



Member Tips

Growing Rotary Membership



Membership
Newsletter of
Zones 27/28

December, 2008

Organizing a New Club

By Dennis Dinsmore, PDG District 6330

If a Rotary district wants to get the biggest bang for its buck when it comes to membership growth, it needs to focus attention on starting new clubs. Every district in this zone has room for new clubs and each new club brings in at least 20 new members to Rotary.

The latest figures from RI show the US as having 371,749 Rotarians and Sweden as having 29,058 members. Comparing these figures to the total population yields some interesting results. In the US one out of 822 people is a Rotarian, in Sweden it is one out of 318. In other words we could *double* the number of Rotarians in the United States and still not have the market penetration of Sweden! Clearly there is room for growth here.

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.

Like anything worth doing, starting a new club takes some work. Perhaps the hardest task is identifying where a new club could be started. Some questions which should be asked are:

- Is the prospective new club in a town which currently has no Rotary clubs? If so, is the population large enough to support a club? I have a personal rule of thumb for this question, if the town is big enough to have a car dealership, it is big enough for a Rotary club.
- If there are already one or more Rotary clubs in the town, are there reasons why it would be beneficial to start a new club rather than just increase the membership of an existing club? Maybe the meeting time of the existing club is not convenient for at least 20 prospective new members. Perhaps the current club only has meeting capacity for so many people and can no longer grow. Maybe in a large city there are neighborhoods not served by Rotary. All of these factors must be weighed.

New clubs, like new members, must have a sponsor. In the case of new clubs, the sponsor is usually a nearby established club which helps to recruit the members and to train the new club officers. The sponsoring club must agree to monitor the new club for at least one year after chartering, be in good financial standing with RI, have at least 20 members and carry out a well-rounded program of Rotary service. There is some paperwork of course, available at rotary.org, search for 808en_forms.pdf

The new club must meet the following criteria:

- Adopt the Standard Rotary Club Constitution
- Have a minimum of 20 charter members
- Elect officers
- Pay a charter fee
- Hold weekly meetings
- Choose a club name (in line with Rotary standard naming criteria)
- Be approved by the RI Board of Directors

The biggest challenge for both the new club and the sponsoring club comes in the second year when statistically a large percentage of new clubs fail. A five year survey by RI from 2000 through 2005 showed the 5 top regions for new club establishment were as follows:

	New Clubs Chartered
India	903
Latin America	653
North America	490
Western Europe	477
Asia Zones 4B & 6B	372

While the new club growth in India seems amazing, it was noted that by the end of the study period, 24% of those new clubs had folded. North America fared much better with fewer than 2% of the new clubs going under. Around the world, by far the biggest membership loss among new clubs came in the second year. Years three, four and five brought more stability.

The lesson is that when the new club is formed, it needs to immediately begin recruiting further new members. Membership growth in the first two years is critical to club survival and should take precedence over functions which more mature clubs regularly perform.

The next article, written by a PDG from Australia, has some excellent, practical tips for going about the process of organizing a new club.

Chartering New Clubs

By PDG Ian Yarker, Rotary Club of Ashmore, District 9640.

I share a positive formula Heather and I have developed over the past 4 years that has worked for us during the formation of 2 clubs. Hope Island Club now has 47 members after 4 years and still growing. Coomera River Midday now has 23 members after 7 months of stabilizing plus 6 prospective members. Both in the original territory of a 20 year old club with about the same membership it chartered with. None have transferred.

A summary of our formula:

Have an understanding Governor appoint a relevant representative and leave them to the task – which is...

Identify a location with an established focal centre. Retail or manufacturing in larger urban regions. Pure residential areas are a much greater challenge. Identify a “key members group” from key business people. Identify well established long term business people with credibility in that community. Senior Partners in Law Firms, Real Estate, Finance Accounting, Banking, Major Manufacturing, Publishing, Community Service, Local government, Hotels, Golf and Bowls clubs. Spend time with the enthusiastic people establishing a personal mutual understanding of the privilege of establishing another service organization in the community.

Identify the depth of commitment of these key people to service organizations, service ethic, awareness and understanding of Rotary ideals, caring for community, size of community picture – specific, local, national, international. Many busy business people have personal humanitarian aspirations. Often they have tried to do something alone and found it very difficult. They respond to the Rotary organizational platform. They must be “peoples’ people”.

Identify a meeting venue that is central, conducive to private meeting, recognized and willing to materially support the new club with any catering, promotion and storage.

Identify prospective membership. Build the larger more detailed prospective list. Discover who knows them personally from the key members group and decide who will make the personal approach.

