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## 5 Membership

To be effective, a Rotary club needs members. Your club's ability to serve the community, support The Rotary Foundation, and develop leaders capable of serving beyond the club level is directly related to the strength and size of your club's membership base. Your club leadership team and club members, particularly the club membership committee, should assist you with your membership development responsibilities. Your club's membership development action plan must incorporate strategies for recruitment, retention, and organizing new clubs.

### Responsibilities

As president-elect, you have the following membership development responsibilities:

- Appointing and meeting with your club membership committee to develop an action plan to carry out your club's membership development initiatives
- Assessing the current state of your club's membership, using the *Planning Guide for Effective Rotary Clubs* (appendix 39) as a guide, and reviewing your club's long-range membership goals
- Setting your club's annual membership goals, which support long-range goals, using the *Planning Guide for Effective Rotary Clubs*
- Identifying and implementing strategies to recruit and retain club members
- Promoting club and district membership education and training for all stages of membership, including:
  - Prospective member education
  - New member orientation and education
  - Continuing member education
- Using available RI and district resources to support membership development efforts
- Seeking opportunities to organize a new club in your area

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Plan weekly meetings and activities in observance of Membership and Extension Month (August) and New Generations Month (September).

As club president, you must make membership a priority so that your club has an active and involved membership base to pursue the Object of Rotary.

## Membership Committee

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Many different club committees must interact and work closely with club leaders to successfully recruit, retain, and educate club members. Include the membership committee as one of the five standing committees of your club. Your club may amend its bylaws to reflect the specific responsibilities of this committee, adding subcommittees as needed.

Appoint Rotarians to the membership committee who have strong connections to a cross-section of the community. Members of this committee should have an outgoing and sociable personality as well as a thorough knowledge of Rotary.

The club membership committee develops and implements a plan for recruiting and retaining club members. Check in with the membership committee regularly to determine whether new strategies are needed to achieve your membership goals.

### Membership Committee Responsibilities

Your membership committee has the following responsibilities:

- Establishing club goals for increasing membership with the president-elect
- Assisting the president-elect in developing a membership action plan for the club
- Encouraging all members to propose prospective members
- Coordinating and implementing a new member orientation and education program
- Promoting membership retention
- Implementing club membership education and training
- Identifying classifications within the professional community
- Assessing whether the club's membership reflects the diversity of the community
- Educating the club about the purpose of the classification principle
- Assisting the board in investigating the eligibility of all people proposed for membership

### Other Committees That Support Membership

The membership committee should work with the following committees to meet your club's membership goals:

- Club public relations committee (to develop and maintain a positive image of your club within the community and improve retention of existing members through positive club public relations)
- Club service projects committee (to plan interesting and relevant projects and activities that engage members, meet the needs of the community, and attract new members)
- Club administration committee (to assess club trends, member needs and satisfaction, and plan weekly meetings and programs)

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You'll find more information on the membership committee in the *Club Committee Manual*.

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Your club's five-year membership history is available from your district governor or district governor-elect.

- District membership development committee (for support, resources, and strategies to recruit and retain members)
- District extension committee (for guidance on organizing or sponsoring new clubs in your area)

### **Assessing Your Club**

As president-elect, you'll work closely with your club's membership committee to assess the current state of your club and plan membership goals using the *Planning Guide for Effective Rotary Clubs* (appendix 39) and other membership assessment tools available at [www.rotary.org/membership](http://www.rotary.org/membership). To understand your club's membership trends:

- Review your club's long-range goals.
- Review your club's five-year membership profile.
- Complete a classification survey as early in the year as possible to identify unfilled professions represented in the community.
- Consult with your district governor or assistant governor, as appropriate.

Once you've drafted membership goals, you should develop a membership action plan (see appendix 18).

