
Membership Development and Retention Manual



Rotary International

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Introduction

How would you run your Rotary club if it were a business? Would you refuse to help it grow? Would you allow staff members to merely come to meetings but not participate in the ongoing work of the company? Would you leave positions vacant?

Probably not. More likely, you would work tirelessly to promote growth — publicizing your “product” throughout the community, recruiting talented new people to infuse your “business” with fresh ideas, and keeping current “employees” satisfied and productive.

According to recent studies, however, many Rotary club leaders are not using their renowned business sense when it comes to membership growth and retention. The 1990’s have seen the emergence of an alarming trend of membership loss in *existing* Rotary clubs. The overall Rotary membership growth of recent years can be attributed primarily to the creation of new clubs rather than the growth of existing clubs. All of which indicates that existing clubs are failing both to attract new members and to keep the ones they have.

Given these discouraging statistics, it is time for club leaders to make membership growth a top priority. Although clubs need to grow simply to compensate for the natural attrition that occurs each year, growth is also essential to the vitality of the club. New members bring new ideas for service projects, along with the enthusiasm, energy, and expertise to carry them out. And by promoting growth, you are giving more people the unique opportunity to serve their community while enjoying the warmth of Rotary fellowship.

Your effort to put or keep membership on an upward track should begin with a serious assessment of your club. Consider how you can make it a more “marketable product” — one that is more attractive to a larger group of potential members. And once you have made improvements, how can you target your audience and sell your product?

Assessing Your Club

There are a number of ways to make your club more attractive to a greater number of people without alienating current members. The following guidelines can help you analyze your current situation and determine what changes to make.

- Evaluate your current logistics. Are your meeting time and location convenient for most business and professional people in the community? Would more people be interested in a less expensive meeting, such as a breakfast meeting or one without a meal? Is the size of your meeting room prohibiting growth?
- Draw up a demographic profile of your club and consider the following questions. Are you recruiting enough younger members? Currently, 60 percent of Rotarians are 50 years of age and older, and only 12 percent are under 40. If your club has agreed to invite women to join, are you actively seeking them out? Only six percent of Rotarians are women, leaving an enormous untapped pool of potentially valuable members.
- Compile a classification survey that lists the business and professional activities in your community. (See pages 15-16 for a sample survey.) Use the survey to complete a new classification roster to identify classifications that remain unfilled.
- Use the information on pages 5-6 to determine if you are making full use of all types of membership. Remember that when a member automatically becomes senior active, his or her classification will be open. Also, make full use of all allowable additional actives. And don't forget about past service; a decision by the 1995 Council on Legislation has opened this membership category to retired persons who were *not* previously Rotarians.
- Chart your club's membership loss and gain over the past five years. How many members left the club for reasons other than death, relocation, or a serious health problem? Is your club losing several members every year? Why?
- Assess your club's programs and activities to determine what you have to offer prospective members. Interesting programs? An opportunity to work on meaningful service projects in the community? A chance to meet people from all parts of the world? True club fellowship in which everyone is made to feel welcome?
- Examine your club's efforts to actively promote membership growth. Are you publicizing open classifications and encouraging members to propose candidates to fill them?
- Consider your club's overall attitude toward growth. Do a majority of members think your club is already "just the right size"? This negative attitude toward growth has contributed to the fact that almost a fourth of all clubs worldwide have fewer than 25 members.
- Seek out new membership development ideas for your Rotary Club on the Rotary International Web page (<http://www.rotary.org/programs/club/memdev>).

- Evaluate the general image of your club in the community. Is it perceived as a dynamic group committed to effectively serving the community or as a business organization that meets for lunch?
- Appraise the competition. Many communities have several organizations that compete for the same members. Examine the opportunities your club offers — for community service or international experiences — that other groups might not provide. But also pinpoint those areas in which other clubs may excel — greater fellowship, perhaps, or a more convenient meeting time or place.

Once you've completed this assessment, it's time to take action. There are two ways to ensure a healthy membership level for your club — retaining current members and attracting new ones. These actions are equally important and need the full input of all club members.

Types of Rotary Membership

Active Member

A member of a club who has been elected to membership under a classification of business or profession and who has all the obligations, responsibilities, and privileges of membership as provided in the Constitution and Bylaws of RI.

Additional Active Member

There are three types of additional active members:

- Members who are actively engaged in the same classification as that of their proposer;
- Former active members of any Rotary club;
- Members who belonged to a Rotaract club for at least four years and terminated their Rotaract membership due to reaching the age limit or relocating outside the territorial limits of the Rotaract club.

