

# Member Gets Member strategy - a new approach for the future of Rotary

A new District Membership strategy was launched at the District Assembly last April - incoming District Membership chair, Ray Burman, re-emphasises how every single Rotarian has a significant role to help our clubs grow and strengthen.



Our culture is becoming busier, with reduced job security encouraging people to accept more demanding work schedules, our leisure time is becoming more and more scarce.

We need a new imagination, a new approach to how we retain and attract people into our Rotary Clubs.

All membership data across the Rotary world shows the best way to grow a Rotary Club is to grow the members. When existing members grow in confidence, in skills, in depth of Rotary knowledge, their excitement for Rotary tumbles out and naturally draws others in. A club which is member focused and is excited to grow, will be more attractive to non-Rotarians rather than a club that is focused on numerical growth for the sake of numerical growth.

Developing members into full Rotary membership, seeing involvement as a vocation, a way of life, not just a matter of attendance. In this way people are more likely to join Rotary, because they see something they like, something they will enjoy and more importantly, having understood the organisation they are joining, they are more likely to stay. Unless existing Rotarians are committed and feel themselves growing and fulfilled in their local club, they will not be at their best to "tell and sell" Rotary and bring new people into our organisation. We will be working with clubs to encourage them to consider adopting the simple philosophy of **MGM - Member Gets Member**.

Over recent years, Rotary has produced advertising and marketing materials, documents, pamphlets, considerable resources for membership and recruitment; yet the paradox is that despite all this energy going into creating and promoting recruitment resources, our numbers continue to fall.

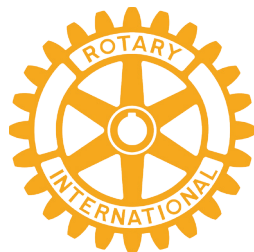
It has been my experience in over 20 years at local, national and international levels of Rotary, that people are drawn to joining our movement when they meet existing motivated Rotarians and through attending club meetings they get to know and understand Rotary, becoming part of the club and by membership, fully understand Service Above Self. Joining Rotary offers a way of life, a series of values, a world-view of giving service and vocation and this individual development is best done one-to-one in an intentional mentoring friendship. The concept of a mentor or coach is not new.

Against a backdrop of ever decreasing membership in our clubs, it is the responsibility of every Rotarian in District 1080 to examine how they can strengthen and grow their Rotary club. The 'Member Gets Member' strategy is not only key to developing long standing and committed Rotarians in District 1080, it is increasingly important in supporting those who are attracted to joining Rotary, but are hesitant in taking those first steps. We should be aware that there are often stumbling blocks that people need to overcome before joining Rotary. It is a friendly introduction and follow-up invitation that are often the decisive factors whether someone will join Rotary; in our changing culture, a one-to-one relationship is essential alongside offering membership to a club.





## District Membership chair Ray Burman asks “Are you ready to pass on the gift of membership?”



When Harold Macmillan, as Prime Minister, was once asked by a journalist what is most likely to blow governments off course, he answered “Events, dear boy, events”.

In a similar way, it seems that no matter how careful we are in our Rotary clubs to focus our resources, strategies and plans to bring in new members, experience repeatedly shows that unexpected events are likely to throw even the most careful plans off course. Consequently, I would suggest, we need to balance aspirational plans with the reality of life that continually brings fresh challenges to blow us off course which even the most detailed, thorough planning could not foresee.

In addition, our day-to-day Rotary activity can soak up energy and although considered important, it is frequently not focused on membership. Exposing this may be painful, but perhaps also a relief, because repeating what has always been done, while grappling with the challenge of membership, can leave members feeling helpless in the face of the scale of the task. As clubs we must acknowledge that not everything can or should be done. This allows clubs to deal with competing agendas, to think long term and not overestimate what can be achieved in one year or underestimate what can be achieved in, say, three years. Ironically, aiming too high can be as ineffective as aiming too low. Any club membership plan should have a clear sense of direction and a realistic target of what the club want's it's membership to look like in two or three years time.

