




# The Most Important Avenue of Service

A Guide to Membership Growth and Improved Retention



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**Rotary**   
District 5230

**Rotary**   
Club of Clovis

## Introduction

Rotary International is a worldwide service organization with over 35,000 clubs in 200 countries consisting of over 1.2 million members. Rotary's marketing materials identifies its members as "neighbors, friends, leaders, and problem-solvers who see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change – across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves".

The Mission of Rotary is to provide service to others, promote integrity, and advance world understanding, goodwill, and peace through our fellowship of business, professional, and community leaders.

Rotary clubs vary from one another in a number of ways. They vary in the size of the club and the time of day and type of location where they meet. The members vary in the diversity of age, religion, politics, race and gender. Some clubs serve meals while others meet for cocktails. Some clubs are very formal while others are more informal.

Unfortunately, one thing almost all clubs have in common is a "declining membership".

It is a premise of this paper that clubs share a common fault that has lead to this downward trend. Simply stated – clubs are not run as a "business" and clubs mistake who their customers are.

If businesses are not retaining old customers and gaining new customers the leaders make it their top priority to find out why and correct the reasons. Common sense says the same principle should apply to Rotary Clubs. It begins with identifying who is the Rotary club's customer - **the Club's customers are its members and the District's customers are its clubs**. Repeat that a few times so it really sinks in. Many Rotarians share the belief that the club's customers are the organizations and projects supported by their club. This misguided notion often leads clubs to focus attention in the wrong direction which adversely affects the club's ability to retain existing members and gain new members. Clubs that focus attention on their members discover that satisfied members will give more of their time and treasure to the club's projects which improves the overall effectiveness of the club.

Now that the club's customers have been identified it is incumbent upon the clubs' leadership to make its members a top priority. Club members are keenly aware of the priorities of the club's leadership. Members of the club observe where the club's leadership spends time, energy and the club's treasure. Make your members (customers) your club's top priority. In doing so, retention will improve and without being asked your members will begin bringing in their friends and associates to join in on the positive (fun) experience.

Leading a club to become more effective requires a multi-year effort, not a hit-and-miss one-month-a-year effort. It takes focus and consistency, which is often lost in time and the chaos of other activities. It is of upmost importance that the leaders keep membership satisfaction in sharp focus because it will be necessary to change past customs and practices. When we analyze the operations of effective clubs, we find that they are clear about their efforts to retain existing members and what it takes to attract new members.

**To reverse membership decline, clubs must focus on becoming more effective in satisfying their members' needs. It will not happen until leaders at all levels establish doing so as their number one priority.** If clubs and Districts fail to make this a priority they will continue on their downward trend, and, as that trend indicates; many clubs and some districts will reach their point of no return – their tipping point – and will cease to exist.

Reversing the membership freefall is not an option, it is a necessity.

The membership decline in Rotary clubs needs – no – demands bold persistent experimentation in order to reverse course. Efforts to pursue new members and retain existing members cannot simply be a repeat of the past. Clubs must recognize that doing the same thing over and over again expecting a different result is lunacy. Common sense says we must try different approaches. If the first attempt at a different approach doesn't work, admit it and try something else. But above all, stay focused and remain persistent!

This paper will begin and end this paper with the following paragraph:

**Every club needs to ask itself if it is a membership organization that provides service or a service organization with members.**

The First Object of Rotary clearly defines a club's purpose - *"The development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service"*. Note: it is NOT, repeat, NOT the development of service as an opportunity for members. We must operate clubs as membership organizations that provides service. The club's customers are its members. It is our job as leaders to provide quality customer service.

## The Most Important Avenue of Service

The Guiding Principles of Rotary are: the Object of Rotary, the Four-Way Test and the Avenues of Service.

In the Introduction we briefly discussed the First Object of Rotary and the clear message contained therein – "the development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service".

We will now shift our attention to the Avenues of Service: Community Service, International Service, Youth Service, Club Service and Vocational Service.

Which of the Avenues of Service best describes your club's most significant efforts?

It is likely you chose Community Service or Youth Service, the two most popular of the Avenues of Service. Because you did not choose Club Service, there is much for you to now consider.

It is our belief that Club Service, the most neglected of the Avenues of Service, is actually the most important. Your willingness to keep an open mind in this discussion could result in significant benefit to your club.

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It is a widely known fact that Rotary International has struggled for years to maintain its membership. In 2000 there were 1.17 million Rotarians in 29,238 clubs. Today, in 2021, Rotary has over 35,000 clubs with a total of 1.2 million Rotarians. You can clearly see over the past 20+ years that Rotary gained 6,000 new clubs while total membership remained flat. Essentially for every new Rotarian gained in a new club a Rotarian was lost in an established club. But we know it was actually worse than that. While new clubs were being chartered existing clubs were also adding new members but unfortunately those clubs were losing existing members at an even faster rate. We need to break the cycle of adding new clubs to offset declining membership in existing clubs.



*Rotarians in existing clubs*

Can this cycle be broken? How?

In redirecting our attention to individual clubs would you agree that most clubs have a “tradition” in the way their meetings are conducted? From year to year, the new president conducts the meetings similar to their predecessors, some better than others but generally in the same format.