A club may have one additional active with the same classification in each of the three categories. The active member holding the classification must be the proposer of the first type of additional active and consent to the other two types representing his or her classification.

Senior Active Member

Active members automatically become senior active when they meet one of the following requirements:

- They have been active members of one or more Rotary clubs for at least 15 years.
- They are at least 60 years of age with ten or more years of active membership.
- They are at least 65 with five or more years of active membership.
- They become or have been an officer of Rotary International.

Senior active members do not hold a classification and therefore cannot propose an additional active member.

Past Service Member

A retired person who was an active member in a Rotary club or who held a qualifying position before retirement even if he or she was not a Rotarian is eligible for past service membership. Past service members automatically become senior active when they meet any of the criteria listed on page 5.

Honorary Member

A person who distinguishes him or herself in the furtherance of Rotary ideals may be elected to honorary membership of a club. The honorary member is exempt from paying fees and dues and cannot vote or hold office. Honorary membership terminates each year on 30 June but may, by resolution, be continued from year to year.

Retaining Members

Worldwide, Rotary loses an estimated 10 percent of its members each year. Some of this loss is due to natural attrition — caused, for example, by death, business transfers or other type of relocation, or health problems. But most Rotarians leave without giving a reason, which probably means that they weren't fully realizing all that Rotary has to offer. If your club is steadily losing members, now is the time to take some concrete steps to reverse that trend.

Begin at the Beginning

The time to try to keep a member is not when he or she already has “one foot out the door.” It's probably too late by then. Instead, start your retention efforts the minute that a member is invited to join. The section on “Providing an Orientation to Rotary” on pages 19-21 outlines many ways to welcome new members into your club and help them to feel that they are an integral part of Rotary.

Monitor Your Dropout Rate

Why are members leaving your club? Research has shown that many younger members drop out because they feel an incompatibility and lack of fellowship due to age differences. To counteract this problem, consider simultaneously recruiting several new Rotarians in the same age group. If the new members immediately feel comfortable with each other, they will give themselves more time to develop solid relationships with the club's older members.

Many Rotarians cite time pressure as the major reason for dropping out, claiming that they cannot fulfill the strict weekly attendance requirements. For some members, this claim may be entirely valid. But for others, especially those who feel ignored, uninformed, and isolated, time constraints may become magnified and give them a justifiable reason for leaving a situation in which they are not happy. Make sure to conduct exit interviews with members who leave to find out what can be changed, and remember, whenever possible, most people choose to spend their time on the activities they find most rewarding. It's up to you to help make Rotary a more worthwhile experience for more of your members.

Stress to members that the 60 percent attendance requirement promotes fellowship because it ensures that they will see each other on a regular basis. And by encouraging makeups, Rotary promotes a farther reaching fellowship — one that can stretch around the globe.

Disperse Responsibility Among Your Members

Studies have shown that a large percentage of Rotarians who maintain their membership are current or past club officers. This indicates that involving

members in the operation of the club is a successful retention tool — and one that should be used as soon as a member is inducted. Appoint new members to committees and consider them for club leadership positions.

But in your rush to integrate new members, don't forget about others who haven't had a chance to serve. They may need more encouragement. Give special attention to members who have been Rotarians for less than three years; studies show this group makes up only 22 percent of Rotary as opposed to the 40 percent of Rotarians who have been members for more than 10 years.

Make Fellowship a Reality for Everyone

You may feel that fellowship is strong in your club, but does everyone else? To promote this key element of Rotary, try rotating the seating assignments to break up exclusive groups. Also, have one or two greeters stand at the door welcoming everyone to the meeting. Rotate this position so that everyone has a chance to “meet and greet.”

Make Sure All Members Are Well Informed

Members will feel more a part of the whole Rotary movement if they are constantly kept abreast of changes and events. Use your weekly meetings and club bulletins to share information from your district governor or the RI Secretariat. Make sure everyone knows about such RI programs as Youth Exchange, Ambassadorial Scholars, World Community Service and others. Involvement with one of these programs might be the catalyst that sparks a lifelong commitment to Rotary. Encourage all members to attend the district conference and the RI international convention as a way of meeting many Rotarians and learning more about Rotary's activities worldwide.

