

# Recruiting and Retaining Members Aged 40 and Under

A Handout for Rotary Clubs

Prepared by the Rotary District 9810 Younger Membership Taskforce, November 2020



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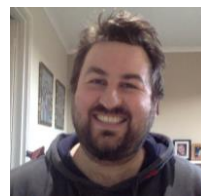
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## Goals

1. To increase the number of Rotary District 9810 members under the age of 40.
2. To increase the retention rate of Rotary District 9810 members under the age of 40.

## Challenges - a two-fold problem

**A. Some of our key findings as to why people under 40 don't join Rotary concern the following:**

1. Perceptions, assumptions and stereotypes around requirements of membership, appropriate membership age, Rotary's purpose and activities.
  - "Rotary seems to be just for older people, I wouldn't fit in"
  - "I'd rather join a group that looks like it has others like me"
  - "It's just sausage sizzles and markets"
  - What kind of club does your marketing material reflect?
2. Costs including membership, meeting/meal and other associated costs as a Rotarian.
  - "I don't have the money at the moment"
  - "I am already volunteering my time, why should I pay so much as well?"
  - "Is it worth it?"
3. Lack of Rotary Club/Rotarian ongoing connection and engagement (after sponsoring a younger person for a Rotary program).
  - "No one's reaching out to me"
4. Lack of explanation and/or promotion of the benefits/opportunities available via Rotary membership.
  - "As a young professional I am interested in networking/professional development/Board experience - can Rotary offer this?"
5. Competing opportunities to assist the community.
  - "I already make a difference to social justice through my work/career"
  - "It seems easier to help that charity instead without having to be a member of anything"



6. Cause based service interest. Rotary's purpose may be unclear or too broad and/or there may be an expectation by Clubs for members to engage in many of the Club's service ventures whereas some people may prefer to engage in causes that are interest-specific to them and only in those areas.
  - "I've got other interests and would rather contribute to that cause"
  - "They aren't already doing projects which address causes that I'm interested in"
  - "They just donate money, I'd rather be more hands-on"
7. Entrepreneurial mindset. Younger people generally prefer working in a different management structure that is currently adopted by Clubs. They prefer to work in environments that aren't as structured and/or in a non top-down organisational structure or hierarchical structure. They also prefer to start their own cause/organisation/project.
  - "It's not how I want to do things"
  - "I'd rather have a go at starting something up myself"
8. Timing and/or length of meetings may not be convenient. Similarly regarding existing Club ventures.
9. Limited time available.
  - "The times that they meet don't suit me"
  - "I've got a family/work long hours/play a sport/have so many other commitments"
  - "Rotary seems to be too much of a time commitment"
10. Expectations placed on younger members to take on responsibilities quickly and to take on tasks or roles that don't interest them even though they may have experience (i.e. social media person).
  - "They want me to do too much/things I don't feel comfortable doing"
  - "These tasks just don't interest me"
11. Younger individuals are often not asked to consider membership and/or invited to join a Rotary Club. In some cases some interested younger individuals have been turned away and/or recommended to join Rotaract instead.



**B. People under 40 may leave Rotary for one or more of the following reasons:**

1. Other commitments/Limited time available/not realising how making time for Rotary can be beneficial.
2. Competing opportunities in both professional & other community service organisations
3. Movement & lack of catering for changing life circumstances
  - "I need to focus more on work/family now"
  - "Rotary just isn't family-friendly/flexible enough for my changing lifestyle"
  - "I'm moving away"
  - "I want to do other things"
4. Club/Rotarian expectations regarding time commitments and tasks/roles desired for the younger member to undertake.
  - "They expect too much in attendance/effort"
5. Club processes can be bureaucratic, slow and appear formal and archaic
6. Club traditions/formality/stuck in their ways/not open to change/adapting and/or trying new things.
  - "They are too slow"
  - "They are not open to new ideas"
  - "These club traditions seem old-fashioned/aren't for me"
7. Rotary politics and/or bureaucracy.
  - "There's too much politics and not enough action"
8. Ambiguous or lack of guidance with respect to opportunities available through Rotary, including that relating to personal/professional development, service and leadership.
  - "I'm passionate about that but am not sure how to get involved"
9. Lack of diversity and/or issues regarding diversity
  - "The club is homogenous and I'm not sure I fit in"
  - "I have heard members stereotype certain groups in a way which I don't agree with"