## **Recruitment**

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All Rotarians are responsible for proposing new members. New members bring important benefits to the club, including:

- Increased capacity to serve your community
- Future leaders
- Diversity
- Fresh ideas, interests, and energy
- Long-term continuity of clubs and the organization

### **Responsibilities**

As club president, you have the following responsibilities for raising awareness of the importance of recruiting new members:

- Ensuring that the club board of directors understands the importance of membership growth
- Leading by example, personally recruiting a new member during the first month of the Rotary year and encouraging each member of the club membership committee to do the same
- Appointing active, knowledgeable membership committee members
- Setting ambitious but attainable membership recruitment goals
- Conducting a club assembly on the importance of new members and successful recruiting strategies
- Encouraging full representation of the diversity of the community
- Promoting participation in the district membership seminar

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The *Membership Development Resource Guide* outlines the action steps necessary for developing an effective membership recruitment action plan and includes assessment tools, such as the Member Satisfaction Questionnaire and the Resigning Member Questionnaire.

- Encouraging club members to discuss Rotary and its goals with friends, family, and colleagues and to invite qualified candidates to join Rotary
- Promoting community awareness of your club and its activities
- Recognizing club members for sponsoring new members

### **Diversity**

Your club's membership should accurately reflect the community. Profession, age, gender, and ethnicity can characterize the diversity of your community. One way to ensure professional diversity in your club is to conduct regular classification surveys so that your classification list accurately represents the community. The broad range of professions represented in your club means a wide range of experience and knowledge for your service efforts.

RI policy prohibits limitations on membership in Rotary clubs based on gender, race, color, creed, or national origin. Refer to RI Bylaws Article 4.070. for more information.

### **Recruitment Strategies**

Recruitment involves effective and relevant projects, public relations, interesting meetings, and overall club effectiveness. It also anticipates the challenges that come along with recruiting new members, including:

- Competing priorities
- Lack of diversity among club members
- High cost of membership
- Misconceptions about benefits and responsibilities of membership
- Poor public image
- Lack of awareness of what Rotary does in the community and internationally

Determine which recruitment challenges your club faces and then work with the membership committee to implement strategies for addressing them. See appendix 20 for club membership recruitment strategies.

### **Retention**

Retention is crucial to increasing your club's membership. A high turnover rate in existing clubs is one of the most pressing membership issues facing Rotary today. Work closely with your club administration committee to monitor trends in attendance, length of membership, service projects participation, and contributions to The Rotary Foundation. Such trends can point out concerns that may need to be addressed.

### **Responsibilities**

As club president, you have these responsibilities for raising awareness of the importance of retaining club members:

- Making continuing education and training for members a regular club activity
- Involving the club membership and public relations committees in membership retention efforts

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Visit the Membership Development Best Practices Exchange at [www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org) to view membership initiatives that have worked in other clubs.

- Appointing a club leader to update club members on the latest Rotary developments
- Conducting a club assembly for member education
- Including local and international Rotary information in weekly club meetings
- Recognizing existing members for their contributions to club projects and activities

### **Retention Strategies**

Successful club retention strategies include educating and training members and keeping club members involved and informed. Of course, retaining current members comes with some challenges, including:

- Competing commitments with family and work
- Expenses associated with Rotary membership
- Lack of fellowship
- Poorly structured meetings
- Lack of service projects and programs that interest members
- Moves or relocations

You should work with the membership committee to implement retention strategies for addressing these challenges. See appendix 21 for club membership retention strategies.

## **Education**

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Education is important at all stages of membership. Work closely with your club's membership committee to ensure that your club has a membership education and training action plan.

### **Prospective Member Education**

The club membership committee should provide prospective members with information about Rotary, including its history and ideals, and the club and its activities.

### **New Member Orientation and Education**

The process of new member orientation and education should begin immediately after induction, ensuring that new members become part of the club.

Every member of your club should play an active role in educating new members. Informed members can help new members develop the knowledge base necessary to function effectively as a club member, get involved, and help the entire club succeed.