Please allow me a little leeway as I bring Einstein into this discussion. It is commonly known that Einstein defined insanity as doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. Now that is not meant to be taken literally but it certainly raises a question regarding my Rotary club and yours. Each year we get a new President with fresh ideas and the Board adds a few new members and loses a few. The new Board meets and the primary conversations and focus are centered on this year’s fundraiser, which organizations we want to support, and maybe talk of having a membership drive. We put the District Governor’s visit on the calendar and begin the year with a burst of enthusiasm. Need I point out that is most likely the same thing last year’s board did and the year before and the year before.

With an energetic new president and a fresh new board you have the beginnings of what sometimes is referred to as the club having “a good year”. At one time or another we have all been discouraged to see the club gain momentum during a “good year” only to see it lost the following year under a less energetic president. Has your club experienced this difference in energy from one year to another?

Are you ready to step up and accept the responsibility of providing leadership to your club? This does not mean you have to volunteer to become president or repeat as president. It means you will take an active role in improving your club. Will this year be a good year or a bad year? Are you willing to listen to new ideas?

We believe the overall experience in your club can be more fulfilling for your members and beneficial to your club’s health and it can be accomplished without doing anything radical. What we are proposing will engage more members by spreading the workload more evenly across the club.

Back to Einstein and making a commitment not to repeat the same thing over and over. Are you and your board content to continue on the path you are on and watch your membership continue to slowly decline? Or, is your Board willing to make some simple adjustments in the focus within your club with the expectation and likelihood of achieving different results? When was the last time your board

discussed the topic of Club Service? Let me guess, never. When was the last time your board discussed the topic of Membership? Let me guess, frequently.

Ironically, focusing on Club Service will grow your membership and improve retention while focusing on Membership, a standard practice in Rotary clubs, will actually place your club in a constant decline. We will go out on a limb by saying we believe the failure to properly prioritize Club Service is one of the major factors in both Rotary's declining membership and its struggles to recruit and retain new members.

In this paper we will make suggestions for you to "think out of the box" and look in a different way at your board positions, member responsibilities and club activities.

## Redefining Club Service

If you want to have a little fun, at your next regular meeting, walk around your club and randomly ask members to name the Five Avenues of Service. Most likely, after a little struggle several could provide the correct answer and it is likely others would fail. Then progress to an even tougher question – ask them to "define Club Service".

If you want to experience a little frustration log on to the Rotary.org website and type in the keywords "Club Service" or "define Club Service" or "definition of Club Service" or "Avenues of Service". In the first several pages of results you will find responses of "service club", "youth service", "vocational service", "community service" and lots of other results but nothing on "club service".

Eventually under the keywords "Avenues of Service" you will find a definition: "Club Service focuses on making clubs strong. A thriving club is anchored by strong relationships and an active membership development plan."

In browsing the internet we found a definition on the website of a Rotary club in Vermont which says "**Club Service** focuses on strengthening fellowship and ensuring the effective functioning of the club. This "Avenue" promotes the development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service. It involves the activities necessary to make the club function successfully and achieve its goals.

So there we are, one of our five Avenues of Service, and it barely exists on Rotary's website and better definitions can be found elsewhere.

Let's look closer at the Vermont club's definition. Let's break it down into three segments:

- 1) Focus on strengthening fellowship and ensuring the effective functioning of the club.
- 2) Promote the development of acquaintance and the opportunity for service, and
- 3) Conduct the activities necessary to make the club function successfully and achieve its goals.

WOW! Three simple things that say so much.

These three things are the basis for everything in this program and are a blueprint for placing emphasis on this Avenue of Service.

Is it possible Rotary itself has not seen the connection? Failure to place importance on this Avenue of Service results in a club functioning at less than capacity. Clubs that run smoothly have more fun, more social interaction, more hands on to help with projects and more minds to develop new ideas. No matter where a club currently stands, there is room for more: more community service, more international service, more vocational service and more youth service. That's what a "membership organization that provides service" does, they provide service and more is better. Note: we did not call ourselves a service organization.

We would argue there is a direct correlation between the overall health of a club and its capacity to provide service. The success of a club in any given year is not measured in how many dollars it can provide for a project but rather the path the club is on regarding its own sustainability. Is your club growing or declining, and why? And what is being done to correct or improve it?

This is where you come in. Regardless of the path your club is currently on: upward, level or downward, the trajectory can improve in an upward direction by following a number of simple actions focused on CLUB SERVICE. By improving your club's health you increase the ability of your club to provide more service, and isn't that what it's all about?

## Things you can do

Below you will find 20 recommended actions that should be taken into consideration to make Club Service your club's number one priority. At first glance the list looks overwhelming and the tendency would be to abandon it but if you take a closer look you will discover it is simply a refinement of the things your club already does. These actions are not a radical change for your club, they are simply a redirection of focus. Your club will still have the same internal committees and conduct your same fundraising activities. Your club will continue to support the organizations and charities it traditionally supports and your club meetings will only appear to have minor differences from the current meeting format. Examine each of the recommended actions and discover the similarities to your current methods with the realization that adopting these methods results in a change in focus which will increase membership growth and improve retention.

1. **BOARD SIZE** – If possible, adjust the size of the Board to either 6 or 12 Directors at Large exclusive of the Officers. This number is dependent on the size of your club. If you have approx 50 or more members select 12 directors at large as your board size. This number does not include your officers – president, secretaries, treasurer or immediate past



president.