Keep Track of Rotarians on the Move

If a member of your club relocates to another community, make sure he or she is not lost to Rotary. Give the member a leave of absence for up to 12 months to make up at clubs in the new community. Your club secretary can send the “Notification of a Rotarian Moving to Your Locality” slip (available in the *Club Secretary's Manual*) to inform these clubs that a potentially valuable member is moving into their territory. In the same way, follow up on any notices you get from other clubs about Rotarians moving into your club's territory.

Invigorate Your Programs and Activities

If your club offers lively programs on topics of interest to many members, more members will make an effort to attend every week. Solicit ideas from members for topics and speakers. Similarly, evaluate your service projects in terms of interest. Perhaps it's time to replace or augment some traditional projects with others that appeal more to newer — and younger — members. Appoint some recent recruits to explore community needs and propose new project ideas.

Recruiting New Members

No matter how well your club is doing at membership retention, you will lose some members every year. You will need to replace these members if your club is just to remain the same size. A key question, however, is *should* your club simply remain the same size? In too many cases, there is a faction of Rotarians who contend their club is just the right size as it is, that more members would only diffuse the fellowship. Fortunately for these exclusionists, the Rotarians that invited them to join were the kind of welcoming group that your club should strive to be. New members do more than swell your membership ranks. They enable your club to take on more service projects, providing more hands to accomplish more tasks. And they infuse your club with new ideas and energy essential to any vital organization.

Make Growth a Priority for All Members

Everyone in your club should be actively seeking new members. In fact, according to an RI Board decision, proposing new members is the *responsibility of all Rotarians* — a responsibility that an estimated 70 percent of Rotarians are failing to assume. The following are a few ways to inspire your more reluctant members:

- Hold a club forum on membership development to discuss ways to seek out potential members. Explain your club's procedures for proposing new members. Distribute copies of "How to Propose a New Member" (254-EN), which is available from the RI Secretariat. Establish a method for educating prospective members about Rotary's requirements for attendance, dues, and service commitments.
- Advertise open classifications and encourage all members to seek out prospects in these fields. Some clubs list two or three open classifications in each club bulletin or announce them at the weekly meeting. One club puts a tent card on each table to publicize a different open classification each week. Members are asked to fill in the name of a potential member who fits that classification.
- Introduce the Five for One Plan, which involves dividing your membership into groups of five, with each group being responsible for bringing in one new member.
- Establish a policy about inviting prospective members to meetings and encourage all members to bring guests. Some clubs hold monthly guest days. Others invite prospective members to enjoy a free meal or to attend a club social event. Whatever procedure you adopt, make sure that all members give guests the kind of warm welcome that will make them want to become part of your club.

- Surprise the members at a meeting by passing out paper and asking them to write on it the name, profession, and telephone number of a likely prospect.
- Give recognition for proposing new members. Some clubs display a “family tree,” a line chart illustrating the relationships between members. Such a chart clearly indicates which members have shared Rotary by sponsoring new members and which have not yet fulfilled this obligation. Other clubs put the spotlight on those who have never sponsored a new member. For example, one club has a rubber chicken that a member must wear at each meeting until he or she proposes a new member.
- Encourage all members to talk about Rotary with friends, family, and colleagues.
- More Membership Development ideas appear in the “Membership Development Corner” on the Rotary International Web page (<http://www.rotary.org>) and are available in hard copy upon request.

Fill All Classifications in All Membership Categories

Begin by compiling a classification survey, using local telephone and business directories to determine if you have included all possible business and professional activities in your community. (See pages 15-16 for a sample classification survey.) Using your new survey, draw up a roster of your club’s filled and unfilled classifications.

Next, examine your current membership. How many members who are listed as “active” are actually senior active or past service members? One club opened up 11 new classifications just by reclassifying these members. Then, consider your additional actives. Do you have openings for more? Consult page 5 for information about the three types of additional active memberships. Finally, consider past service, a membership type that the 1995 Council on Legislation opened up to retired people who were not previously Rotarians but who held a qualifying position prior to retirement.

Make sure that all members have access to an updated list of open classifications and encourage them to identify likely prospects in each.

Improve Your Club’s Image in the Community

If prospective members view your club as a prestigious organization that is highly regarded throughout the community, they will consider it an honor to be invited to join. One way to project such an image is by carrying out service projects that make a vital contribution to your community *and* ensuring that these efforts receive adequate media coverage.