## Solution Options

- **Provide education & training to clubs**

  - **Targets goals 1& 2 - recruitment and retention**

    - Taskforce members - who are all Rotarians under the age of 40 themselves - will make themselves available to clubs for presentations and ongoing support
    - Sharing of resources including information on how to connect and engage with Rotary Alumni (*created and already distributed by the District Alumni Committee*)
    - Membership experience and exit surveys
    - District training on generational differences (including interests, motivations, skills) so as to reduce stereotyping and develop understanding between age groups

- **Club Membership Lead provides curated experience to younger members**

  - **Targets goal 2 - retention**

Provide club membership leaders guidance on how to support younger members, including:

    - Connect them to other Rotarians, whether in or outside of the Club, in their age category, so they have peers to connect with
    - Encourage them to bring a friend/family member as a guest to encourage building a network in the Club
    - Provide them a meaningful committee/leadership/service role - one they are actually interested in undertaking rather than one presumed they would be interested in undertaking, as soon as possible to make them feel valuable
    - Allowing them the opportunity to put forward and act on, where appropriate, new ideas and then, where appropriate, show support and encouragement of the idea
    - Learn and understand their strengths, so these can be promoted and utilised within the Club and/or District
    - Recommend them to District Chairs and/or encourage them to undertake District roles if they are interested and have the appropriate experience and/or skills

- **Hosting a social entrepreneurship hackathon**

  - **Targets goal 1 - recruitment**



A hackathon is a compressed period of time (i.e. 24-48 hours) where teams or individuals build out a socially responsible business idea into a pitch. Rotary can provide prompts (i.e. the Sustainable Development Goals) or open it up to any programs/ideas.

The level of Rotary support for this can differ (i.e. Rotary can provide written guidance, give them short 15min mentor check-ins, or can give them someone to work with them throughout).

At the end, there is a judging panel and prizes are awarded. This could be individual prizes, or money for the team to start their idea, or an agreement to work with Rotary to make their idea a reality.

This provides two things; promotion of Rotary and the work we do to a younger generation of socially conscious people, and an event that is marketable as its own advertising point.

- **Partner with youth run organisations to deliver major projects**  
**Targets goal 1 - recruitment**

Partnering with youth organisations such as the AYCC (Australian Youth Climate Coalition), Scouts and YMCA around campaigns, projects and events.

This provides a joint marketing opportunity for Rotary to younger members, increasing our visibility in this age category, and increases our impact in new growth areas such as climate and the environment.

- **Running an incubator/accelerator program for social entrepreneur start-ups**  
**Targets goal 1 - recruitment**

Start-ups when they're first getting off the ground often look for incubators or accelerators. Incubators and accelerators provide mentoring, advice, network connections and/or funding to start-ups to help them grow. Rotary could run an incubator/accelerator program for social entrepreneur start-ups.

This provides a marketing opportunity for Rotary to the younger age group.



- **Develop a compelling brand and marketing pitch relevant to younger individuals**

**Targets goal 1 - recruitment**

Refine what the pitch is for this target group, making clear in materials/communications we answer the question “what can you do for me?” from the target group’s perspective rather than what can they do for Rotary. This will enable Rotary to more competitively compete with other charities/causes with similar product categories. Further, the marketing channels used should be appropriate for younger members including: ads on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Meetups and associated social networks should be prioritised. Attending University/Tafe volunteer and related expos should also be considered. Images portraying action shots and a diverse membership should be used.