Currently, every year, membership drops away for various reasons – moved away, work, health, or maybe becoming disillusioned - the loss of Rotarians from our clubs, particularly those Rotarians who have been in our movement for many years, seems to be linked directly to the loss of Rotary knowledge. The slipping out of our knowledge and shared practices mean that those who are new to Rotary, just starting their Rotary journey, have further to travel before they become fully informed and integrated into Rotary life. Taking stock of our membership frequently shows us that whilst experienced Rotarians may know what's happening, those newer to Rotary still have many questions and can be far from a shared Rotary viewpoint. Experience across the Rotary world has shown that focusing on numerical growth, chasing league tables just for the sake of numbers, is not as successful or attractive as a club that is clearly member focused. When members grow in confidence, in skills, in

depth of Rotary knowledge, their enthusiasm at being a Rotarian becomes evident and they tend to pass that enthusiasm onto others.

Strengthening our clubs by retaining and increasing our membership is not necessarily a matter of survival, rather it is a matter of recognising that the wonderful gift of Rotary membership was given to you by a Rotarian and it is, I would suggest, the duty of every Rotarian to pass that gift on to others. This, in turn, will lead to the growth of your club and therefore to a growth of the service your club can give to local and international communities.

We are very keen to ensure that best practice and evidence of membership growth is shared with Rotarians and clubs in our District. With this in mind, we have organised a number of Membership Seminars to be held during September, when we will look at public image, new initiatives, beacon clubs, re-energising clubs, satellites etc. Each seminar will start around 10am and finish no later than 1pm, with tea, coffee and a bacon roll, and thanks to the efforts of DG Robert, obtaining a grant from RIBI, we are able to offer these seminars at no cost to our members.

### The seminars are scheduled:

 <b>Lowestoft Area</b> 9th September	 <b>Holt Area</b> 23rd September	 <b>Ely Area</b> 30th September
Contact: Paul Wilkinson	Contact: Jonathan King	Contact: Bill Redmayne
<a href="#">Email Paul</a>	<a href="#">Email Jonathan</a>	<a href="#">Email Bill</a>

My personal thanks to the Rotarians involved in organizing these events.

Let me encourage you to come along to one of the mornings, talk to other Rotarians, see what clubs are doing to grow their membership and hear some of the latest initiatives to strengthen our membership.

The way to build and maintain a flourishing Rotary club is to work constantly at retaining and recruiting new members. Every member should be involved in membership. Put simply, it is the responsibility of every Rotarian to pass on the gift of membership – MGM - Member Gets Member.

District Membership chair Ray Burman asks

## “Are you ready to move from membership disillusionment to membership productivity?”

If you are of a certain age, you may, like me, remember being taught road safety at school – at the kerb, stop, look right, look left and right again – if it's all clear, cross.

But what I don't remember was being told to continue to look right and left as I crossed the road. In many ways a membership plan, if blindly and unconditionally followed, can be a bit like the old Road Safety mantra. We need to keep looking and listening, as we progress our membership growth, watching for surprises or unexpected events. There's an old military adage which says “a plan is only good until contact with the enemy”. In other words we must remain fluid and flexible when considering membership retention and recruitment in Rotary. All club members need to own and share the membership direction, sharing the commitment required, realising that there may well be a slow start until growth becomes a regular reality.

In many cases, what appears to be the 'silver bullet' to Rotary membership, often, after a while, falls away, with a familiar pattern emerging where initial enthusiasm is followed by disillusionment, when the hard work required to attract potential members really kicks in and reality for long term commitment dawns.

This is often a familiar pattern in the business world and is known as the Gartner Hype Cycle, where early success inflates hopes and garners initial high support, only to be followed by hard times where initial high expectations peak and quickly plummet into a trough of disillusionment. However, the Gartner Hype Cycle shows us that although it doesn't happen automatically, the graph moves into a slope of enlightenment, as fresh insights are introduced resulting in productivity.



The Gartner Hype Cycle can apply equally to Rotary clubs where we see that when members remain focused and committed to recruiting new members and when new ideas are introduced, the graph moves from disillusionment into productivity, or in our case new members. If we take the Gartner Hype Cycle as our model we can see that there is a need to keep looking and listening, to ensure our original direction is the correct direction for the club and when we think we are in the trough of disillusionment, new ideas and fresh insights can lead to membership growth. Rather than a desperate recruitment drive where numbers can be given a

short-term boost, we need to measure what we value, rather than value what we measure. Good, sustained, membership growth is the key to retention and recruitment and at times we need to keep looking and listening, to keep our eyes open to the changing world around us that may lead us to adjust our membership vision in the light of changing circumstances.