Why? You will see as we progress that board members will be utilized in a non-traditional manner and these numbers balance the work load of the club's activities

- 2. BOARD POSITIONS** – if your board does not already have two secretaries, add one and identify the two as – Recording and Correspondence. The Recording Secretary is responsible for all interaction with RI, the District, handling board meeting agendas and minutes, etc. The Corresponding Secretary is responsible for the newsletter which is emailed weekly. This Secretary is the single source of correspondence by email with the membership of the club.



Sharing the responsibilities of this important position will ensure the likelihood that more things will get done and improves the overall efficiency of club operations. It also decreases the chance that things get overlooked. The Corresponding Secretary is the only club member to send mass emails under normal conditions. This minimizes the number of Rotary emails a member receives in a week and increases the likelihood the emails will be opened. Other members wishing to share info should ask the Corresponding Secretary to include the info in the newsletter or through an email whichever is appropriate.

- 3. CLUB PRESIDENT** – This may surprise you but the Club President should not “run” your club. The club should be “run” by the Board of Directors. Simply stated: **The Board runs the club, the President runs the meetings.**

The President's role is to:

- a) preside over club and board meetings
- b) conduct club assemblies
- c) lead by example through participation in club projects and fundraisers
- d) serve as a cheerleader to Board directors to ensure the Teams and the Committees are active and meeting their timelines
- e) promote the club to the community
- f) work with the District Governor and Assistant Governor to ensure the club is operating in compliance with the rules and guidelines contained in RI's governance documents, Rotary Code of Policies and the District's Policy Manual.

Clubs that experience “good years” and “bad years” are typically the clubs that place the responsibility of “running” the club onto their president. Year to year consistency comes from the board, not the “one year” leaders.

Presidents should avoid promoting any of their “pet” causes during their year. In other words, if the President also belongs to another non-profit that has not been previously supported by your club either financially or through a hands-on project, the President should consider refraining from proposing support during his/her year as President. If requests from other members are not approved and the President’s pet project gets funded it has the risk of being viewed as “self-serving” rather than “service above self”. The alternative is to request support for this organization when you are president-elect or past president so there is no appearance of inappropriate or unwanted pressure. As President you will be best served by supporting the grants and sponsorship requests proposed by your club members and focusing your extra energy on items a) through f) above. You club will be healthier and you will be viewed as a “leader” and respected by your club for having a “good” year. In our club the President has a spending limit of only \$100. See Item 13. CLUB DONATIONS AND SUPPORT.

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- 4. DIRECTOR RESPONSIBILITIES** – In Item 1. BOARD SIZE you restructured your Board to include either 6 or 12 at large members plus the Officers. We will now address the responsibilities of those at large Board members (Directors) under this new structure. Each Director will now have two separate responsibilities and each responsibility carries a different title: “Director” and “Team Leader”.

As a “Director” they attend Board meetings and perform the normal duties and responsibilities of that role. Each Director will also oversee a proportionate number of the club’s committees. For example if the club has 18 standing committees (community relations, membership, finance, international, vocational, social media, speakers, fundraising, etc.) six of the Directors would have one committee under them and the remaining six would each have two committees under them. Each Director may or may not actually serve on the committee(s) under them, but rather will serve as a cheerleader to ensure those committees remain active and accomplish their goals in a timely manner. Directors will review the timelines provided in Item 9. DIRECTOR’S TIMELINE and work with the Committee chairs to ensure the projects, etc. are being completed in a timely manner. The form labeled as Attachment 1 in this document can be used to organize the Committees. A completed sample of this form can be viewed using the “Committees” link on the About Us page of the Clovis Rotary website <https://clovisrotaryclub.com/About%20Us.html>

As mentioned above the other role of each Director is serving as a “Team Leader”. In that capacity each Director is assigned a proportionate number of the club’s total members as members of his/her Team. With twelve Team Leaders in a club of approximately 60 members, each Team will consist of the Team Leader and approximately four team members. The responsibilities of the “Team” are discussed in Item 5. TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES. In a club with 30 members and six at large directors you will have similar team sizes – six teams, each with a team leader and four team members. The form labeled as Attachment 2 in this document can be used to organize the Teams. A completed sample of this form can be viewed using the “Teams” link on the About Us page of the Clovis Rotary website <https://clovisrotaryclub.com/About%20Us.html>



We have all experienced what is commonly referred to as the 80/20 rule wherein 20% of the club's members are doing 80% of the club's work and 80% of its members are doing what's left. Few Rotary clubs are exempt from this phenomenon. Most often the 20% of the club members that are doing the disproportionate share of the work are also serving on the Board. Unfortunately this structure can lead to some things being missed or simply not completed. Quite often some members "burn out" and this disproportionate distribution of the work does not promote the camaraderie you desire to have in a volunteer organization. By implementing the recommendations in this paper your club will engage more members and improve the percentage of "workers" in your club. Team Responsibilities are further defined below.

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- 5. TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES** – Once or twice a year, depending on having either 6 or 12 directors, each Team will provide Club Meeting Service duties and plan a Club Social (see Item 6. CLUB SOCIAL below).