**What Rotary can offer that other groups/charities may not:**

- Rotary enables social action both on a massive scale and across countries as Rotary is an internationally well-known brand held in high esteem (and is an opportunity to be part of a huge global network). Furthermore, The Rotary Foundation has annually received the highest rating — four stars — from Charity Navigator, an independent evaluator of charities in the U.S. This adds to our reputation and credibility.
- Rotary gives you access to leadership and management (and other professional development) opportunities you won't get anywhere else - all manager positions require experience; this is how you get leadership experience without already having a management role. Rotary also provides numerous formal and informal training professional and personal develop opportunities including mentoring;
- Rotary supports entrepreneurship, through advice, mentoring, funding and the provision of avenues if you want to launch something whether it be a project or a Rotary Club/Satellite Club;
- Rotary provides opportunities to learn, share, collaborate and work on projects with organisations and individuals all over the world. Through Rotary you can tap into a multitude of resources and skill sets.
- Rotary offers extensive opportunities for networking with respect to your projects, Rotary role and/or vocation - locally, nationally and internationally



- Rotary offers the opportunity to travel locally, nationally and globally for the purposes of training, undertaking projects, networking and social avenues.
  - Rotary provides the opportunity to participate in a diverse range of social events and join fellowship groups
- **A leadership program similar to RYLA but more advanced and specifically tailored for Rotarians under 40 / young professionals**

**Targets goals 1& 2 - recruitment and retention**

In addition to the leadership training opportunities already in place by Rotary, the District or several districts together could run a program specifically tailored for young professionals providing an opportunity:

- To develop personal, vocational and rotary related networks with like minded members in their age category
- To identify their strengths and improve their leadership and other personal and professional skills
- To learn about what Rotary does all over the world and opportunities available through Rotary
- To obtain a memorable positive experience away from work and day to day life

The District could also utilise existing programs, such as [Challenge to Lead](#), or increase marketing to younger members for programs such as Rotary leadership institute. The District and/or Clubs could provide sponsored positions (given cost) to enable attendance of Rotary members under a certain age. However these programs need to provide a clear link to Rotary - it's not about Rotarising them, it's about being clear in how to become a Rotary member and not leaving them hanging.

- **Make Rotary membership and participation more affordable by modifying and/or subsidizing costs for those in younger age groups.**

**Targets goals 1& 2 - recruitment and retention**

This could involve a number of different options including:

- Different membership fee structures for younger membership, including:



- Subsidised joining or membership fees
- District subsidised fees or grants for membership fees similar to that recently offered for partners of Rotarians
- Provision of a number of full funded spots covering one or more years of membership.
- Not charging a joining fee for Rotary alumni, students or those under an particular age limit
- Option of paying via a payment plan
- Option of company membership where the employer appoints a member to attend meetings
- Making meals optional at Club meetings and/or providing other means to reduce costs such as meeting attendance via zoom and/or not requiring meeting attendance or reducing meeting attendance requirements
- Establishing District funds/budget to provide younger members (or certain categories of younger members) with subsidised or fully funded places at Rotary conferences and program.

## Other suggestions for both District and/or Clubs

- Improve branding generally and increase target based marketing
  - Clubs need to ensure their branding, websites, social media are up to date and modern. District to continue to provide training and support to assist Clubs in achieving this
  - District to provide resources or funding to support Clubs with respect to marketing and/or for District to have a budget for certain marketing costs (e.g. Facebook ads, ads in newspapers or magazines) which target those aged 40 and under.
  - Marketing material created or used by Clubs and the District to show diversity which includes mixed ages of members including younger members as well as mixed cultures and even abilities (e.g. those with special needs).
  - Clubs to ask whether the people represented in their marketing is reflective of the demographic of the local area? If not, try to improve it so it's more reflective.
- Increase flexibility
  - Clubs to consider adopting more flexible and less bureaucratic or time consuming processes including those in relation to decision making and planning
  - Consider alternative Club member and leadership structures to the current hierarchical structure adopted by most Clubs
  - Clubs/Rotarians to reduce time commitment and availability expectations of members, particularly of those who are still working and/or who have parental or carer responsibilities.
  - Enable members/potential members to serve in areas/for causes that interest them without requiring them to participate in all/other Club activities
- Adopt innovative or alternative Club styles and means to undertake service ventures.
  - Consider using 'Meetups' and other meeting/organisation/collaboration platforms.
  - Consider forming more Satellite Clubs, single issue Clubs, Passport Clubs
- Create stronger links between Rotary Clubs and Youth programs (e.g. RYLA), Rotary program participants and Rotaract Clubs
  - District, Rotary Program and Foundation to organise alumni ventures including reunions, LinkedIn/Facebook groups and mentoring
  - Rotary Clubs to improve their engagement with participants they have sponsored for Rotary programs such as by inviting them to events, keeping in contact,