Establish good working relationships with your local media and keep them informed about all your projects, especially those in which the general public can participate. Pass along news about any Youth Exchange student or Group Study Exchange team you are sponsoring or hosting. If you sponsor a Rotaract or Interact club, make sure the media knows about its activities as well.

Some clubs put together a publication for prospective members. One such brochure produced by the Rotary Club of Toronto, Canada, lists the organizations the club supports, gives a sampling of recent luncheon speakers, a list of the companies that members work for, and short profiles of prominent members.

Sell Your Product

Rotarians have found that the best way to “sell” Rotary is through face-to-face contact, extending a personal invitation to a potential member to attend a club meeting. The following “script” developed by District 7470 (New Jersey, U.S.A.) has proven effective when calling on prospects with whom you are not acquainted.

“Hello, my name is _____, and I’m from the Rotary Club of _____. Periodically, our club invites people from the business and professional community to be our guest for (breakfast/lunch/dinner). This gives people a chance to see who belongs to our club and to find out what we do in the community and throughout the world. At the same time, it gives our members an opportunity to meet people like you and learn about your professional activity. Would you accept an invitation to (breakfast/lunch/dinner) with the Rotary Club of _____?”

In talking to people who are unfamiliar with Rotary, briefly explain its function as a service club and mention some of your club’s recent contributions to the community. Stress that your membership represents a wide scope of business and professional activity in the community, with a mix of ages as well. Also highlight the international service aspect of Rotary and its commitment to upholding high ethical standards in business and the professions.

RI offers several “sales tools” designed to promote Rotary to prospective members and the general public. When prospects are visiting your club meeting, consider showing “Take a Look at Rotary” (867-EN), a six-minute video that provides an upbeat and informative introduction to Rotary club membership. The brochure “This Is Rotary” (001-EN) is an ideal handout for all potential Rotarians.

Contact Former Members

Find out why they dropped out. Perhaps some of them have more time to give to Rotary now and would like to rejoin. At the very least, you can get some valuable feedback about your club’s strengths and weaknesses.

Consider Organizing a New Rotary Club

If you find that many prospective members cannot meet at your club’s scheduled time, you might talk to them about forming a new club. In recent years, charter members of new Rotary clubs have been a vital part of Rotary’s membership growth. For information about organizing a new club, see the *Extension Manual* (808-EN).

Membership Development and Extension Award

Membership development and extension are the lifeblood of Rotary. The continued health of our clubs and international association depends on our ability to bring new, qualified volunteers into our ranks. The growth of our movement depends on our continued efforts to foster the creation of new Rotary clubs and extend our mantle of service.

While the responsibility for Rotary extension falls to the district governor, the ongoing need to propose qualified, new members is a responsibility shared by each of us. It is an obligation borne from the privilege of membership.

Nothing should be more rewarding than sharing Rotary with another. The RI Membership Development and Extension Award program includes incentives for membership growth in existing clubs, retention of current club members, and the establishment of new clubs. Districts which meet or exceed their membership goal will also receive recognition.

Goals

At the International Assembly each year, district governors-nominee will be asked to work with their incoming club presidents to set membership goals for the next Rotary year. Governors-nominee will schedule time during their Presidents-elect Training Seminar to discuss the importance of membership growth with their incoming club presidents and ask each of them to set a membership goal (net percentage increase) for their club. Each governor-nominee will announce the collective district membership goal (net percentage increase in all clubs, plus the number of new clubs) at the district assembly.

Time Frame

The time frame for the annual RI Membership Development and Extension Award program will be 1 July — 15 May.

- The governors-nominee will report their districts' goals to RI by 1 July.
- Each district's starting membership figures will be based on their clubs' July semiannual report forms received at RI by 30 September each year (in accordance with Board Decision 160, November 1996).

Recognition

After 15 May, each district governor will report the following information to RI:

- the club in the district with the highest growth rate (percentage)
- the club in the district that brought in the most new members
- the club in the district with the highest retention rate (percentage)
- those clubs that sponsored a new club

Each of these clubs will receive a recognition certificate signed by the RI President. In addition, governors of districts that meet or exceed their membership goals by 15 May will receive a special district membership award from the RI President. Districts which meet or exceed their goals will also be reported in *THE ROTARIAN*.

Promotion

RI will promote this award throughout the year in all RI publications, including the *Rotary World* newspaper, *THE ROTARIAN* magazine, the *Rotary News Basket*, and the Rotary Web site. District governors will promote this award through their monthly letters and official club visits.