Club Meeting Service Duties (for one calendar month) includes:

- a. providing a greeter
- b. introducing visiting Rotarians and guests
- c. hosting the guest speaker (accompany them to make sure they have a pleasant experience)
- d. leading the pledge of allegiance
- e. providing an invocation
- f. drawing numbers for seating (same week of each month, i.e. 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of each month)
- g. providing a birthday cake for birthdays and anniversaries (1<sup>st</sup> meeting each month)
- h. Happy Bucks or similar (once, no more than twice a month with proceeds for each three months donated to a designated charity)
- i. Fun Activity (once a month)
- j. Rotary Info (at least twice/mo)
- k. Vocational / Personal Info (weekly or twice/mo depending on total membership)



A completed worksheet will be presented to the club president 3 to 5 days before the first meeting of your Team's duty month. Any changes that may occur as the month progresses should be sent to the president a few days prior to the affected meeting. To organize these duties use the form included as Attachment 3.

Creating this structure has multiple purposes and benefits. Typically a lot of these weekly responsibilities fall on the president and add unnecessary work and stress to anyone serving in that role. Quite often we see club presidents “burn out” which also increases the difficulty in finding others to step up and serve in that role. If we can lighten the load of being president, others will step up and clubs will become more efficient. We have all seen weaker presidents walk in the door just prior to the meeting and ask someone if they will lead the pledge or say an invocation. A lack of advanced planning by the President is a sign of what is to follow – a boring meeting, with nothing special, and a regurgitation of a few announcements with members wanting to get past that part and hear the speaker. **Note: when the speaker is the portion of the meeting that members most look forward to and enjoy, something is wrong with the meeting.** Please pause and read that sentence once again. It is impossible to have great speakers every week so you are settling on your club having some good weeks and some bad weeks and your members remain uncertain when to bring a prospective new member because you only get one shot at making a first impression. Your members will even become hesitant to invite a prospective new member knowing that the guest will experience “good weeks” and “bad weeks”. It is our belief this is a major reason most Rotarians never invite a prospective new member to come as a guest. As Rotarians, we are willing to tolerate the ups and downs of our club meetings but are unwilling to expose our friends and associates to it. If you want new members do not gamble on what their experience will be. This will be discussed in more detail in Item 14. MEMBERSHIP below.

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- 6. CLUB SOCIAL** – Each Team will also be responsible to plan a Club Social once or twice a year depending on a Board size of 6 or 12 Directors. The assigned month for Planning a Club Social will be six months out of phase with the Team’s Club Meeting Service month(s), i.e. the Team with Club Service duties in February will plan a Social in August. The Club will have twelve monthly socials, one per month.

This is another responsibility that has been designed to share the duties. Some clubs have a social committee that plans two or three socials a year. Usually the same members show up for those socials and the rest of the members stay at home. When a single committee has the responsibility of planning the socials for the year there is usually very little diversity in the type of socials that are planned. The few members that show up consist of a few board members plus some of the more active general members. There is little benefit in planning socials for the same members over and over and especially events only attended by the most active members.

Having different Teams plan socials ensures a variety of events. This diversity of socials will attract a diversity of your members. You will see members begin attending socials that previously never attended any of the social activities. With 12 Team Leaders each Team will plan one social per year. If the club board has only 6 directors, each Team Leader will have two months of Club Meeting Service duties and will plan two socials. This sharing of responsibilities engages more members in the process, improves the relationships of Team members and strengthens the bonds of friendship between the Team members. Remember, each social should be logged as a “make-up”. Do not cancel a weekly meeting just because a social is planned during the same week. One activity involves the member (club meeting) the

other activity (social) engages the member and a spouse/significant other and/or children, so each serves a different purpose and provides different benefits in the larger scheme of things. Use the form included as Attachment 2 to organize the Teams and their assigned months of service.

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- 7. BOARD MEETINGS** – Use a Consent Agenda and limit meetings to a maximum of one hour. A Consent Agenda can be used to include the Secretary’s Report, the Treasurer’s Report and Committee Reports. The board will only spend time on these topics if a question is raised.



Using a Consent Agenda reduces the time wasted reviewing topics that do not justify that time. Your Board created a budget at the start of the year so why engage in lengthy discussions on items that are paid during a given month that are within that budget. The board still has access to all information but only spends time on these topics if a question is raised. If no specific questions are asked, simply approve the Secretary’s report, the Financials report, and other reports in one motion. These reports should be sent by email to the full Board no later than 3 business days prior to the meeting. At the meeting the Board should spend its time discussing items relative to the health of the club and how to improve its operation. The meetings also include discussions on providing financial or physical support to other organizations, adopting new projects, ideas to have more fun, and other business items as is necessary. Meetings should not exceed one hour unless unusual exceptions necessitate more time.

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- 8. RESPONSIBILITIES TIMELINE** – Create a Spreadsheet identifying Each Team’s designated months for providing Club Service or planning a Social. A sample form is provided as Attachment 2 in this paper. You will have either 6 teams or 12. If you only have six teams simply list Teams twice in the Table under Club Service and under Club Social.

Creating a published timeline for the Team Duties let’s everyone know what they need to do and when it needs to be done. There are no excuses, if it’s a bad month for a Team Leader because he/she has a planned a vacation, either get your Team members to step up without you or trade months with another Team Leader. The idea is the workload has been distributed evenly and no one has a heavy load, so there is no reason not to get it done. The President is presented with a completed worksheet simply receives a monthly schedule and knows which members are performing which duties at each weekly meeting.

