



Member Tips

Growing Rotary Membership



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Learning About Rotary

By Dennis Dinsmore, PDG District 6330

How many of us have experienced the frustration of recruiting a new member only to see him or her quit within a year? Invariably there are two reasons for this all-too-often occurrence, lack of Rotary involvement and lack of Rotary education.

The good news is that both of these problems can be easily solved by the club. Rotary involvement can be fostered by assigning each new member to an active club member to serve as a mentor. The mentor Rotarian is responsible for helping the new member assimilate into the group and getting his/her feet wet in Rotary activities.

Likewise, Rotary education does not have to be difficult. Ideally every club would conduct a formal orientation program but we all know that does not always happen. Fortunately, the International offers a number of excellent resources to help with the learning process. These resources are excellent learning tools for both new members and experienced Rotarians alike; our thanks to Bryn Styles, RRIMC, Zone 22 for the following.

Check out [Welcome to Rotary](#), a short new video segment, viewable now on the RI Web site. Less than four minutes in length, and offering a broad overview of Rotary and the four Avenues of Service, this video provides an excellent introduction to Rotary club membership for new or prospective members. Find the video by going to www.rotary.org and clicking on Members, New Members, Getting Involved. Use this video during the opening segment of your next prospective member information program.

The new [Membership Video Set](#) (427) includes two DVDs: one for new members and one for prospective members. Each DVD features a compilation of Rotary videos, including [Welcome to Rotary](#), various [Humanity in Motion](#) public service announcements, and segments from RVM: The Rotarian Video Magazine, available through shop.rotary.org for \$10. Purchase at least one set for your club resource library.

The contents of the [New Member Information Kit](#) (426) and the [Prospective Member Information Kit](#) (423) have been updated in 2008. These prepackaged folders contain materials relevant to new and prospective members, and are available through shop.rotary.org. Add your own club and district profiles and informational brochures to give prospective and new members a complete informational resource regarding Rotary membership.

Keeping Alumni in the Rotary Family

By Rob Wylie, PDG District 9710, RRIMC Zone 8 (Australia)

How many alumni of Rotary programs become Rotarians?

If we're talking about Foundation Alumni (those who have been through GSE and Ambassadorial Scholar & Peace Scholar programs), as well as other Rotary programs like YLA and Youth R Exchange, at a guess, I'd say about 5%. Is that good enough?

Every year Rotary sends over two thousand young non-Rotarians on an overseas trip through the Group Study Exchange (GSE) program. The total cost (to the Rotary Foundation, to participating clubs &

D.K. Lee's Membership Challenge for 2008-09

- Ten Percent (10%) Net Increase in Membership per Club;
- Formation of Two (2) New Clubs per District;
- Total Net Membership of 1,300,000 Rotarians at the end of RY 2008-09.

districts, and to hosting Rotarians) would be about 8 to 10 thousand dollars per team member, that's about \$16 million dollars in total. Is that a good investment?

GSE is about promoting world peace and understanding, but to maximize its benefit and cost-effectiveness we MUST keep these young people in the Rotary orbit, so that our investment is recouped in the long term by what they can put back into Rotary and its projects. They are some of our best and brightest – they have all the qualities we look for in a potential Rotarian, they are young, they have gained a strong knowledge and experience of Rotary and what it does at an international level.

Why do less than 10% of them ever join Rotary?

When they return from GSE, their involvement with Rotary can grind to a sudden halt. On average, most returning team members have one or two invitations to present to a Rotary club or larger Rotary group. Some receive no invitations. The obvious message is that Rotary is no longer interested in them.

Some of their Rotary experiences will have been wonderful. Some experiences may not have been. In particular, they may be aware that the average Rotary club caters to a different age group from their own.