Governors-nominee will be given more information regarding this award program at the International Assembly.

The Classification Principle

The classification principle developed by Rotary's founding members stipulates that Rotary clubs should have only one representative of each business or profession within the community. Although this concept was expanded somewhat to include "additional active" and "senior active" members, the policy of a balanced membership remains a basic tenet of Rotary. It ensures that Rotary membership is inclusive, encompassing all services to society. It also enables a Rotary club to be a true microcosm of the community's business and professional life, fostering a fellowship based on diversity of interest brought together to attain a common goal of service.

Each classification describes the principal business or professional activity of the member or that of his or her firm or organization. A classification is *loaned* to the member, who may hold it as long as he or she upholds the high ethical standards of Rotary.

Frequently Asked Questions About Classifications

Q. Can a member's title or executive position be used to describe that person's classification?

A. No. A classification must describe the principal and recognized activity of the member or of the institution or firm with which he or she is connected. For example, a computer analyst who is the vice president of a bank could hold the classification of data processing or banking — not vice president.

Q. There is a retired airline pilot in our community who has never been a Rotarian but who would have lots of time for Rotary. What classification can we loan to him?

A. There is no basis for loaning a classification to a retired person who is no longer "active" in a business or profession. However, thanks to a decision by the 1995 Council on Legislation, you could invite this man to become a "past service" member of your club because he would have been eligible to hold the aviation classification prior to retirement. A past service member does not have a classification.

Q. We have some members whose companies have diversified and changed their main lines of business. How can their classifications be changed?

A. The "Standard Rotary Club Constitution" provides that the club board of directors may correct or adjust the classification of any member, if circumstances warrant such an action. The members should be notified and be allowed a hearing in the matter if they wish.

Q. A member has proposed the head of his department as an additional active member. Should the two classifications be the same?

A. Yes.

Q. We have heard “senior active” and “past service” referred to as classifications. Is this correct?

A. No. “Senior active” and “past service” are types of membership — not classifications.

Q. Should our roster of filled and unfilled classifications include specialties in medicine, dentistry, and law?

A. Yes, if the practices of these professions are recognized as specialized in your community. The same could apply to other professions that have specialties.

Sample Classification Survey

The business and professional activities listed below are frequently represented within some clubs. The local telephone directory usually lists businesses in the community and may provide an outline for a classification survey in your community. Rotary has no standard list of classifications because terminology for businesses varies considerably around the world.

Accounting	Computers Retailing
Advertising	Concrete Construction
Agricultural Consulting	Confectionery Retailing
Agricultural Implements Retailing	Cotton Goods Manufacturing
Air Conditioning Repairing	Cotton Marketing
Airports	Cotton Growing
Ammunition Manufacturing	Criminal Law
Architecture	Dairy Farming
Auctioning Service	Dairy Products Retailing
Auto Insurance	Data Processing
Automobile Retailing	Decorating Materials Retailing
Baking Retailing	Dentistry
Banking	Department Stores
Bookselling	Dry Cleaning
Bottle Gas Distributing	Dry Goods Retailing
Brick Manufacturing	Electric Equipment and Supplies
Building Construction	Retailing
Building Materials Retailing	Electric Service
Bus Transportation	Express and Transfer Service
Carbonated Beverage Bottling	Farming
Cardiology	Feed and Grain Retailing
Carpentry	Fire Protection
Cattle Raising	Fish Products Packing
Chambers of Commerce	Flowers Retailing
Children’s Homes	Frozen Food Lockers Renting
Cigar and Tobacco Retailing	Fruit Growing
Civil Engineering	Fruit Packing
Clothing Retailing	Fruit and Vegetable Buying
Coal Retailing	Fuel Oil Distributing
Colleges	Funeral Homes
Commercial Law	Furniture Retailing
Commercial Schools	Garages

