

They may seem like good ideas, but the following strategies are not going to generate many new members.

1. Club socials, "meet and greets" with prospective members invited as guests
2. Invite prospective members to regular club meetings
3. Incentives -- Offer members an incentive, such as "free dues for a quarter", gift cards or gift certificates, Foundation Recognition Points, etc. for proposing a new member
4. Free or reduced dues for new members
5. Podium announcements, newsletters, bulletins, emails, etc. asking members in mass to propose new members
6. Direct mail, print advertising, billboards, post cards or emails inviting prospects to events or Meetings

## **WHY these strategies don't work to attract members**

### **Club socials, "meet and greets" with prospective members invited as guests**

Clubs love this idea. Who wouldn't? Have a party and use membership as an excuse. Trouble is, a good social is a lousy venue for having a serious, informative conversation about what Rotary is and does. Members mostly talk with each other, guests feel a bit awkward and go home with, at best, a feeling that Rotary "may be OK". No call to action = no action.

### **Invite prospective members to regular club meetings**

Almost as ineffective as socials. In the average club meeting, the 2 or 3 minutes focused on what Rotary is or does would be the exception. Prospects meet some nice people, perhaps hear a good program, have a great meal, and leave without knowing any more about Rotary than when they came in. They go home wondering, "What's that all about?" Conversion rates of 1 in 10 (1 new member for every 10 prospects at meetings) for this strategy are about the best you can expect, even with great member follow-up. Rather, a focused Rotary Membership Event can yield 1 new member for every 2 prospects.

### **Incentives**

Offering members an incentive, such as "free dues for a quarter", gift cards or gift certificates, Foundation Recognition Points, etc. for proposing a new member. A weird thing happens when you attach money to something. Suddenly, instead of thinking, "That's even a better reason to do something I ought to do anyway" the member starts thinking, "There are probably easier ways for me to make \$150." The problem is, you can't make it big enough to make the money matter in its own right. If you could offer, say, \$2,000 it might work. If your budget will support that, give it a try.

### **Free or reduced dues for new members**

In general, community service isn't free and community service including a meal several times per month surely isn't free. Rotary isn't for everyone, and particularly not for someone for whom the cost is a hardship. We don't do anyone any favors by asking them to give up something else to be part of Rotary. If the "sticker price" of Rotary is too much, reducing that by half or to zero for a while is just postponing the inevitable. When the full dues rate kicks in, it will still be too much, and you just upped your attrition or reduced your retention. The only exception to this

may be as an intentional strategy of bringing in Young Professionals who would still, eventually, age out of subsidized dues.

### **Asking members in mass to propose new members**

In even a group of 20 people, let alone 200, a general "ask" is anonymous, everyone at the table assumes the speaker is talking to the person on his left or right and that someone else will take care of it. A real one-on-one conversation in person or by phone (a personal "ask") where you ask for and receive a commitment, is a whole different deal.

### **Direct mail, print advertising, billboards, post cards or emails inviting prospects**

Clubs love this because it's easy but unfortunately, it is also not successful. If our own members won't pay attention to an anonymous "ask", or even open your email, then why would prospects? The way to get prospects to a membership event (not a regular club meeting) is for a member who knows them to invite them personally, get their firm (not "Maybe" or "I'll try") commitment to come and offer to pick them up.

To know what works be sure to read If you really want your club to be successful in attracting, onboarding, and retaining members, have a look at 10 Intentional Membership Strategies proven by clubs to work.

You need at least 1 strategy for each of the Membership Key Success Factors:

- ✓ Prospect Identification (Lead Generation)
- ✓ Attraction
- ✓ Onboarding
- ✓ Retention