 hours, which is the full-length training for area membership seminars.

Creating individual buy-in from members to share Rotary has always been a challenge for membership committees. We chose to approach it from the legacy paradigm. What is the legacy you would like to leave in your Rotary club? Would you like that legacy to continue? To continue the legacy, each of us must invite the next generation to further that legacy.

Additionally, when I am presenting to any group, I ask them, “Who knows someone who should be a Rotarian?” Almost always, every hand in the room goes up.

To assist members with that prospective Rotarian, we focus on supports for the member. Personal preparation is vital to the process. From the Membership Matters seminars, we are aware of the personal preparation required to create an elevator speech to share, “What is Rotary?” However, the next question from most prospective members is, “Why did you join Rotary?” Therefore, a second elevator speech we prepare is, “What is my Rotary story?” This elevator speech focuses on why the member joined Rotary. We emphasize that it is attraction to Rotary that counts, not recruitment. Recruitment is something that happens to us. Attraction is something in which we choose to be involved. Sharing our experiences of Rotary, or our Rotary stories, is creating opportunity for the potential member to be attracted to Rotary.

We also explain that sharing Rotary is about small steps, not large ones. As Rotarians, we have traditions and celebration in each of our club meetings. Often, these traditions can seem overwhelming or strange to a potential member. We encourage members to first invite potential Rotarians to a club service project or social event, which allows the prospective Rotarian to first experience individual interactions with Rotarians, rather than club traditions. This will frequently push on club activities to ensure there are frequent service and social events. Additionally, we encourage clubs to engage the potential member’s entire family, not just the individual. This pushes on club culture to think about how to structure service, social events and club meetings to include entire families.

As part of Membership: Making a Difference we focus strongly on engaging new members in the club. We ask each club to have a formal mentoring program and present all club service opportunities so that the new member may engage in the service area for which they have a passion, whether that be youth services, international service, club administration, or the many other ways that we provide service to our communities. Service activities and club socials are an integral part of engaging new members. We also focus on engagement versus attendance, explaining the flexibility that clubs now have to structure club attendance.

Membership: Making a Difference is about delving deeper into the individual member responsibility to share Rotary, personal member preparation, club structures that better engage new members, and ensuring new member retention.

**DISTRICT SUPPORTS - Lindagene Coyle**

Thank you Rob

District 5050 mission statement says

The District enhances the success and growth of clubs through effective communications, training and leadership

As a result of the clear message during our strategic planning that membership growth was a top priority for clubs, we added a second session to our facilitated Visioning sessions - Strategic Planning. While many clubs had participated in a Visioning exercise, very few followed Visioning with Strategic Planning to identify the specific action steps necessary to achieve the vision.

To support Strategic Planning in the clubs, we offer facilitator training sessions twice a year. This allows the district to have enough trained volunteers available to provide this service to the clubs.

Clubs are encouraged to send welcome letters to new members. A past district governor mentioned that in his year he sent welcome letters to new club members. This is a great idea and way for the district governor to support membership in a tangible way. Personal letters were sent to every new club member in the district.

Each letter welcomes the member to the district, and provides information about training, and how to access information including links to the district website, Rotary Leadership Institute, district conference and other upcoming events.

New members are encouraged to get involved in their clubs, in the district and to take advantage of the many benefits of being a Rotarian.

In addition to clubs growing members the district needs to grow new clubs. New Rotary clubs are a way to meet community and individual needs by providing access to Rotary at different times, locations and focuses.

Rob has explained the paradigm shift from a centralized process that moved to club and individual responsibility for membership. This is significant in that in the past Rotarians often asked why Rotary International wasn’t doing more and why wasn’t the District doing more to increase membership. The reality is that it is the clubs and individual Rotarians that need to JUST DO IT!

However, in addition to clubs increasing their membership, starting new clubs also boosts membership.

Sean will now share information about not only a new Club, but a new style Rotary Club.

**PASSPORT CLUBS – Sean Hogan**

The first Rotary Passport Club chartered in Sacramento, California (D5180) on May 1, 2015 by District Governor Glenn Fong and Charter President Mike Reneiro. It had 60 members, but grew to 90 within one year.

The concept behind the Passport club was to:

Remove barriers to both joining or staying in a Rotary club

To provide greater meeting flexibility

With lower costs

A Passport Club aims to create a new engagement model which fits with a member’s time, talent and finances.

To fit Rotary within a member’s family, work and life commitments

So what about the details - how does a Passport Rotary Club differ from a traditional or an e-club?

Unlike an e-club, a Passport club has a defined geographical area so that members can meet in person on a regular basis.

Passport clubs are grassroot based & member driven. Each club decides how it will operate.

