

## 5 Things I Wish All Rotarians Knew (and Believed) about Membership

1. **Nothing Else Matters -- Rotary is a Membership Organization And Our Product is Service.** If you get Membership right, pretty much everything else takes care of itself. If you don't get membership right, everything else is a struggle for the whole year. Work on membership **first**, get your membership committee up and running **first, and** then attend to other priorities. Make sure your membership chair is 100% committed to membership growth, and to getting started in April or May (the April or May **before** the next Rotary year). And that the Membership Chair has a committee. *NOTE: A committee cannot be one member!*
2. **Attrition is Real** -- Membership organizations lose members, most at alarming rates. I know, you're thinking "Nobody would quit our great club". Wrong. The 5-year average attrition rate for clubs is **fifteen percent (15%) annually**. Half of those leave for reasons you can't control. A handful of clubs have long-term attrition rates below 10% and **none** lower than 8%. Build your membership plan around the assumption that 15% of your members will leave. During this next Rotary year and have a plan to replace them. Count your blessings (and your membership gain) if that doesn't happen.
3. **Retention is Important for the LONG Term** -- Retention rates can be changed over time, not quickly, and you can't retain your way from 20 to 30 members. Work on retention strategies, but don't count on moving the needle quickly. Find out why people leave through exit surveys and fix those problems. | **Hint: Most attrition casualties have been members less than 1, 2 or 3 years (<1 year = highest attrition)**. Focus your retention strategies on those members.
4. **Clubs need membership growth every year** -- It doesn't have to be dramatic. 4% annual membership growth will double the size of your club in 18 years. What you want to develop is a **membership growth culture** -- the fundamental belief that the club grows a little every year and avoids huge declines along the way. It's not a series of "membership drives", but a consistent, sustained effort. We have examples of clubs doing just this, with only one year of decline (by 1 member) along the way. Set your goal at 10% net membership growth (plus an estimate of 15% attrition).
5. **It takes Intentional Strategies** -- Discard generalities like, "Ask members to bring guests to meetings". Change that to, "Ask "x" members to bring "y" guests to a meeting about Rotary membership on mm/dd/yyyy", and you might have something, if the rest of the plan for reminders, follow up, etc. is in place. Lather, rinse, repeat. Likewise, financial and other incentives for membership recruiting are surprisingly ineffective -- you can't make the prize big enough to be "worth the effort" after a member thinks about it for a while. It's a nice "thank you", but don't count on incentives alone.

**Remember the 10:3:1 Rule** -- It takes about 10 names or referrals (suspects) to get 3 prospects to a Rotary Information Hour or Rotary club meeting, to get **one** new member proposal. Lack of sufficient "lead generation" is a root cause of low rates of new member flow.

If you **understand** and **believe** these truths, your year as President will be successful, rewarding and perhaps legendary in the life of your club.