Research across the Rotary World continues to show that the clubs who reflect the demographics of their community are the most effective clubs. Consequently, the goal of clubs who want to grow, should look to increase the number of women, younger professionals early retirees and members of local visible ethnic groups in their membership. Clubs, that are diverse and reflect their local community make-up, are stronger, have a greater social credibility, a wider range of skills, a greater pool of potential volunteers and an enhanced potential to fund raise and change lives. Increasing the diversity of your membership will bring a different perspective to your club and expand the opportunities for service projects.

During my two decades of Rotary membership, I have been powerfully impressed by the imagination, vision and energy of many of the Rotarians I have met. I have listened, sometimes awestruck, by what some Rotarians have achieved. However, we are not all exceptional innovators and consequently will need to adopt and adapt what others are already doing. What seems fundamental to the growth process is that the club membership is constantly engaged in reflection; clubs cannot soar on autopilot, membership growth is a product of good leadership, working with a willing set of members, in a favorable context. If there is to be fresh inspiration, clubs can look beyond their regular membership for help and advice, the District Membership and Public Image Teams are happy to work alongside you to help your clubs strengthen and grow.

There are a number of tools which are useful to a club that is looking carefully at their local area and community. Membership Assessment Tools are available as a download pdf - [click here](#) and can help members focus on the club issues, establish what are the needs identified, the opportunities available and the demographic profile of the members when set alongside the surrounding community. The real challenge comes when a in-depth and careful examination of the local scene leads members to the question, “So what might we do?” For some Rotary clubs who are deeply rooted in their local context, feeling they know the people around them, the instinctive answer may start with, “Well, we always....” or “I remember when....” This may lead to valuable and fruitful membership initiatives, but there is also a real danger that retrying old solutions, leads us quickly to remembering why it didn't work last time.

**In other words, if we follow the same recipe and use the same ingredients we will get the same cake. Maybe it's time to try something new. Feel free to run your ideas past the District membership and Public Image Teams and discuss your proposals to strengthen your club and increase your membership.**

District Membership chair Ray Burman asks

## “How can we be Innovative and Flexible?”



**There is no doubt that we live in a rapidly changing world, where people are often ‘time poor’, busier, with reduced job security and more demanding work schedules.**

Against this changing world we need a new imagination, a new approach to how we attract and retain people into our Rotary Clubs. In the future, the success of our Rotary clubs may well depend on our ability to be innovative and flexible. Rotary International surveys and focus groups consistently show that younger members and prospective members are more likely to join and remain in Rotary if they believe that Rotary is willing to accommodate their interests, their work, their family and personal needs.

Clubs may ask themselves if their activities and traditions reflect current interests of younger people and what they could change to make their club more relevant to potential younger members. Of course, each Rotary club is autonomous and it's for the members to decide the way forward for their club; if they don't feel the need to change then that's fine, however, they may want to consider reaching more people, younger people, by starting a new Rotary club or a Rotary satellite group.

Any new Rotary group formation needs to be against the backdrop of appropriate contextualization, listening to the local setting and shaping the new group to ensure the “Rotary Message” remains undiluted and resonates with the target community, whilst at the same time, recognising different groups, distinctive interests, life styles, communication and relationship networks. Any new group formed should reflect our rapidly changing culture and should be established primarily for the benefit of the local community who are not yet Rotarians. In other words, any new club or satellite should be deliberately shaped to relate to and grow among people who are not yet Rotarians, although of course, they may already have knowledge or experience of Rotary. Such groups will develop and mature through listening, forming, giving service and embedding in the history and values of Rotary. Those involved in forming new Rotary groups need to be opportunists and optimists, with a vision for what might be, believe it can happen and have an openness to welcome ideas, changes and surprises. Some Rotarians are instinctive doers who have a natural desire to direct their energy and imagination towards doing new things, going where none has gone before, taking every opportunity to reach out in new ways.

Although a new club isn't required to have a sponsor club, it is obvious that a guiding club can act as a mentor to the new club offering help and guidance for one or two years after charter. Research shows that the biggest loss of members to a new club occurs during the second year and any club that has the strong support of a mentoring club well into its second year has a greater chance of becoming a strong, self-

sufficient and productive Rotary club.

