



Membership Development: Six Retention Ideas

"Keeping the Member in Rotary, Keeping Rotary in the Member"

Action steps:

- INFORM
- INVITE
- INDUCT
- ORIENT
- EDUCATE
- INVOLVE

1. INFORM all non-Rotarian visitors of Rotary International's programs and a club profile outlining the club's service efforts. A club should develop and distribute a club profile. This document could be added as an insert to *This is Rotary* and presented to all visitors. A recent copy of *THE ROTARIAN* or regional Rotary magazine is also a good introduction to Rotary.

2. INVITE a prospective member with a personal visit by the proposer and a member of the club's membership committee. The visit could be made by one Rotarian, but a second member provides additional Rotary knowledge and experience and gives the prospective member another point of contact after being accepted into the club. During the visit, the prospective member should hear a description of:

- Community service efforts and successes
- The international scope of Rotary service and fellowship
- Rotary's emphasis on high standards of character and integrity
- Rotary's broad-based community representation
- Rotary's attendance requirements and the club's dues structure

Rotarians extending the invitation must be well prepared and should consider ahead of time the personal interests and abilities of the prospective member in order to highlight areas of potential personal involvement.

3. INDUCT new members in a dignified and meaningful manner. If possible, a spouse might attend. The induction ceremony should be used as an opportunity to underscore the benefits and responsibilities of being a Rotarian. A new member should be provided with:



- A Rotary lapel pin
- Membership Identification Card
- An Object of Rotary suitable for framing
- The 4-Way Test suitable for framing or the 4-Way Test Desk Plaque

Other recommended materials include:

- A copy of the club bulletin
- The district directory
- The latest District Governor's Newsletter
- The Rotarian or regional Rotary magazine
- A list of local clubs for make-up meetings
- The club badge; perhaps a history of the club itself; a club banner, etc.

During the ceremony, the new member might give a five minute talk about themselves, their business and families. Some clubs sing a song of welcome to the new member; other clubs have a ceremony where the club stands and applauds the new member and then the entire club lines up to shake the new member's hand. The induction ceremony should be special. It should imprint on the new member an enthusiasm for membership.

4. ORIENT the new member properly. Providing an effective orientation for new members through education is vital to their growth as individual Rotarians and will enable them to participate effectively in club activities.

a) The three key elements to an effective orientation include:

- Benefits of membership
- Responsibilities of membership
- Opportunities for service

b) New members should be given a checklist outlining the many opportunities for gaining knowledge about Rotary and becoming involved in club activities. The new member's mentor should deliver the checklist within one week of induction and provide guidance on completing each step.

c) A new member's orientation should also include several opportunities for feedback on a wide range of issues, including the process and results of the orientation program itself. Effective feedback includes a mechanism for reporting comments to the club president, the assistant



governor, and the district governor as appropriate.

d) Consider periodic meetings between new members and the governor's group representative, along with new member forums (facilitated by the RI President's representative) at the District Conference.

e) Consider scheduling the formal orientation programs in several sessions to enhance retention of information.

5. EDUCATE the Rotarian. Most members leave our ranks because they were never really Rotarians in the first place. An argument can be made that 80% of a club's membership know very little about Rotary. Education can come about it two ways:

a) Completing the items listed below within six months will expand a new member's vision about opportunities for Rotary service.

- I. Attend new member orientation meeting(s)
- II. Read two or more of the following booklets (preferably all)
 - *Getting Started in Rotary*
 - *The ABC's of Rotary*
 - *The Rotary Foundation Fact Book*
 - *Historical Review of Rotary*
- III. Display the *Object of Rotary* or *The 4-Way Test* at your place of business
- IV. Attend one or more of the following club functions:
 - Fellowship activity
 - Board meeting
 - Committee meeting
 - Project activity
- V. Complete one or more of the following tasks:
 - Serve as a greeter at a club meeting.
 - Give a classification talk at a club meeting.
 - Participate in a club service project.
 - Make-up a meeting at another club.
- VI. Expand Rotary to others
 - Invite a guest to Rotary
 - Propose a new member
- VII. Experience the internationality of Rotary
 - Host a Youth Exchange student for a meal or other activity.



- Host a Foundation Scholar for a meal or other activity.
 - Host a Group Study Exchange team member for a meal or other activity.
 - Host a Rotarian from another country in your home.
 - Invite a business or professional non-Rotarian to apply for Group Study Exchange.
 - Invite a non-Rotarian to apply for a Foundation scholarship.
- VIII. Attend one or more district meetings (listed in order of priority).
- District conference
 - District assembly
 - Foundation seminar
- IX. Choose a committee on which you would like to serve.

b) The club must make certain it has a continuing Rotary education policy in place. This education process is essential for older members as well as newer ones. Research has shown that a positive program of continuing education can help increase a club's overall retention rate. Such a program would include some of the following components:

- Frequent communication of Rotary news and information
- At least four club programs a year focused on continuing education
- Attendance at multi-district meetings that address continuing education
- At least two informal club assemblies a year
- Personal involvement of Rotarians in club and district projects and activities, particularly those that require hands-on action
- District level seminars on continuing education
- Stimulating and efficiently run weekly meetings that keep members interested in Rotary
- Sharing of ideas and information on Rotary programs, projects, and activities at regular committee and fireside meetings
- Attendance at meetings of other clubs

These ideas are meant solely to educate the Rotarian about Rotary. Experience shows that when one is knowledgeable about the organization, and involved, the chances for retaining a solid member are much greater.

6. INVOLVE the Rotarian in club committees, club fund raisers, board meetings, club meetings, club social activities, etc. There is nothing sadder in Rotary than to find a letter of resignation because a member didn't feel "a part" of the club. Some methods of getting new members involved in the affairs and activities of the club include:



- Developing programs such as STAR (Special Training for Action in Rotary). By creating a friendly and informal atmosphere through small group meetings, programs such as STAR help new members get acquainted with each other and some of the club's more experienced Rotarians.
- Hold an information program for new members.
- Create special badges for new members to wear for one year. Encourage other members to look for the badges and make a special effort to talk with the new members.
- Assign a new member to be a greeter or to introduce a guest speaker.
- As a club service assignment, have the new member serve as a delegate to the District Conference. A new Rotarian learns much about the world of Rotary and the vast projects beyond the borders of his/her own club - by attending the district conference. Some clubs assist the new member by paying part or all of the registration fees and costs of the conference. After the conference, ask the new members to give a report to the club.
- Introduce a "commencement" program, where all club members who join in the same Rotary year work together on a project or meet on a special occasion.
- Ask the new member - especially the younger ones - to find two or three other new members from among his/her peer group. When one "sells" the Rotary idea to one's friends, the member himself/herself becomes stronger and more enthused about Rotary. We therefore address both the need for retention and the challenge of membership growth and age reduction.

In all of this, many clubs find it wise to involve the new member's sponsor. The sponsor keeps close contact with the new Rotarian - perhaps for the first six months or so - until the new member is truly involved in the club.