

Philip Archer

## **HOW TO ATTRACT TOMORROW'S ROTARIANS – OUR NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS**

Philip told a story about his aging parents. For fifteen years, he and his siblings had tried to get his parents to move to a newer, smaller home. Finally, they did. Their new place made them very happy. Had they not taken so long to let go of the old, they could have the benefits of the new fifteen years earlier.

Are we Rotarians like that with our clubs? Are we hanging on to old beliefs, practices and rituals? Is our thinking stuck in the past, making us unaware that we are unattractive to new members? If it is, our penalty is not just loss of members but the potential death of our club.

Generally, our Rotary clubs are good at recruiting members but poor at retaining them. Each club has to ask both “How can we retain our existing members?” and “How do we recruit new members?”

## **HOW TO RETAIN OUR CURRENT MEMBERS AND ATTRACT NEW ONES**

### **1. Ask “How can we improve our Club Services”?**

- a. Are we responding fast enough to societal change? Change is being driven by social media. The pace of change is picking up. Will we be left behind?
- b. How do we modernise our club?
- c. Are we flexible enough?
  - i. Attendance
  - ii. Meeting rules and procedures
  - iii. Meeting time
  - iv. Length of meeting
- d. Are our meetings too expensive? How can we reduce our cost to members?
- e. Do our meetings engage members and guests or are they unexciting and the same from week to week? If so, how can they be changed?
- f. Do we have good speaker programs? Do guest speakers include our own members?
- g. It is up to us to effect change in our thinking and in our clubs.
- h. We need to build the club of the future so that people will stay.
- i. RI leadership is inspiring and sharp and has helped us become more contemporary.
- j. Bold decisions are needed. The work we do is great. Friendships are important.

## 2. Membership

- a. We need to engage our members anew.
- b. What will keep members and guests coming back?
- c. Will young people respect the values of 'our club'?
- d. Historically we have had a good range of ages in our clubs. Do we still have that?
- e. How do we ensure that we maintain the respect between older and newer members?
- f. We need to take stock of all our marketing assets - stories, websites, social media, meeting promotion - and use them.
- g. New members getting hands on straight away is important.
- h. We must *Share the inspiration*.
- i. Listen to our new members.
- j. We should be proud of the work we have done, especially with polio eradication.
- k. Ask how we make it easy for people outside our club to know what we're up to?

## 3. Are we aware that...

- a. It's a very competitive market for new members. Many other volunteer organizations (e.g. Lions, Red Cross), sporting bodies, Probus and others are also chasing our prospective member.
- b. Many potential members have greater flexibility in the jobs than they did in the past and more time to give to others.
- c. The new Rotary Public Image campaign is about *Joining the Conversation*. It is a costly campaign. How do we get leverage from it?
- d. Listening is the key. We need to give people the chance to talk. What are the reasons why people join? Do we ask and listen to the answer?
- e. Local community is different now – we are more spread.
- f. People join because they want to give back. Because they have a sense of service
- g. It doesn't matter how old you are, you won't give time if there no sense of purpose and flexibility.

#### **4. Ask “What legacy do I want to leave to my club and my community?”**

##### **POINTS RAISED DURING DISCUSSION**

1. Do we think the fear of change is in the constitution?
  - a. Better to ask for forgiveness than permission.
  - b. People don't read these things before they start using them.
  - c. Attendance is not the big issue we sometimes make it out to be.
  - d. Unity without uniformity.
  - e. Geoff Brennan: was invited to a meeting, had no idea what to expect, it was fun, exciting, and he wanted more. If the club experience is not what people are looking for it will put people off for the rest of their lives.
  - f. Bob Aitken talked about getting people to a meeting in the morning.
  - g. Need to connect with the community. Have fun, engage the community.
  - h. We need to connect with people.
2. Ignoring the rules. Focus on purpose. Be convinced by the purpose.
3. Why do we keep having guest speakers? Turn meetings into working meetings. Use the time to get things done.
4. Rotary is too complex
5. Rotary Clubs used to have areas, clubs would cede territory.
6. Set up a satellite club.
7. Coffee or cocktail club. Short meetings, email contact after the meeting.
8. People join in relation to local issues.
9. Elevator pitch = “Rotary turns conversations into action”
10. Getting stuff done. In your local community.
11. We need to think differently

##### **FINAL POINTS:**

1. Share your ideas. Send them to [Bryan O'Shannassy, D9685 Public Relations Director](#)
2. Be creative but with common sense
3. New members can be our age, under and over our age.
4. Be proud of what we are and what we do.
5. Website has ten documents that can help.