There are real grounds for seeing both the formation of new clubs and satellite groups as significant parts of a healthy and positive membership future, ensuring understanding and respect between those groups and existing clubs. Personal invitation, Member Gets Members, is common to every way that Rotary will grow. I firmly believe that personal invitation is significantly fundamental to any growth. Sometimes we forget the slightly awkward experience it is for someone new to visit a Rotary club, maybe not the easiest place for outsiders to drop in when they have no real link to our club.

Often I hear how clubs have held an ‘interest meeting’ to bring new members into the club, but seem surprised that the invited guests didn't naturally follow on and join Rotary. After initial contact, invitation and welcome, it is key that a structured follow-up to potential members, is undertaken. A particular strength of any Rotary club, when working well, is relationship; a weekly or fortnightly gathering where people of all ages spend a significant portion of their time in discussion, or in a shared activity, often produces far deeper mutual understanding.

We should always remember that those joining a Rotary club have almost no awareness of the fundamentals of our Rotary movement and even less experience of its structures, practices and culture. The overwhelming experience should be one of welcome which begins to develop relationships. For me, effective membership builds a good club, not the other way round. We need to appreciate that a club is the effect of membership growth and not the cause. If we start out to form a club or satellite group, to meet a target, there is no guarantee we will see membership growth and retention. Surely we should look to start a new club or satellite to bring more people to understanding the gift of Rotary membership and how give service to our local and international communities. Often with new clubs or satellite groups, there is a thrill of being part of new growth, seeing things growing at an early stage, with little or no consideration as to where the group will be in three to five years time. Unfortunately, experience shows that retaining members can quickly become an issue for the new club or satellite group, once the thrill of newness starts to fade.

As we experiment with different types of ‘doing Rotary’ to grow and strengthen our membership, I believe it will be less a case of ‘traditional’ Rotary and ‘new’ Rotary running in parallel, remaining separate from each other; rather, we will witness a more fluid membership where both traditional and new Rotary is changed and developed by listening, mutual understanding and respect, which will develop into a future new shape of membership for all of us. If you are considering forming a satellite club and wish to scope the possibility, please contact the District Membership and Public Image Teams who will be happy to help you.

District Membership chair Ray Burman asks

## “Are you ready to re-energize you Rotary club and grow membership proportionately?”



In last month's District magazine, I wrote about Innovative and Flexible clubs and how starting a new club or satellite group, that are basically simpler and less formal, may be an effective way to bring younger people into Rotary.

However, it is obvious that new clubs and satellite groups are not the complete answer to growing and strengthening Rotary, they are only part of the answer. Over the past few months, I have been visiting Rotary clubs in our District to talk about ideas on how we can re-energize our clubs and grow our membership proportionately, based firmly on personal invitation, the concept of 'Member Gets Member'.

I've often heard from Rotarians *“but I'm retired, I don't meet anyone in business anymore”*, the inference being that because we're no longer in business, we no longer have contact with anyone to bring along to Rotary as potential members. This of course may be true, but this doesn't preclude us from suggesting potential members, all we need to realise is that our “Frontline” has moved since we retired. We all have a total of 168 hours each week, if we sleep an average of 8 hours each night, we have a remaining 110 hours of non-sleep when we can 'do stuff'. Rotary may take 5 or maybe 10 hours of our week, concentrated probably around our Rotary club meeting or a service project. Consider what would happen if we moved that 10 Rotary hours to the rest of our 100 hours, if we 'think Rotary' during the rest of our week.

Let me suggest a membership recruitment strategy to you, but let me start by clearly stating that it will not be easy and will require commitment and the involvement of every member of your club.

**Select a week or two week period and ask every Rotarian to make a note of anyone he or she meets, who they think would make a good Rotarian. Also, ask members to think of people they know in their community who might be a good member.**

### Who else are prospective members?

- Look back on people who have interacted with your club over the last few years, speakers, charities, friends, neighbours, businesses, public bodies etc. and make a note of anyone who could be a good fit for your club. Consider the young professionals who have participated in Rotary's programs, such as GSE, Ambassadorial Scholars, Peace Fellows etc. and Rotaractors, as well as the parents, grandparents of Interactors, RotaKids, RYLA participants and Youth Programs etc. Remember, of course, the Family of Rotary, Rotarians family members, spouses, partners, widows, widowers, children, grandchildren and other relatives.