It's time for them to get on with life, especially with their career and their family. The demands of Rotary membership, as typically presented to them, will deter them from joining. The club may feel the person is not properly qualified to be a Rotarian. (This is crazy! – the person has gone through a rigorous selection process, it's much harder to get into a GSE team than it is to join a Rotary Club. And they are in the age group we should be seeking.) If the person is asked "would you be interested in joining Rotary?" often it is implied that this would be a good thing to do sometime in the future, maybe in 10 or 20 years time. The common response is "I'd like to one day, but I'm too busy right now", so the matter is forgotten by their sponsor club.

What should happen?

1. An early and proper debriefing by the District, and by the sponsor club.
2. The opportunity to present an account of their Rotary experience to a Rotary meeting, not just at their own club, but at other clubs and Rotary events.

Invite the team member to become part of the Rotary family. Invite them to every meeting and to some of your service projects and social events. (Especially youth oriented projects). Invite other young people along from some of your other Rotary projects, (Other Rotary alumni or family members' friends or employees of Rotarians).

Does it matter if they can only come once a month? Considering the time they have put in on GSE, they are well ahead of most club members for the next couple of years. Why not make the person an Honorary Rotarian for a year, to give them a real ongoing relationship with the club?

Don't forget about them. Have regular functions to which you invite all the younger members of your Rotary family. Keep them involved!

When the person is ready to make the commitment to join Rotary, make it happen as quickly as possible. In 1996 I led a team of four great young Australians on a GSE tour to the Netherlands. It was a wonderful experience for us all. But only one of those has so far become a Rotarian, and that was ten years after she returned from GSE, and in a different state. We need to do better than that in keeping these great potential members in the Rotary family!

Making Up is EASY to Do

By Dennis Dinsmore, PDG District 6330

Neil Sedaka told us that "Breaking Up Is Hard to Do" but Rotary Making Up is a great way to build better Rotarians. Club attendance management has always been a challenge and with the recent downturn in the economy many Rotarians are giving meeting attendance a lower priority. The danger is the "out of sight, out of mind" effect which leads to shrinking membership.

Attendance rules changed slightly last year subsequent to the Council on Legislation tri-annual meeting. The current rules are based on a semiannual basis:

- Attend or make up at least 50% of your club's meetings during any six month period.
- Attend at least 30% of your club's meetings during any six month period, meaning that 30% of the meetings must be attended at the Rotarian's home club and the remaining 20% may be make-ups.
- A member may not miss or fail to make up four consecutive meetings.

To illustrate these rules, let's take a typical club which meets 24 times during a six month period, allowing for holidays, weather, etc. A member must therefore attend or make up at least 12 meetings (the 50% rule) and at least 7 of those meetings must be attended at the home club (the 30% rule).

Are there exceptions to these rules? Yes, there are two exceptions:

- Absence may be approved by the club board.
- If the member's age + years of service in Rotary is 85 or over, attendance minimums are waived.

Again, some examples are in order. Suppose a Rotarian approaches the board with the all too familiar problem of business downturn. This Rotarian states she would like to remain in Rotary but needs some time off to focus on her business. This might be a good time for the board to approve a leave of absence of up to six months in the hope of saving a good member. Ironically, the "Rule of 85" is not often invoked since most Rotarians who fit this rule are often among the most active and most regularly attending members in the club.

There are lots of activities which Rotarians can do to make up for missed home club meetings:

- Attend a club meeting at another club within 14 days of missing the home club meeting.
- Attend a club board or committee meeting.
- Assist with a club service project or fund raising event, note: club social activities are excluded as make up opportunities.
- Attend a district level meeting or seminar such as the District Conference, the District Assembly or a district level committee meeting.
- Attend a Rotary International conference or convention.
- Participate in an E-club meeting for at least 30 minutes.

Remember, the purpose of the attendance rules is to retain members not to exclude them so they must be applied judiciously with an eye toward retention. One frequent example is the "snow bunny", the Rotarian who goes south for the winter. If this Rotarian is regularly making up at another club during his or her absence, there should be no reason to apply the 30% rule. Ultimately, the attendance rules must be interpreted by the club board.

Your Membership Support Team

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