

“IDEA EDITION”

Great Rotary Clubs can't help but grow. They attract and retain members because they're IRRESISTIBLE! Greatness stays alive only when fed new ideas on a regular basis.

Below is a “**LUCKY SEVEN**” list, chock full of ideas to help your club remain IRRESISTIBLE to current and prospective members:

- 1 must-have**
- 2 effective ways to bring in several guests and prospective members**
- 3 ways to evaluate your club's appeal to prospective members**
- 4 talents make better teams**
- 5 ways to spice up your meeting**
- 6 things to do when you're ready for a Turnaround --- or any time.**
- 7 ways to create a club culture that encourages and sustains growth, satisfaction and retention . . . without arm-twisting!**

1 must-have: A Club Brochure or Flyer.

Even if you have a fine website, it's important to have something informational to hand to guests. At the very least, have one page with basic facts and “Highlights of Our Accomplishments”.

2 effective ways to bring in several guests / prospective members at once:

Hold a Meeting to Honor a Certain Business, Profession, or Sector

- Select a group such as Building Trades, Downtown Businesses, Manufacturers, Health Service & Medical Industry, Finance Professionals, Agriculture, etc.
- Set up a special meeting, with either:

- A VIP speaker, or
- Time for each guest to say a little bit about their own business or profession. This becomes your program, with time allotted based on attendance.

Give a Community Service Award or a Vocational Service Award

. . . to a non-Rotarian who has demonstrated exemplary service through volunteer work or through his or her business or profession.

- This is a great reason to invite guests.
- Send out a news release.
- If the honoree is a great speaker, let them be the program. If not, have a related program topic.
- Invite the honoree's family and co-workers or co-volunteers.

Don't mention Rotary recruitment at these meetings, but do hand out club brochures and Rotary Information, collect cards, and invite members to sponsor those whom they feel would be good Rotarians.

3 Ways to elevate your club's appeal to prospective members

1. Ask a few Rotary buddies from other clubs, or experienced district leaders, to visit your meeting for an honest, no-guilt evaluation of your strengths and needs for improvement.
2. If members are not inviting prospective members to join, ask them why not . . . and what changes might make them more likely to invite? (An anonymous paper poll might get more helpful answers.)
3. Audit every aspect of your club's "first impression". Do you have a friendly and easy-to-approach entrance? Is the room pleasant and inviting? See # 7 for further comments on Greeters.

4 Talents that make better New Member teams

Use a Multi-Talented Team Approach

Different types of members excel at different parts of the membership recruitment and retention process:

1. Inviters are good at bringing prospective members to meetings (generally, those who are “enthusiastic” and communicative)
2. Managers like the follow-up and paperwork part of the process (detail-oriented, well-organized)
3. Orienters are good at Rotary Education and orientation (experienced Rotarians; natural trainers or educators)
4. Mentors thrive on ensuring integration and involvement in the club (caring, knowledgeable about club culture and operations)

Let people select themselves; don't assign them! You might combine two talents or types, depending on your club size and culture. Consider playing a game to “divide” your types. Call me for proven ideas on how to do this.

Advantages:

- Enthusiastic “inviters” do their thing without taking on the responsibility of the entire process
- You use the skills and talents of those who aren't comfortable with initial invitations but are skilled at other aspects of the process;
- Teamwork develops around ensuring the success of each new member;
- Almost any team can commit to inviting, sponsoring and mentoring one new member within the next two months. Result:: up to 25% to 33% growth with no arm-twisting!

5 Ways to spice up your meeting

1 Get info to members creatively. Most announcements are dull . . . have you noticed that people often don't listen to them?! Get info out in multiple ways such as signs at meetings, Power Point displays, and creative announcing.

2 Hold a joke contest. Once in a while . . . try a theme such as “light bulbs”, “love” or “money”. Give a prize.

3 Play lively music during meeting arrival time. Oldies rock is a sure-fire please-all, but anything with a good beat works!