- Appoint a 'best fit' Rotarian, or a couple of Rotarians, who will collate the contact details from every member and then organise a membership 'interest meeting'.
- Send a personal invitation to everyone on the contact list, inviting them to come along to an interest meeting to see how Rotary has changed. The meeting can take whatever form suits your club, however, experience shows that an informal, 'fireside chat' format, with tea, coffee and biscuits, keeping the formality, speeches and presentations to an absolute minimum, not only encourages personal conversations, but also keeps the total cost of the event at a reasonable budget. The purpose of the meeting is to have 'one to one' conversations with potential members, to engage them in an awareness of Rotary and particularly what Rotary is doing in their community.
- Don't try to tell them everything there is to know about Rotary, it's better to keep your message simple. Personal stories, how Rotary has made a meaningful impact on members lives, careers and friendships.
- Ask potential members what they would look for in Rotary, it may be friendship, giving service to the community, working with the youth or developing professional networks. Once you know what they're looking for, you can show how your club can fill that need and explain the benefits of Rotary membership. Making a positive impact in your community through service projects, establishing business connections, lasting friendships, professional skills and becoming part of a global network of friends.
- When someone becomes a Rotarian, it is a special occasion for both the new member and the club, mark the induction with a special ceremony to celebrate his or her involvement in Rotary and be sure to invite the inductee's family and business colleagues. Research shows that the more members are involved in Rotary activities, the more committed and connected they become.
- Give them an active role in a project or activity which interests them. A key reason people are drawn to Rotary membership is the opportunity to work on a service project in the local community. When clubs undertake multiple projects they offer multiple opportunities for new members to become involved.

**The District membership and Public Image Teams are always looking for success stories, so if your club has started recruitment initiatives please let us know.**

# Member Gets Member

by Ray Burman  
District Membership Chair



**Ronald Reagan, President of America, once said "The future doesn't belong to the faint-hearted. It belongs to the brave."**

I was mindful of this quote when I wrote the membership article for the July 2017 District magazine and said:

*The culture of the developed world appears to be rapidly changing...our culture is becoming busier, with reduced job security encouraging people to accept more demanding work schedules and leisure time becoming more and more scarce. We need a new imagination, a new approach to how we attract and retain people into our Rotary Clubs.*

Change is happening. Its harder, faster and more impactful on our lives and Rotary cannot sidestep the inevitable if it is to stay relevant to our society. Change shouldn't be seen as something to be endured, rather it is something to enjoy; there are many benefits to reviewing the methods and manner in which our Rotary clubs work if we are to keep pace with the needs of our membership and the communities we serve.

I have found, that it's often those with big egos and negative attitudes who hold back the development of Rotary clubs. I'm sure like me, you can think of people who in your life-experience are constantly harping back to how things used to be and why we can't do something –'we've tried that already'. The 'nay sayers' find a reason not to move forward. One of my favourite films is *Field of Dreams*, where the character played by Kevin Costner hears the message: 'Build it and they will come' and that resonates with me because this has always been my attitude in life and equally in Rotary Service – if we remain positive, if we 'build it' they will come.

Since its start in 1905, Rotary has absorbed, adapted and developed and will need to continue to change as it moves into new communities and grows in a more complex world. Paul Harris famously said: 'Evolution, not revolution' and change brought about with care and consideration can be effective and beneficial. I believe Rotary is strongest when it develops by consulting widely and trusts in the democratic process.

**MEMBER GETS MEMBER** is a fundamental concept that will increase our membership – we need to embrace the understanding that the solution to membership attraction lies with every club Rotarian. It is every Rotarian's responsibility to strengthen their Rotary club; each of us has an obligation to keep Rotary strong, active and growing. We must reach out to different professions, different communities and different generations to find new members. Simply put: when I was asked to join Rotary, my proposer shared with me a wonderful gift of becoming a member of the greatest service organisation in the world. In a

similar way, you were equally given such a special gift when you joined your Rotary club and I believe it is the responsibility of every Rotarian to continue to share that gift and bring in new members. Tell them what they will get for their time and money. They get a wonderful opportunity to partake in and be part of Rotary's core values; experiencing the difference that Rotary membership makes to your own life and the opportunity to make a difference to the lives of others. New members bring in new ideas, skills, enthusiasm and the potential to provide greater service.