The Pacific Northwest Passport Rotary Club members decided that we will meet in person once a month. The original Passport Club **meets (met?)** every three months. Members decide on the schedule that suits them.

The PNW Passport Rotary Club set dues at $150 USD/yr with a special discount rate of $60 for any member who is also a Rotaract member.

We also decided that our Board will consist of the executive members (the President, President-Elect, Past President, Secretary and Treasurer) plus two Committee Chairs. We hope that by having only two Committees, it will make members more likely to join one or both. The Engagement Committee is the membership or internal group. The Service Committee is the external focused group and includes the Rotary Foundation.

So why are we called a Passport Club?

Glenn says that he came up with “passport” because he liked the name.

When he and Mike first came up with the concept, it was called “Members At Large”.

Glen’s idea was that membership is a passport in two ways, and the PNW Passport club members added a third:

First - membership is a passport into Rotary - for people who have busy lives and other commitments.

Membership is also a passport to other Rotary clubs- encouraging members to visit local clubs and to take part in their service projects, fundraisers and other activities.

Thirdly we see membership as a passport to the community- our members who already volunteer in other community groups are our Rotary ambassadors to those groups, and bring ideas for service projects back to our club.

Who is our target membership?

First we look to former Rotary members - every Rotary club has more former members than current members

We also look to current or past members of our Rotary family - Rotaract and other youth programs, scholarship recipients, members of exchange teams (such as the GSE and VTT) and more.

Young people

Retirees

Anyone who wants to do good in the world

Who is our actual membership?

The PNW Passport club was Chartered on January 2, 2018 with 30 members

By the time we held our Charter night party on March 3, we had grown to 40. The background of those members is as follows:

40% are former Rotary members

30% are brand new to Rotary

30% were current Rotarians that were about to leave their clubs for some reason (usually due to a relocation of work or home; difficulty making club meetings or conflict within a club)

At this time we have only 1 Rotaract member, but we see this as a strong area for membership growth

How can you start a Passport Rotary Club

First, ask local Clubs to contact their former members - this is your biggest potential source of members.

Get the support of District leadership and especially the Assistant Governors who are the key contacts with the clubs.

Hold several information meetings open to anyone interested in the idea.

Our most successful meetings were multi-club socials, hosted by Area clubs.

We also shared information on social media - particularly but not exclusively Facebook.

Word of mouth

Next lets discuss some of the Issues & Questions that we have been asked.

Passport Clubs meet less than the twice per month that Rotary requires. However, the second meeting can be an alternative meeting type - including a meeting online or by having members visit other clubs, participate in their service projects or socials.

Commitment - Our members join because they have limitations on time or finances. So rather than tell members what we expect them to do, we speak of opportunities where members are encouraged to take part in activities as they are able.

Club finances - With our dues kept low, to primarily cover RI and District dues, that doesn’t leave a lot in the kitty for other expense such as sending the President Elect to PETS. This is an issue we will be addressing during our first year.

Perception of “poaching” - we have discouraged existing members from leaving their current club unless we are satisfied that there is a good reason and they would be leaving anyway. We also speak with the other club’s leadership before making a decision to accept the transferring member.

Attraction & Retention - Most new clubs will have a decline in membership during their first two years. A Passport Club is at greater risk for this given the membership focus on those with time or financial restrictions. We will have to find the balance where members are feeling connected to the club and are engaged in the level service that fits for them. We don't want to discourage members, but we also don't want people who are "Rotarians in name only".

There isn’t time to review all of those issues and potential solutions in detail for this webinar, but for more details about starting and maintaining a Passport Rotary club, visit [www.pnwpassportrotary.org](http://www.pnwpassportrotary.org) and click on “Start A Passport Club” on the menu list

**CLOSING – JACKIE Hobal**

Thanks Sean, that was a very nice summary about creating a Passport Clubs.

My thanks to all three of you, Lindagene, Rob and Sean for putting this program together for us. And congratulations on the steady membership growth in your district.

A reminder that your Rotary Coordinators and Assistants are available to assist you in your membership development initiatives Do contact them.

Be sure to check the Membership Resource Page on [www.rotary.org/membership](http://www.rotary.org/membership)

for new tools, to help you are grow your membership and strengthen your club. Check out the newly released Engaging Young Professionals toolkit.

This program will be recorded and posted on the Rotary Zone 24 and 32 website and will also soon be posted on our blog [www.greatideastoshare.com](http://www.greatideastoshare.com) that has LOTS of great information about improvements in Membership Growth, Public Image and our Rotary Foundation.

We will be continuing our webinar series on Rotary Membership Growth for Rotary Zones 24 and 32., so please be on the lookout for future programs.

Thank you everyone for joining us and best wishes for continued membership success in your own Rotary District and Clubs ! We’ll see you again soon.