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Refer to the *Membership Development Resource Guide* for more information on educating and involving new club members.

### **Continuing Member Education**

Work with your membership committee to provide the following continuing education components:

- Communicating RI and club news and information
- Holding four or more club programs a year on continuing education
- Promoting district seminars on continuing education, such as the district Rotary Foundation seminar

Continuing member education ensures that members remain challenged, motivated, and enthusiastic.

### **Organizing New Clubs**

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Your district governor is responsible for organizing new clubs. As club president, you should be aware of the possibilities for organizing a new club in your area, such as if a group of committed Rotarians would like to meet at a different time or day. Contact your district governor, district membership committee, or district extension committee if you think your community could support a new club.

If your club sponsors a new club, you have the following responsibilities:

- Assisting the special representative in planning and organizing the administrative processes of the new club
- Helping to organize the new club's programs and projects
- Reporting to the district governor as requested during the club's first year
- Serving as a mentor to the new club for at least two years after its admission to membership in RI

### **Resources**

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The following resources are available to help you fulfill your membership development responsibilities:

#### **Informational Resources**

- Classification survey — A tool to help clubs identify potential new members.
- Club bulletin — A club's main communication tool, which should include membership development information such as recruitment strategies and continuing education opportunities.
- Club member interest assessment — A tool to help clubs identify the needs and interests of their members.
- Club profile — Club information for new and prospective members.
- Governor's monthly letter — A membership development resource for clubs that includes retention and recruitment strategies as well as continuing education opportunities.

- *How to Propose a New Member* (254-EN) — Brochure outlining the procedure for selecting and electing members.
- *Membership Development Resource Guide* (417-EN) — Publication that outlines basic procedures for building club membership and lists suggestions for retaining members.
- *New Member Orientation* (414-EN) — Resource for Rotarians responsible for creating or updating their club's new member education program.
- *Planning Guide for Effective Rotary Clubs* (appendix 39)
- Retention Model — A tool that clubs can use to identify current membership retention strengths and weaknesses.
- *Rotary Basics* (595-EN) — Member education publication containing the information that every Rotarian should know.
- *Rotary: The Possibility* (688-MU) — A three-minute video without narration showing Rotarians in action.
- *The ABCs of Rotary* (363-EN) — Compilation of short articles about Rotary history and programs.
- *This Is Rotary* (001-EN) — Brochure providing brief overview of Rotary for prospective Rotarians and the public.
- *What's Rotary?* (419-EN) — Wallet-size card answering frequently asked questions about the organization and scope of Rotary. Popular as a handout to non-Rotarians.

### **www.rotary.org**

Click on:

- Membership ([www.rotary.org/membership](http://www.rotary.org/membership)) — A comprehensive, current source of Rotary membership information. Many membership publications are available for free download.

Keyword searches:

- Demographic survey — A tool to help clubs review their membership data and identify trends.
- Membership Development Best Practices Exchange — Contains successful membership ideas submitted by Rotary clubs and districts around the world.
- Rotary E-Learning Center ([www.rotary.org/jump/elearning](http://www.rotary.org/jump/elearning)) — Brief modules designed for independent study by new members and club officers.
- Termination Profile — An online tool that clubs can use to identify why a membership was terminated.

### **Human Resources**

- Assistant governors
- District governor
- District membership development committee — Responsible for overseeing all membership activity in your district.

- District public relations committee — Provides resources to develop a positive image of your club within the community.
- Regional Rotary International membership coordinators (RRIMCs) and Rotary International membership zone coordinators (RIMZCs) — Rotarians appointed by the RI president to serve as a primary membership development resource within a specific region.
- RI Club and District Support representative
- RI Membership Development staff — Staff members at World Headquarters dedicated to assisting clubs and districts in their membership development efforts.

For contact information, see the *Official Directory* or go to [www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org). Publications can be ordered from the *RI Catalog* or downloaded at [www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org).