Identify a plan of procedure, set the promotion period and establish the direct approach. Important to include invitation to the Partner especially to small business and semi retired people. Research potential meeting time, breakfast, midday, cocktail, evening. Consider complimenting existing nearby clubs. Research the type and cost of meeting, full meal, light meal, finger food, meal available before and during shorter meetings such as lunch. Initial meetings catered with finger food. Be prepared to change to suit

the majority of prospects. Agree on frequency of initial interest meetings – weekly not essential until regular attendance by at least 12 prospective members.

Announce public launch. Announce in press, leaflets, window sheets, radio. Make the direct and personal approaches to selected people by the selected people. Build perception. Get everyone aware at the same time.

Conduct meeting with pride and precision incorporating fun. Run exactly to time. Chair with business purpose. Agenda opens with everyone making a personal self introduction led by selected person who will set the style of information required. Agenda includes recognized local guest speaker who is clear, relevant and brief. Agenda includes Governors Representative or alternative who must be relevant, with broad flexible Rotary overview, be inspiring in the opinion of the target audience and collect contact details – name, phone, email – business cards. Follow up immediately in writing with brief email. Circulate minutes of meeting including names and contact. Introduce basic Rotary aims and objectives and achievements.

Follow up immediately before the next meeting. Personal phone call inviting back to next meeting Offer to transport to meeting. Seek conversation and guidance from prospective members. Enthusiastic prospective members know likeminded friends and business associates.

Adapt subsequent agenda to suit perceived interests of the key prospective members speakers based on local issues. Have 4-Way Test announced. Expand general organizational structure of Rotary.

Focus on building relationships between members. I like these people. What can we do together?

Announce intention to run meetings weekly – come when you can. Explain that Rotary clubs run weekly meeting and we would like to think the meetings are sufficiently interesting for you to want to attend together with your friends.

Announce need to establish an elected President and Board of Directors and that nominations are sought and election date will be at the next meeting. Ensure sufficient nominations are confirmed.

Announce anticipated Charter date to raise expectation and generate positive planning and purpose. Work with Rotary International staff in all normal ways and documents. Keep District Governor advised and attend especially at election meeting.

The real object of Rotary is to bring people together who may not normally meet, in a friendly atmosphere, to do things for others that they cannot do alone.

Small Club Recognition

News from RI

To provide an incentive for membership development, the RI Board of Directors established the Recognition of Smaller Club Membership Growth program, which acknowledges the unique challenges these clubs face and recognizes their achievements. The Board encourages the DG to work with these clubs and support their efforts to gain new members.

A knowledgeable, well-established district membership committee can work with specific clubs on strategies to strengthen and improve their efforts toward growth.

Recognition of Smaller Club Membership Growth certificates will be awarded to clubs in the following three categories that meet their membership goal during the 1 July-15 May time frame:

Club category	Membership Goal
Fewer than 10 members	At least 10 members
10-14 members	At least 15 members
15-19 members	At least 20 members

The District Governor submits the names of all qualifying clubs to RI between 16 May and 30 June. Each recognized club will receive a certificate signed by the RI president.

Public Relations Resources for Clubs

From The Membership Minute, Vol. 5, Issue 3, Sept. 2008

Recent focus groups conducted by RI (of non-Rotarians) indicate that many people are not aware of what Rotary is or what Rotary clubs do. Public awareness and your club's public image have a direct effect on membership growth, so it's important that the membership and public relations committees work together to coordinate their activities and goals. When your club has a prominent, public presence in your community, inviting prospective members to become Rotarians becomes a much easier task to accomplish. RI provides a variety of materials to assist your club in developing and implementing a public relations strategy:

- [Effective Public Relations: A Guide for Rotary Clubs](#) (257) is must-read material for club membership committees. This how-to guide offers basic tools and tips for promoting your club's activities to the public.
- [Humanity in Motion public relations tools](#) on DVD and CD-ROM are sent annually to every club. Rotarians should use these to try to obtain free or low-cost placements from their local media.
- Subscribe to the free [Rotary PR Tips](#) e-newsletter.
- [Download PR writing templates, fact sheets, and tips for working with the media.](#)

If your club has consulted these materials but would like additional training to learn more about public relations strategies, consider these resources:

- The [RI Public Image Resource Group](#) member in your region
- Your [regional RI membership coordinator](#)
- Your district public relations committee
- PR and media professionals in your community (invite them to serve as trainers or speakers at club meetings or special events.)

PR professionals can help your club learn how to negotiate for free advertising and media coverage. But sometimes large-scale public relations campaigns come with a price. If your club has a proactive, creative idea for a public relations campaign, contact your district governor. [PR grants](#) are awarded at the district level on a competitive basis (pending RI Board approval for 2009-10). With a fast-approaching deadline of 1 October [*ed. now past*], think about collecting ideas from club members for next year's deadline.

Your Membership Support Team

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