

President's Forum Notes

July 14, 2009

Challenges in black, Opportunities in blue:

Limited club size with members who have served as officers and committee chairs repeatedly.

- New member recruitment, with mentorship & training opportunities.
- More opportunities for advancement in a smaller club. Could be a recruitment tool

Active older members; less active or very few younger members

- Mentorship by older members
- New member orientation, recruitment onto committees and into projects
- Club interest survey

Progression – succession of officers (President elect to President). Creating or re-establishing a development program for officers (moving up through the offices) and committee chairs

- Rotary Leadership Institute: trains club members for Rotary leadership positions at the club and District level
- Internal club orientation and mentorship programs

Helping our members with career changes: job referrals, re-training, maintaining club membership

- Club task force to assist members whose jobs have been eliminating in the current recession.
- Offer three to six month membership dues relief (to be covered by cash reserve, endowment or create special fund), to keep good members in the club
- Buy/hire local: do business with fellow Rotarians wherever possible or appropriate

Evaluating, reviewing club operations & by-laws. Club self-study process – strategic planning, club leadership plan, goal planning. Club restructuring without losing continuity.

- Sign up for club Visioning process with Peggy Day and her team
- “borrow” from other clubs with current by-laws and stable operations
- Record club history; establish archives committee or archivist position

Dwindling club size--recruitment of new members and increasing current club size

- Sign up for a Membership Blitz Workshop with DGN Paul McNamara to create a short list of prime membership strategies with buy-in from your club members.
- Increase, and improve club visibility in the community. Don't keep your light under a barrel

Care of “hurting” members

- Find out why good members have “gone missing”; don't just send a scolding letter or email
- Send a “thinking of you” or “get well” card, signed by the club members
- Set up car pool for members who can no longer drive
- Record your club meetings for shut-ins
- Welcome club members who return after an absence
- Consider Honorary Membership for those who can no longer attend; give or create an award for them, if they have served honorably

Fundraising

- Review Jim McIntyre's notes from the Fundraising Seminar
- Download and review comments & ideas proposed by Rotarians at the Seminar.
- Sign up for a Fundraising Strategy Workshop with DG Kathleen Tosco

Retention of members

- Membership satisfaction survey – find out what your members value about your club, and what isn't working for them
- Conduct exit interviews with members who leave
- Get members involved in club projects, committees, goal setting
- Recruit members who buy-into the principles, practices and vision of Rotary International.
- Try out potential members as project workers before inviting them to join
- Offer quality programs, fellowship opportunities, and relevant projects

Challenge of “constantly working” pool of members – taking time away from business and/or family to participate in Rotary. Members who feel Rotary is not meeting their needs – relevancy to professional development. Networking opportunities. Membership that travels – business, snow birds

- Look at meeting time, location and format of your meetings
- Consider a networking component in your club to allow members a chance to openly promote their company or services – could be a separate task force, a special time before or after the regular meeting, an e-newsletter
- Plan family-oriented events and/or projects
- Allow members to bring cell phones on vibrate and leave the room to take an important call (small fines could make this fun and provide a few bucks for Polio Plus).
- Make sure members know about online make-ups
- Encourage, acknowledge and celebrate members who make up at other clubs

Generational divide. Technology use – the digital divide. “Good old boys” stigma of Rotary Club.

- Recruit younger members as a group
- Make sure new members value the traditions of older members.
- Feature “membership minutes” about a newer and older member each week
- Update club technology. Contact District Secretary, Data Base and Web Master Ed Foster for help and training for club officers, members and committee chairs.
- Create buddy system for information to non-email members
- Increase visibility of club showing younger and older members working side by side.

Involving new members. Mentoring program for new members

- New member check list “Red badge program”
- Mentorship
- Fellowship
- Training and service opportunities
- Respect and support for new member ideas (the opposite of “we do it this way”)

Staffing committees. Members taking responsibilities—lots of ideas, little participation. “Hats” worn by the same core group – they get burned out, others feel shut out

- Committee chairs reach out to under-utilized and new members
- Members recruited with the understanding that they will serve on at least one committee

- Recruit committee members from outside the club. Also a new member recruitment step
- Examine events and fundraisers to be sure the “person power” is there to conduct them well
- Partner with other Rotary clubs, service clubs, non-profits, etc.
- Combine projects, or replace some with lower requirements for staff

Taking the “deep dive” of membership commitment and Rotary values

- Acknowledge members for service above self
- Make Rotary values the core values of your club
- You cannot legislate commitment, but you can inspire

Entrenched members; reluctant to change. Changing club meeting date and time – disrupts traditions and habits.