including in distributions lists, offering mentoring, asking them to contribute to Club ventures that may be of interest to them.

- Clubs are encouraged to maintain a register in accordance with a Privacy Policy of their beneficiaries/youth/Foundation Alumni.
- *We understand the Rotary District Alumni Committee is working on providing tips and guidance to the District and Clubs on connecting and engaging with Rotary Alumni and thereby the Taskforce will not provide an exhaustive list of suggestions here. We encourage the District and Clubs to consider the suggestions by the District Alumni Committee.*
- Provide more guidance/training on Rotary/Club/District procedures:
  - Improved mentoring or commencement of mentoring if not in place
  - Creation of manuals of procedures
  - In particular, provide a roadmap and/or structured guidance for how to get involved with a District committee, a club project, or other Rotary opportunities, to give new members education on how to be involved in Rotary and achieve what they want. This will also minimise the “ring around” problem, and allow Presidents and District to get a wider variety of members/individuals involved in committees rather than the same faces.
- Provide leadership opportunities
  - Continue or start inviting younger members take on District and Club Leadership roles
- Use a membership form and/or questionnaire to assist tailoring a new member’s Rotary experience and opportunities offered to them.
  - Provide a new membership questionnaire and/or membership form to all new members upon joining a club asking questions such as:
    - how many hours per week they want or are able to commit?
    - How do they want to spend their available (e.g. attending meetings, service opportunities/active service, providing administrative support (e.g. Club administration, marketing, treasurer duties etc), Fellowship activities, personal development opportunities, District events etc)?
    - What are their passions/interests?
    - What do they want to learn, skills to build, or get out of Rotary?
    - Why did you join?



- The answers to the membership form or questionnaires will assist those in leadership roles within the Club including the Club President to link the new member with the right Club and/or District committees or opportunities that meet the new member's interests and availability.
- USING ABOVE FORM a district level register of people's interests could be created, allowing an expansion of existing committees and projects to younger members, who may not otherwise have knowledge or access to these opportunities.
- Increase Club membership diversity
  - Clubs to obtain an understanding of the demographic in their locality (e.g. there are resources available by local Councils) and to make steps towards achieving more diverse Clubs which reflect that demographic THEN ensure their branding reflects the diversity - e.g. culturally and age related
- Clubs/Rotarians to improve their approach and/or commence an approach to inviting younger individuals to join Rotary
  - Clubs/Rotarians take the time to 'court' (get to know, connect and engage and invite to events) potential members. Take the time to build a connection and relationship between the person and the Club and its members.
  - Try to avoid your wish for someone to join too obvious especially at the start.
  - Avoid calling potential members in their presence: 'targets'
  - Avoid trying to make prospective members whom you had sponsored for a Rotary program guilty for not joining or engaging with Rotary. For various reasons they may not be ready yet but could be interested at a later point in time, however if left with a sour experience they may never consider/re-consider membership.
  - Avoid automatically assuming that \ just because someone is under 30 that they want to join Rotaract over Rotary. Ensure they know about Rotaract and Rotary and the benefits of each and let them make the decision as to which is more suitable.
  - Considering involving the potential member in Club meetings and activities before inviting them to join (unless they take the lead and request to join)