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- 9. DIRECTOR’S TIMELINE:** Create a list of all the projects for the year and organize them by the month the activity will occur. Then add to that list any deadlines that will occur prior to each



specific event or activity. Below you are provided a sample of a few random months. A full year timeline used by our club can be viewed by using the “Committee Timelines” link on the About Us page of the Clovis Rotary website <https://clovisrotaryclub.com/About%20Us.html>

ROTARY CLUB OF \_\_\_\_\_

(sample) ANNUAL TIMELINE OF ACTIVITIES

JULY

- Start of New Rotary Year / Polio Plus Month
- Update Website and DACdb to reflect new Rotary year, Officers and Board
- Contact Elementary Schools for number of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders for dictionary order
- Submit District Grant Application
- Treasurer submits dues invoices to membership
- Treasurer sends member dues to District & RI
- Review Policies & Procedures for any necessary changes

NOVEMBER

- Rotary Foundation Month
- Foundation Chair coordinates Foundation education, donation drive, and acknowledges PHF’s
- Club nominations for next Rotary year’s Board of Directors and President Nominee
- Club Crab Feed table reservations
- Activate Crab Feed ticket sales on Club website and Event Bright ticket reservation system.
- Begin sales of sponsor opportunities for the event-
- Two Cities Marathon Event (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday)
- Board review of delinquent financial and attendance records of membership
- Board review and recommendation of 3 (no less than 2) President Nominee candidates
- Christmas stocking decorating and donation collection-
- Bell Ringing for Salvation Army (Nov/Dec)
- Identify and make donation to selected Military family/ies
- District Foundation/End Polio Now Dinner

RE-OCCURRING ACTIVITIES

- 1st Tuesday Salvation Army Food Distribution
- 1st Friday birthday/anniversary cake
- 2nd Monday Board Meeting
- 3rd Friday mix up seating
- 4th Tuesday Clovis Rotary Breakfast
- Every week Corresponding Secretary distributes News and Notes
- Every Friday Reading Program at Sierra Vista Elementary
- Every Friday (other than DARK) club meeting

Waiting too late to begin a project or not having help on a project can create enough stress and anxiety to destroy the good feelings about the project itself. It also reflects poorly on your club. When you look at the Rotarians in our clubs you find business, professional and community leaders. These are individuals who operate daily in an environment where timeliness, efficiency, productivity, teamwork,

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creativity, etc. are the norm. We spoke earlier on the importance of running the club like a business. This cannot be over emphasized. We must create an environment that is comfortable for our members not a place of anxiety and frustration. Improving our efficiency leads to improved retention, increased membership and ultimately providing more service.

**10. WEBSITE:** Develop a website for the club that is a source of quality information. Keep it updated.

It should include (at a minimum):

- a list of birthdays, socials, club projects, etc. (publish two months in advance and update as necessary)
- information about your club
- a list of your current and past projects
- information about Rotary International
- other information that may be of interest to a prospective member
- images that show the members working and having fun
- a link to the DACdb or ClubRunner, if your clubs uses either of these databases.



Rotary has a high percentage of “older” members and we must recognize these members are the past and the present but they are NOT the future. They still provide great benefit to our clubs but the world and our society are continually evolving. Gaining younger members and having more diversity is the future. This is another one of those doing the same and getting the same scenarios. We must recognize the younger generations are tech savvy and are active in social media and engaged in e-commerce and other activities on the web. If someone logs onto your club’s website what will they find? Having a two page website with little content or outdated data makes a statement about your club – it conveys the message your club is outdated, not tech savvy and has little to say about itself. Remember, you only get one chance to make a first impression. Does your club have a website? If not, why not? If yes, how much can a visitor learn about what your club does? Does it show your members engaged in service? Is it a useful tool for your members?

**11. FACEBOOK** – Create a Facebook Page and frequently post to it.

Does your club have a Facebook page? If not, why not? If you want to connect with prospective new



members this is the place to be. You probably will not find a lot of prospective elderly males on Facebook, but wait, you already have a lot of those. If you want younger members and diversity, this is a great place to start in social media. No excuses here, you simply need to get it done. Also

consider Instagram and other popular social media platforms. Using an analogy – if you want to be successful in fishing be sure to use the correct bait and fish in the right pond.

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**12. NEWSLETTER:** Recruit two or more of your members to create a weekly newsletter. It needs to be relevant. Monitor the images placed in the newsletter to make sure over a period of time ALL members are represented. Members enjoy seeing their photo in a newsletter so make sure your editors keep track of including everyone. Feature a brief story on last week's speaker and this week's speaker. Once a month include a section called the Board's Corner or similar which includes a recap of board decisions at the most recent board meeting.



Do you currently have a newsletter? If so, does it really contain any “news”? Is it something your members look forward to receiving or is it read by 10% to 20% of your members? Be willing to embrace change, this is another of those doing the same and getting the same results situations. If you have a newsletter that is not of value to your members, change it. Post news from other clubs, from the District, from your local high schools or organizations your club supports. Ask your members what they would like to see in a revised edition. The newsletter is emailed by the Corresponding Secretary on the same day of each week. Members will look forward to receiving it.