Strengthening and growing your club is everyone's responsibility. Only you can invite someone to become a member. Clubs can't do it, Districts can't do it, RIBI can't do it, you alone can move this great organisation of ours to ever greater heights, to ever greater achievements and in the process save and change lives. Why not pick a two week period and challenge every member of your club to note the contact details of anyone they meet or know in the community, who they think could be a member; it doesn't take long to compile a list of potential members. The club membership committee should collate the list and take on all responsibility for the process of attracting potential members. The club President should send a personal invitation to everyone on the list inviting them, and their partner, to an 'interest' meeting to see if they suit Rotary and if Rotary suits them. From then on, the normal membership process continues.

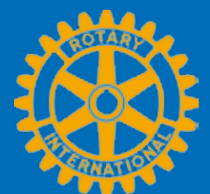
**So we can see that the process of attracting new members can be simply divide into three areas:**

**FIND THEM:** Undertake a classification survey, discover what skills, what local businesses, what occupations are not reflected in your club membership, look to friends, family members, neighbours, Rotary Alumni, business and social contacts, local faith leaders etc.

**BRING THEM IN:** Invite potential members to an informal information meeting, a 'fireside chat', make the invitation personal, a personal letter or invitation card, tell them what your club does and has historically done for your local community and tell them why you are a member of Rotary and what you enjoy about being a member, etc.

**KEEP THEM:** Get them involved in club activities early, assign a mentor, good meetings with interesting programs keep new members involved.

**MEMBER GETS MEMBER -**  
all we have to do is reach out  
our hand and ask someone to  
join our Rotary club.



# Rotary Members..

## Learning from the past

by Ray Burman  
District Membership Chair



When Paul Harris invited his friend Sylvester Schiele, a coal merchant, to join him for dinner at Madame Galli's restaurant on a bitterly cold evening of Thursday, 23rd, February, 1905, he outlined his idea for a new club where members would mix together for business and social purposes.

Harris firmly believed that those who joined would become friends and business acquaintances and, as a result, respect and trust each other. Schiele immediately saw the benefits of Harris's idea and went with him to a nearby office to meet two other local businessmen, clients of Harris: Gustavus Loehr, a mining engineer and Hiram E. Shorey, a merchant tailor..... and the rest, as they say, is history – Rotary was born.

Author, James P. Walsh, in his biography, *The First Rotarian*, describes Harris' new club: "Most of the early members had come to Chicago from small towns or villages and the club's organisation held instant appeal. One attraction was freedom from petty restrictions. Members were attracted to a club where there were no absolute rigid rules and no rituals. It was a club which was fun to belong to, where a member could be on first name terms with fellow members, irrespective of station.....Rotary offered a splendid opportunity for fellowship and development of new friendships."

Our **Member Gets Member** drive should have the same aim as those early Rotarians, to be inclusive, to embrace all communities and to be open to diversity irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity or faith. In an ever-increasingly interconnected world, our challenge for the future is to ensure that every idea, effort and service is considered, appreciated and not dismissed out of hand. By doing this, we will continue our Rotary in a similar way to Paul Harris and his friends in that first club, creating an environment of dignity, respect and collaboration where we welcome and positively seek different perspectives. Embracing diversity, our core values and high ethical standards ensures we Rotarians treat all who we encounter as unique individuals, worthy of our friendship and respect. Rotary was founded on a clear idea that if people of good character, intelligence and values, joined together, they could achieve a great deal more than they could alone. Rotary has always been a grass roots

organisation with, I believe, some of the best humanitarian projects being undertaken at the club level. It is, I believe, the task of the District Membership team to support each club to grow and strengthen their membership to help them increase service efforts, both in their local and international community.

Some Rotary clubs I meet have a masochistic view of themselves and my comment to them is that if people do not wish to join their Rotary it is by no means always or mainly the fault of them as a Rotary club. We live in a deeply materialistic culture with dominant influences such as consumerism, electronic media and globalisation. While Rotary has much to do to reconnect with younger people, it is wrong to beat ourselves up, rather we should understand we have hard work ahead of us if we are to become a multi generational organisation. As I travel around the District, talking to clubs, I find that many have been able to get younger generations to visit their meeting or participate in a community project, but have been unable to get them to join their club. Rotary International has recently published the stunning fact that only 5% of Rotary's worldwide membership is under the age of 40. So how can we get younger people to join our Rotary and equally important, get them to stay?