- Involve members in the process of change
- Strategic Planning and/or visioning
- Recruit entrenched members as mentors of new members. They will want their trainees to serve as club leaders

Long term financial plan with cash reserve fund

- Part of the strategic planning process
- Budget conservatively for the year, including a modest cash reserve if possible
- Fundraising for a reserve is difficult, but dedicating a portion of funds raised may be possible where appropriate (don’t tell donors that all the money is going toward the cause, if part is going toward a reserve or club overhead).
- Encourage bequests to club or talk to the District Foundation about a named restricted fund

Apathy, lethargy, low club self-esteem

- Visioning process identifies the rich history of the club, and its core values
- Identify your club mission
- Look at your club as an integral part of the larger family of Rotary
- Look at the way you present yourselves to visitors and potential members. Do you wear your badges? Do you welcome guests, sit with them, and tell them the history of the club? How are your programs? How do you talk about your club? New members want to be part of something relevant, professional (casual is ok, but sloppy is not) and fun. Not tired and self-denigrating.

Club size in relation to speaker pool – members think club is too small to invite good speakers

- Invite guests, potential members, family, business colleagues, and other community members with an interest in the topic when you have a special speaker.
- Hold club meetings in interesting and unusual places: vocational field trips, art galleries, museums, theatres, city hall boardrooms, etc. Ask the CEO of the host site to present a program to members on that day.
- Use the RI promotional DVDs: Rotary Video Magazine, This is Rotary, Humanity in Motion. You can order them from RI or borrow them from the District Office.
- Invite fellow club members to do a program on their vocation, or special interest.

Goal setting – RI Tools to help you with goal setting

- RI Strategic Planning process, available at Rotary.org
- Vision Process

- TRF Goal Forms
- Club Leadership Plan

In large membership clubs – members can get lost, large turnover.

- Orient new members before induction, so they know what to expect
- Provide fellowship opportunities
- Mentorship program for new and lapsed members
- Club satisfaction survey
- Get new members involved in committee work, projects and fundraisers
- Give all members an opportunity for input into club planning

Expand Rotaract group memberships to include post college younger professionals

- Contact Matt Lechtel of the Greater Kalamazoo Rotaract Club, or Brian Kauffman Kalamazoo Rotary about sponsorship process
- Start an area Rotaract, invite other clubs in your area to participate in sponsorship to spread the workload and potential member pool
- Keep a strong link with Rotaract and your sponsoring clubs. These are your future Rotary club members and current project partners.

Youth programs as an opportunity to energize clubs: Interact, Youth Exchange, RYLA

- Contact Dan Cropsey for Interact, Dick Sammis for Youth Exchange, Jim Alden for RYLA
- Build club excitement by sponsoring Interact, Incoming/Outgoing Exchange students, RYLA participants
- Recruit from participating students for staffing of club projects and events
- Acknowledge students, include them in your club meetings and programs
- Provide ongoing mentorship for “your” students
- Make connections between Interact students, Youth Exchange and RYLA opportunities
- Recruit for host families from Interact & RYLA youth families

Marketing – telling our story

- Send articles and photos about your club projects and special events to: District6360.com web site, District 6360 newsletter, your club newsletter and web site, your local paper.
- Invite Barb Walters to your club to do a PR program
- Have tee shirts or vests (or whatever) made with your club logo, to be worn during club projects in the community
- Develop a simple brochure about your club, or team up with the other clubs in your area
- Carry “What is Rotary” cards in your wallet (available through Rotary.org web site), or make up your own and print on business card stock. Include an invitation to attend a club meeting as your guest.
- Invite area press to very special club meetings as your guests (make sure the meeting is first class, with a great program and lots of members/guests in attendance).
- Invite local press dignitaries to be guest celebrities at your annual fundraiser (celebrity chef, celebrity waiter, celebrity model, celebrity bar tender, guest speaker, honorary campaign chair, etc.)