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**13. CLUB DONATIONS and SUPPORT** – Many clubs are known for supporting one major organization (charity) in their area. Is that your club? If so, consider if your club would be better served donating to and supporting numerous organizations rather than backing one specific organization. This creates an enhanced image of the club as it relates to community service. Rather than donating a larger sum to one organization, donate smaller sums to several organizations. Most Rotarians also belong to other organizations. These are the organizations you should support. Yes, support organizations that your members also support. By supporting an organization a member belongs to your club will further develop that member's participation in and loyalty to your club. Why support an organization that consists of strangers when you can support an organization connected to your members?

Here's one option of providing support that may work for your club and help with retention.



Typically most clubs prepare their annual budget with an assumption of providing donations to the same organizations they supported in the past. If you have any additional funds set aside for new requests in this Rotary year consider a different method of selecting recipients. As an example, provide each new member an opportunity to have a donation made in their name to a charitable organization of their choice in an amount of \$500 (or another

amount as your club may decide). New members earn this opportunity by doing the following in a consecutive six month period – participate in two club projects, attend two club socials, serve as a Greeter three times, assist at the Sgt at Arms table three times, give a 5 to 10 minute talk on Rotary prior to the Guest Speaker and maintain at least 50% attendance during this period. Upon completion of the tasks, the new member reports completion to the club Secretary and a donation is made to the organization designated by the new member. You have accomplished several things in this one offer: assured attendance and participation of the new member, made him/her a hero at the organization receiving the donation, and you are now more likely to retain this member because they have now established themselves into the club.

Several clubs have one non-profit they support and provide a large percentage of their annual support to one organization. This does very little to improve your club's recognition in the community as a provider of service. It also helps your fundraiser to support multiple organizations. Your donors appreciate seeing all the good being accomplished. When a club makes one large donation a year to one organization, your donors and your members may feel disconnected from your mission. It's a number game, become engaged with numerous organizations and the number of people that learn of your club greatly increases and the opportunity to gain new members also increases. Your retention rate will also increase when you are providing support to multiple organizations that your club members belong to. Club loyalty and retention are directly related.

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**14. MEMBERSHIP** – You should never, *repeat never*, ask your members to invite prospective new members to a meeting. **Never hold a membership drive.** If your club is fun and productive, your members will want to share the positive experience with their friends and associates. Here's the key: EVERY meeting has to be fun. You can have a good speaker or even one that is not so good but what a prospective new member sees in the interaction between members will be the deciding factor. If they see everyone enjoying each other, they will want to be a part of it. If they simply see people eating a meal and frequently looking at their cell phone or watch to see if they have any texts or how much longer it will be before they can get out of there, you will not increase membership. Meetings **MUST** be fun, every meeting, because you never know when a guest will be there and you will never get a second chance to make a first impression. Let's address a reality that is rarely discussed or even briefly mentioned. ***The reality is not everyone deserves or wants to be a Rotarian.*** Your members are a good judge of the people that should be asked to attend a meeting and ultimately asked to join the club.

It is as simple as this – your club **MUST** be a place that any member you have is certain that if they invite someone to a meeting that person will have fun and enjoy what's going on. This does not mean inviting someone when you have a guest speaker that is high powered. You invite prospective new members with the certainty that comes from knowing how the rest of the meeting will be regardless of the speaker. People do not join Rotary to hear guest speakers or for the meal, they join for the experience. What is the "experience" in your club? If you have to ask your members to invite someone that is a clear

sign something is wrong and experience has shown they will not do it. Ask yourself why? The answer can be found in the preceding paragraph.

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**15. NEW MEMBERS and RETENTION**– Keeping new members will depend on how well you get them integrated into the club. Our club provides a red name badge with the new members name hand written on it. To get a “Blue Badge” we require them to serve as greeters and also at the sergeant at arms sign in table at least a few times during their first couple months. We also require participation in at least two projects and attendance at two socials. Establish your own requirements but make the new members feel the blue badge is a badge of honor they have earned and in the experience of earning it, they began to establish an acquaintance with other members.



Have board members make an effort to sit with new members a few times during the same time period. Thoroughly interview prospective new members to ensure they understand their commitment both financially and physically.

No one wants to be in a group and feel unwelcome at a particular table or at a social or project. People join organizations to be a part of something and it is irrelevant that we have 1.2 million members in 35,000 clubs in 200+ countries, or that we eliminated polio, etc. These are all great accomplishments but for each member it is about the personal experience. If they look forward to the weekly meetings their attendance improves, relationships with other members continually grow and the club becomes one big family. I know that sounds cliché but if a member does not see themselves as part of the club, they will eventually leave, more often sooner than later. New members also become unsolicited recruiters if their experience is good. If the experience is less than great, they are simply on a time clock as to when they will give up and leave. Retention begins when new members are first inducted and consistently continues with a deliberate effort to always ensure the club is inclusive in socials, service projects, etc. If one of your members misses three or four consecutive meetings, does anyone call to check on that member? Do you know the names of the children of any of your members? If so, how many can you name? Is attendance at your socials mostly individual members? Or do you find that most members are accompanied by spouses and/or significant others? Do you have any socials that include children? Membership growth and retention are natural byproducts of a healthy club.