Gas Heating
Grain Elevator Storage
Groceries Retailing
Hairdressing
Hardware Retailing
Hospitals
Hotels
Internal Medicine
Iron and Steel Manufacturing
Jewelry Retailing
Laundries
Law Enforcement
Libraries
Life Insurance
Linen Manufacturing
Livestock Feeding
Local Government
Lumber Yards
Machinery Distributing
Machine Shop Service
Magazine Publishing
Masonry Construction
Meat Retailing
Men's Clothing Retailing
Movie Theaters
Moving Service
Municipal Water Service
Musical Instruments Retailing
Newspaper Publishing
Office Equipment Retailing
Optical Goods Retailing
Optometry
Painting and Decorating
Paper Industry
Pediatrics
Petroleum Refining
Pharmaceuticals Retailing
Photography
Physical Therapy
Plumbing Service
Postal Service
Poultry Retailing
Printing
Psychiatry
Public Relations
Radio Broadcasting
Radio Repair Service
Railroad Transportation
Real Estate Agency
Refrigerators and Freezers
Religion
Resorts
Restaurants
Sand and Gravel Distributing
Savings and Loan Associations
Sheet Metal Working
Shoe Retailing
Sports Equipment Retailing
Stationery Retailing
Surgery
Taxi Service
Telegraph and Cable Service
Telephone Service
Television Broadcasting
Television Repair Service
Textile Fiber Growing
Theaters
Title Insurance
Tort Law
Universities
Welding Service
Window Glass Retailing

Inducting New Members

The day that a man or woman becomes a Rotarian can be the beginning of many years devoted to service and fellowship. Such an event warrants a special commemoration — one that will show new members just how important they are to your club. When planning an induction ceremony, invite the new member's spouse to attend and make sure the sponsoring Rotarian is present as well.

The following script, adapted from the ceremony used by the Rotary Club of Ulverstone, Tasmania, Australia, represents a typical Rotary induction ceremony. It could be modified, shortened, or expanded to meet the needs of your club.

Sample Rotary Club Induction Ceremony

Club President: “ _____, it is my great pleasure on behalf of the board of directors and members of the Rotary Club of _____ to welcome you as a member. We welcome you not only for the fine fellowship that we shall share, but also for your strong arm that will help us to carry out our many projects to make our community, our country, and the world a better place in which to live.

“Rotary is not a political organization, but all Rotarians are vitally concerned with everything pertaining to good citizenship and the election of good men and women to public office.

“Rotary is not a charitable organization, yet its activities exemplify the charity and the sacrifices that one should expect from people who believe that they have a responsibility to help others.

“Rotary is not a religious organization, but it is built on those eternal principles that have served as the moral compass for people throughout the ages.

“Rotary is an organization of business and professional people pledged to upholding the highest professional standards. Rotarians believe that worldwide fellowship and international peace can be achieved when business people unite under the banner of service.”

(President requests those present to stand for the delivery of the charge that follows.)

“You, _____, have been chosen for membership of the Rotary Club of _____ because your fellow members believe you to be a leader in your special line of activity and because you manifest those qualities of head and heart that fit you to interpret and impart the message of Rotary.

“You are the representative of your vocation in this club and any information of an educational value pertaining to your craft must naturally come to us through you.

“At the same time you become an ambassador from us to your classification, and we rely on you to carry the principles and ideals of service, which we here inspire, to those who share your professional activity.

“The community will know and judge Rotary by your embodiment of it in character and service, and we accept you as a member because we know our principles and organization to be safe in your keeping.

“We also expect you to give us the inspiration that will help us to become better Rotarians, and it is with this hope that I ask your sponsoring member to invest you with the distinguishing badge of a Rotarian, and gladly offer you the right hand of Rotary fellowship.”

(President asks those present to be seated.)

“It is also my pleasure to present you with this folder of information pertaining to Rotary, which I hope you will read and think about.

“Your membership identification card shows that you are a member in good standing of the Rotary Club of _____. It is all the identification you need to visit any other Rotary club in the world.

“Fellow Rotarians, I have much pleasure in presenting to you Rotarian _____.”

(The new member addresses the club, and the president offers the following closing statement.)

“I invite everyone to introduce yourselves to our new member at the earliest opportunity.

“(New member’s name), for the remainder of this Rotary year, you have been placed on the _____ Committee, and your chairman will be Rotarian _____.”

Providing an Orientation to Rotary

The first months after induction are a critical time for assimilating new members into your club. There are a number of club-tested methods for successful member orientation.

Establish a New Member Mentor Program

Such a program links an experienced Rotarian with a new member for a period of one year. The mentor is charged with providing general orientation and information regarding club activities, committee assignments, etc., introducing the new member to others in the club, and providing overall support and follow-through during the member's first year. Mentors should be experienced Rotarians who have a continuing high level of interest in the club. Each mentor should have only one new member assigned at any one time.