4 Variety is the ultimate spice. Change it up: your room set-up, décor, entry or order of business. Surprise members with new features of the meeting. Too much predictability is a snore!

5 Put the meeting to work. Now and then, use a weekly meeting for “committee jams”, saving time for Rotarians by holding committee or task force meetings at their tables during the usual program time. (Also helps ensure that everyone’s on a committee or project.)

6 things to do when you’re ready for a Turnaround – or any time.

If membership is down and retention is too, you may be in a slump. It happens all the time, and clubs create Turnarounds all the time. The sooner you begin, the easier it will be and the faster your results! But even an advanced slump can be shortened, starting now.

1. Hold a session in which members envision the future (What do we want our club look like in 1 year? 3 years? 5?) Identify your present strengths and challenges.
2. Don’t start with the idea that something is “wrong” . . . instead, create the vision of a possible future that members can look ahead to. Think of change as a process of updating, not correction.
3. After summarizing the results, hold a strategic planning session, or a goal-setting workshop. Utilize a skilled facilitator from outside the club if possible, so that everyone can participate equally.
4. Develop flexible approaches that accommodate the varying motivations, skill sets and individuality of your members. Think in terms of small task forces instead of ponderous committees. Authoritarian, chain-of-command approaches do not work in today’s volunteer organizations.
5. Ask your District Governor, Assistant Governor or District Committee leadership, or me, to suggest experienced “Rotary expert consultants” who have helped their clubs or others turn around. There are several such people in our district, and they would be delighted to assist you on a confidential basis.
6. Choose actions to take immediately and actions or projects to begin putting in motion, and create a structure for following up on those choices.

Membership Development Resources

for the Rotary Clubs of District 5100

1. Please ask me about the “Club in a Club” process, or visit www.clubinaclub.org. Some clubs used it to gain an immediate increase of 12%+.
2. The district offers seminars, “Round Tables” or speakers or custom workshops for your club, board, or membership committee
3. Consult personally with caring Rotary experts! Ask your Assistant Governor, District Committee Chairs, District Governor or District Membership Chair for confidential referrals.

Sample topics for coaching and consulting*

- The art of leading a great meeting (it’s learnable; almost no one is born with it!)
- Effectiveness as a board member
- Retention strategies
- Getting to 100% participation (Motivating Volunteers)
- Turn-around strategies

7 ways to be an IRRESISTIBLE Rotary Club

One that encourages and sustains growth, satisfaction and retention:

1. Have great, un-missable meetings. These require:

- Time for social conversation at every meeting
- A welcoming environment including a comfortable room, good food, good lighting, Rotary banners and signs.
- Three greeters; yes, THREE! If one or two must introduce someone or help a guest (or gets distracted), everyone is still greeted.
- That you never, never, never, never have a dull speaker. Given the choice between no program and a poor one, go for the former. As an alternative, schedule three to five craft talks, extra fining, or declare a “Committee Jam” (see #5 above)

2. Pursue service projects that touch members' hearts. Size matters less than the "heart" factor.
3. Encourage the creation and practice of an "elevator speech" about your Rotary Club, so that members are comfortable describing your club and our organization to interested prospective members. (But don't force those who aren't comfortable with it to participate.)
4. Hold Induction Ceremonies that are celebratory, honoring, and welcoming. Schedule time for them; don't rush!
5. Keep your processes for identifying, approving, publishing and inviting new members up to date. Have an established, written procedure for handling objections.
6. Do not demand that each member learn every detail of the proposing and sponsoring process; this doesn't work. Instead, empower a strong team to see that the membership steps are taken. ("4 Talents", above)
7. From time to time, conduct a member satisfaction poll, or frequent mini-polls that can be answered quickly and anonymously.

Other

See membership progress stats and attendance figures monthly on the District Website, www.rotary5100.org. And please be sure to report yours!

For more ideas, go to www.rotary.org, hit the "Membership" tab, then "Best Practices." You'll be amazed.

And please send me your ideas and comments for inclusion in future issues!

geoffreyjames@comcast.net