We recently introduced an incentive to new members we believe will help solidify their foundation as a member. We found that after earning their blue badge some new members began to retreat in their efforts and participation and we recognize this is a critical time when some new members become very active and others start to drift away. Unfortunately those who begin to drift are the ones who leave the club a year later for no good reason.



To counteract this cycle we established an incentive program which must be completed in a consecutive six (6) month period which begins immediately after completing the requirements to earn their Blue Badge.

The New Member shall:

1. Attend two (2) fellowship and two (2) service projects sponsored by the club.
2. Assist the Registration/Attendance Sgt-at-Arms at least three (3 times) at the check-in table
3. Serve two (2) times as a Greeter
4. Attend greater than 50% of the general club meetings. Normal make-ups will apply, i.e. projects, socials, District functions, committee meetings, etc.
5. Present one five to ten minute presentation on a Rotary topic at a regular club meeting.
6. Present one five to ten minute presentation on their vocation at a regular club meeting.
7. Advise the Recording Secretary when requirements have been completed.

Upon satisfactory completion of the above within the 180 day period the club will:

- Donate up to a maximum of \$500 (the actual amount as requested by the new member) in the new member's name to a charity, non-profit, etc. chosen by the new member.

Completing these requirements ensures the member has stayed active during the critical foundation building time and also makes the new member a "hero" at the organization receiving the donation. It's a win-win-win for your club, the new member and the organization receiving the donation. Your club is already making donations to various charitable groups, why not donate to an organization identified by your club member?

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**16. SEATING AT MEETINGS** – as mentioned in Item 5. TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES, bullet "f" you should designate one meeting each month in which numbers are drawn at the sign in table to determine which table number each member will sit at for that meeting. NO Exceptions. This will create an opportunity for more social interaction among members.



Part of the discussion in Item 15. NEW MEMBERS AND RETENTION touches on this topic. It's OK to have close friends in Rotary; it is not OK to exclude others. Your "close" friends can do without you once a month. Mix up the tables by drawing numbers to see where you sit once a month. You will be surprised how happy some members will be when they get to sit at a table that usually seems "reserved" even though no sign is posted. Get to know as many members as possible and it will improve your experience and theirs.

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**17. SCHOLARSHIP FOR MEMBERS** – Many clubs operate with an attitude of "we can't do that" if a proposal would in some way benefit a member. We recommend your club set aside a small

amount of your club's funds and dedicate it to be used on an "as needed" basis for a scholarship to a member in temporary need. Use it to cover the Rotary International dues, the District fees and part of the other Club costs for a six month period of time. Many clubs require their members to eat; others make it optional, which could affect the amount needed. If a member is struggling financially for a period of time rather than have him/her quit, make it possible for them to remain in the club. You will never have a more loyal member after they have recovered from their temporary situation.

If your club is willing to make donations to support total "strangers" why doesn't it make sense to support one of your own. The club should adopt a policy that limits the number of Board officers that are aware of the award so there is no stigma associated with the scholarship. The committee could include any two or three seasoned members with the intent to keep the award of a scholarship closely held. The name of any recipient should only be known by the committee members. Funds are not given to the individual but rather are paid to RI for dues. Many clubs allow prepayment for meals and using this method the individual's account can be pre-loaded with an agreed number of meals. We recommend the member also cover the cost of at least half of the meals as the intent is not a "free ride" but rather a gesture of good will and support. Our club has supported a couple of younger members which allowed them to stay in the club during a time in which they would otherwise have resigned. They are now fully active, self-supporting members.



**18. CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP** – There is no such designation in Rotary but Rotary does allow some flexibility for clubs to become creative if it has potential for gaining new members. Practically every club has designated someone as an "Honorary" member. Under Rotary rules that designation does not require the payment of RI dues. Does your club have any members who are business professionals that cannot attend every meeting? Of course you do? We all do. A few years ago our club created a "corporate" member position that is simply an Honorary member with a different name. The purpose of this position/person is to be able to attend meetings when the "active" member cannot attend and have that attendance count for the active member. The individual is treated like any other member and assists in projects.

When this idea was first suggested to our board there were a lot of skeptics to its potential benefit. With a willingness to think and act out of the box, our Board agreed to bring in two members as "corporate" members. To our surprise there was an improvement in the member's attendance and the corporate member would routinely attend the same meetings. In one of these cases the corporate member accepted a job with another company and rather than quit that person joined our club as a regular active member. In the other several months after serving in that position the "corporate" member decided to become an active member. So there it is, two new members from a program of which several were skeptics. The lesson learned is that we should remain open to new ideas. New ideas will bring your club new members and improve the retention of existing members.

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**19. CLUB BYLAWS** – We recommend your club initiate the actions suggested in this paper. Nearing the end of your club’s first year using these methods, if your club decides to stay on this path, it is recommended to modify your club’s bylaws to include the new structure of Teams, etc.



One of the main reasons clubs have good years and bad years is the reliance on the president to get things done. By perpetuating this structure into your club’s bylaws future presidents can rely on the Club Service responsibilities getting done. This will provide more stability to the health of the club from year to year. A copy of sample bylaws with this structure included can be found on our club’s website using the “Club Bylaws” link on this page

<https://clovisrotaryclub.com/About%20Us.html>. A sample copy of a club policy and procedures manual is also available. These are documents your board can edit to suit any specific methods consistent with your club’s personality. Other forms used in this program are also available on that same webpage.