In general, the mentor should assume the following tasks:

- Monitor the new member's comfort level with and involvement in the club through periodic telephone calls and personal contact.
- Periodically attend club meetings with the new member and introduce him or her to other club members.
- Explain the various Rotary committees and guide the new member to a committee assignment that is compatible with his or her interests.
- Inform the new member about special meetings, such as new member meetings, "Fireside Chats," and Rotary social events throughout the year. The mentor should also attend as many of these events as possible and act as an informal "host" to the new member and his or her spouse or guests, introducing them to other members and making sure they are comfortable.
- Make sure that the new member understands all club rules, including the attendance requirement.
- Monitor the attendance of the new member. If he or she must miss a regular meeting, offer to go along on a makeup.
- Involve the new member in your committee activity if he or she has not been appointed to another committee.
- Be available to answer questions and provide requested counsel or guidance.
- Seek suggestions and feedback on the Rotary club. Let them know they are a vital part of the Rotary club.

Plan an Information Program

Many clubs make special presentations to new members to inform them about the structure and history of Rotary, as well as the club's activities. "Fireside Chats" are a popular Rotary tradition and orientation tool for new and prospective members and their spouses. Held in the homes of club members, these events feature present or former club leaders discussing various aspects of Rotary.

In general, an information program for new members should cover the following subjects:

- The history and organization of Rotary International;
- The types of membership and the criteria for each;
- The four Avenues of Service and how your club fulfills the mission of each;
- The programs of Rotary, with information on how members can get involved;
- The Rotary Foundation, its humanitarian and educational programs and how they are supported.

Consider showing new members the videos "Introduction to Rotary" (449-EN), a 14-minute comprehensive overview of Rotary, or "Take a Look at Rotary" (867-EN), a six-minute upbeat and informative introduction to Rotary club membership.

Disperse Rotary Publications

Rotary International offers a number of publications and audiovisual materials that together make up a comprehensive Rotary education. These materials can be ordered from the RI office serving your area:

- *The Rotary Basic Library* (990-95-EN), a three-volume set that provides a comprehensive overview of the history and organization of Rotary International (Volume 1), the four Avenues of Service (Volume 2), and The Rotary Foundation (Volume 3).
- "The ABCs of Rotary" (363-EN), a compact, lively guide to Rotary's history, customs, and traditions, based on short articles written by 1992-93 RI President Cliff Dochterman.
- "Rotary in an Hour" (512-EN), a 60-minute audiotope of Rotary information.
- "Getting Started in Rotary" (333-EN), a guide to sponsor's responsibilities and brief information for new members and their families.
- "The Rotary Foundation Fact Book" (101-EN), a booklet featuring answers to the questions most frequently asked about The Rotary Foundation.

Don't Forget to Follow Through

Helping a new member feel like a part of your club is a process that does not end when the orientation period is over. Mentors should continue to oversee new members' acclimation, making sure that they have plenty of opportunities to get involved in club activities. The following are a few tested ideas for turning new Rotary members into committed Rotarians:

- Assign new members to a committee that matches their interests. If a member has no preference, try to assign him or her to the same committee as the mentor.
- Create special badges for new members to wear for one year. Encourage all other members to watch out for those badges and make a special effort to talk to new members.
- Assign new members to be a "greeter" and hand out badges at the door. This will give them an opportunity to meet everyone in the club.
- Invite new members to attend a board meeting to learn more about club operations. Take this opportunity to get feedback from them about the orientation process, club fellowship, and other important aspects of Rotary membership.
- Encourage new members to propose others for membership. Not only will this increase membership, it will allow new members to bring someone they know and like into the club *and* feel like they are making an important contribution.
- Continue to seek suggestions and feedback.

Continue to Educate All Members of Your Club

A Rotarian who is knowledgeable of Rotary's activities at the club, district and international levels is more likely to stay active in Rotary.

- Encourage all members to read *THE ROTARIAN* or their local Rotary magazine.
- Subscribe to the *Rotary New Basket* (546-EN) or access it off RI's Web site or by Faxback. This weekly publication provides up-to-date information on what RI and Rotary clubs are doing worldwide.
- Share information on new programs and emphases with club members. Utilize information from the *News Basket* and other publications in each club bulletin or monthly letter. Make informational announcements at each weekly meeting.
- Encourage members to attend their district conference and/or the international convention. Meetings such as these give members a broader view of Rotary, and their potential as members of the organization.



Rotary International
One Rotary Center
1560 Sherman Avenue
Evanston, Illinois 60201, USA