

The Rotary Club of Yass (D9710) has found a successful formula for finding new members and Rotary stories are the important factor. Although we are encouraged to, few people like asking friends or acquaintances to join Rotary for fear of rejection. No one likes to hear the word NO! Yass Rotary has been running a membership recruitment drive that has had some excellent results.

The steps are:

1. Decide on a date for the membership night.
2. Tell members the date and ask them to think of people they know who might be suitable as Rotarians. Ask them to provide their names and addresses. These people do not need to be close friends, or even someone they know well. They can be simply someone they have met once or twice and seem to be the type of person for whom Rotary would be a good thing.
3. Once a list of about ten people has been compiled, a letter is sent out to each one, from the president, by mail and signed. The opening paragraph says: A respected member of our Rotary Club has put forward your name as a leader in business, a professional and someone involved in our community. We would therefore like to extend an invitation to you to come to a relaxed evening, with like-minded people, to hear about the activities of Rotary International and your local Rotary Club.
4. It then goes on to say a short bit about Rotary and gives the time and place for the meeting.
5. On the night the evening is held more like a cocktail party, not a regular meeting. Finger food replaces the normal meal. This gives the visitor and members an opportunity to mix well.
6. We do not have a special guest speaker but ask four or five Rotarians to tell their Rotary story in five or less minutes. The story might be about how they joined Rotary, what it is like to be a younger member in Rotary, what projects the Club does that they enjoy, a special experience they have had as a Rotarian etc. The stories need to be varied so that the visitors can find at least one to which they can relate. Do not choose Rotarians to speak who ramble, or are boring.
7. At the end of the evening, invite them all to come back again as a club guest, to a normal meeting. As they leave give them a pack of information they can take home.
8. MOST IMPORTANT! The next day each visitor needs to be contacted by a Rotarian and encouraged to come again. Sometimes this might mean being picked up and brought home.
9. At Yass we ask our potential members to come three times as a visitor and during that time we carry out the normal process of filling in the paperwork, explaining what membership means and finally inducting them on the fourth or fifth meeting.
10. At our most recent membership evening, which was just before Changeover, we had 11 visitors and of those we inducted 7 and the others are still considering joining.

This is a simple method, avoids Rotarians to feel threatened, embarrassed or rejected and introduces Rotary in a friendly and informal manner.