Well, let's start by dispelling some misconceptions we may have of them:

- 77% of Millennials are involved in a charity or a cause
- 37% of Millennials have cancelled an association membership because of cost
- 61% of Millennials and 57% of Gen Xers say becoming a leader is important to them

Millennials are those born between 1981 and 1998, they have grown up with smartphones and the internet, they expect immediate access to product information and peer reviews and they seek access to products without the burdens of ownership. They are optimistic and idealistic, dedicated to wellness, exercise, eating smarter and smoking less. Generation Xers are those born between 1965 and 1980; they value loyalty and are loyal to good leadership and although they still use traditional media, such as television, they are increasingly active on social media. They put their family first, prioritising spending on children,

housing etc., they seek a work-life balance and are realistic and pragmatic.

Today's world is a busy place, busier than it was just a few years ago; it is a world of constant change where everything seems to be more immediate - 24 hour news, texts, constant updates, instant gratification and a craving for connections and networking. All this has become normal life for younger people, so when we communicate with them, we need to use technology, because its part of their daily life, it connects them to the world. They are hyper-connected and want to know what their friends and peers are doing and where, around the clock. Embrace social media, it's where many people "live" these days, often checking their phone hourly. If you don't have a social media presence for your club, create and maintain one that shows prospective members what you're doing and how they can get involved. Ian Elliott our Public Image chair will help you do this. Younger people are more likely to communicate by text message than a phone call or email, and after you've connected, stay in touch by text, everyone texts and Rotary needs to text as well.

It's been my experience that people will make time for the things that add value to their lives. Younger people are seeking mentors with insight, experience and clout, they are looking for inspiration - this is exactly what many Rotary Clubs have to offer. Rotarians are people of action who often come together to make significant changes in our local and international communities, frequently saving and changing lives. I believe it is Rotarians experience, leadership and motivation that is our Unique Selling Point and can help us bridge the generational gap we see in our club membership profile.

When discussing Rotary's future our founder, Paul Harris, once said "Evolution not Revolution" and he was right, evolution is inevitable. However, clubs shouldn't change for change sake, don't discredit the things your Rotary club is doing well, be proud of Rotary's traditions and achievements, in contrast, if your membership isn't satisfied with the way it is now, or worried as to the club's future, you may want to change direction. You may want to review some club traditions that might be confusing or unacceptable to new members. My Rotary experience is that clubs make great efforts to get potential members along to a meeting and then either don't involve them, or give them a predefined list of what they are expected to do. Tell potential members what your club does, your service projects, networking and leadership development opportunities and social events. Why not ask potential new member what they want see in the local community or

## Rotary in East Anglia



ask them what they are passionate about? Why not allow them to offer new ideas to the club? Show them that Rotary is a place to learn, to solve important local issues, a place where they can share skills across generations and learn from their experiences in Rotary.

The expense of Rotary can be a big turnoff to potential members. Be transparent about the breakdown of dues – club subs, District subs, RI subs and additional costs, regular meals, charter night etc. Consider reducing the cost of being a Rotarian. Many clubs in our district are now moving to no planned meal at meetings, rather they hold a usual Rotary meeting and if members wish to eat they do so either before or after the scheduled meeting and rather than losing members, they are growing.

Understand that people are busy with many calls on their time, so be totally flexible and take advantage of flexible meeting policies. All clubs (not just satellite) now have the flexibility to meet how they want and when they want. It doesn't have to be the same get-together week after week. Meetings should be fun, a unique experience, something exciting that can't be missed. Make your club family-friendly, welcoming families to club events, celebrating family and personal events like birthdays, weddings, milestones or personal achievements. Assign a mentor to new members, matching interests, skills, and background. Mentors also benefit by staying engaged, honing their leadership skills and building meaningful connections with other members.

Research shows that Rotarians are at the highest risk of leaving their clubs in the first two years, so it's critical we engage new members early and don't assume that members are content after those first few years. Lives evolve and change, clubs who retain members provide new and different ways of engaging them over time, so they continue finding value in their membership experience. Rotary is an ideal mix of people, it brings ordinary people together in extraordinary circumstances and with Rotary clubs in 200 countries it transforms local people into global citizens.