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**20. FUN** – Once a month at the regular meetings a specific activity designed to engage the members should be scheduled. These are 10 minute activities that kids would do. It can be silly things like building straw towers, and other games requiring tables to compete. You will be surprised by the level of engagement and positive attitude from your members.



This is the last item addressed in this paper but it bears the most significance. A healthy club is a club where the members not only are friendly and cordial to each other but they look forward to the weekly meetings and the opportunity to be around their fellow Rotarians. When a club has this atmosphere and a visitor (prospective new member) sees the camaraderie they will want to be a part of it. We know the source for new members is our existing members. As previously highlighted in this paper – we know our members quite often do not invite someone because of the uncertainty of what their invited guest will experience. This consistently occurs in clubs where the speaker is the highlight of the meeting not the interaction among members.



Members are willing to put up with things they would never ask a friend or business associate to endure but they will not expose others to it. Having fun meetings with occasional fun specific activities changes the environment to one that is welcoming and more consistent. You will find your members become more likely to invite a guest.

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## In Conclusion

Let's close this paper by looking first at Rotary's Mission Statement. It reads: "We provide service to others, promote integrity, and advance world understanding, goodwill, and peace through our fellowship of business, professional, and community leaders."

Note: it provides service "...through our fellowship of business, professional and community leaders"

Now, let's look at Rotary's response to the question "Why join Rotary?" As you examine any list of reasons to join the first two items listed are: "Friendship" and "Business Development", the two principles upon which Rotary was initially founded. Much further down the list you will find "The opportunity to serve".

What stands out here is the clear message that the organization is built on fellowship and friendship and from that foundation the organization provides service. It is not built on service to recruit members.

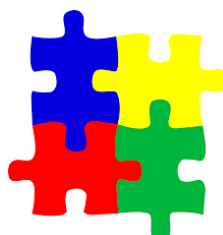
We will now ask ourselves the question that started this paper: Is your club "**a membership organization that provides service or a service organization with members?**"

The First Object of Rotary clearly defines a club's purpose and reinforces the primary element is fellowship. It reads: "*The development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service*". Note: it is NOT the development of service as an opportunity for members.

Healthy clubs are membership organizations (not service organizations) that set their priorities on serving their members. This paper has provided you with the **basics** for making Club Service a priority in your club. We encourage you to seriously consider adjusting your club's focus. Two key factors are: running the club as a business and recognizing the Club's customers are its members.

If a stranger asked one of your club members "what does your club do?" how will your members respond? **Note: this is a very important question.** Will your members simply name one of more of your club's projects? If so, how will those be described? Or, will the response and explanation be centered on the fun and interaction your club members have while accomplishing the club's projects? If the response is solely focused on the activity itself, your club is missing an opportunity and most likely not adding new members or retaining existing members.

**Club Service is the Most Important Avenue of Service** and it is the SECRET to a healthy club with membership growth and improved retention. You can be assured doing more of the same (business as usual) will guarantee more of the same (declining membership). Breaking this cycle is up to you.





Attachment 1

COMMITTEES - Rotary Club of _____ 2021-22					
Past President	President Elect	President	Recording Sec'y	Corres Sec'y	Treasurer

COMMITTEES - Rotary Club of _____ 2021-22					
Director	Director	Director	Director	Director	Director

## Attachment 2

**Rotary Club of \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_ – 20\_\_**

**Teams are different than committees.** Club members can be on multiple committees, but only on one team. Teams are responsible for:

**Club Service** activities include: greeting members, hosting the speaker, salute to the flag, invocation, birthdays and Rotary anniversaries, Happy Bucks or other donation/fun activities, Rotary and member highlights etc.

**Club Social** activities include: planning a social event during the month assigned.

The following is a list of **TEAM** assignments and activity months:

<b>TEAM #</b>	<b>BOARD DIRECTOR (Team Leader)</b>	<b>TEAM MEMBERS</b>	<b>CLUB SERVICE</b>	<b>CLUB SOCIAL</b>
1			JULY	JANUARY
2			AUGUST	FEBRUARY
3			MAY	MARCH
4			OCTOBER	APRIL
5			NOVEMBER	MAY
6			DECEMBER	JUNE
7			JANUARY	JULY
8			FEBRUARY	AUGUST
9			MARCH	SEPTEMBER
10			APRIL	OCTOBER
11			SEPTEMBER	NOVEMBER
12			JUNE	DECEMBER

## Attachment 3

Team Club Service Duties 2021-22				
Duties	February 3rd	February 10th	February 17th	February 24th
Greeter at the door introduce visiting Rotarians and guests	member name	member name	member name	member name
Host guest speaker (sit with them, introduce to others introduce as speaker	member name	member name	member name	member name
Lead Pledge of Allegiance	member name	member name	member name	member name
Invocation (prayer)	member name	member name	member name	member name
Draw #'s for seating, 3rd meeting of month			Sgt at Arms	
Birthday cake, announce B'day and Rotary Anniv	member name			
Happy Bucks or other activity (10 min), once/mo		member name		
Fun Activity (10 min) once/month			member name	
Rotary Info (5 to 10 min) at least twice/month	member name	member name	member name	member name
Vocational / Personal info 5 to 10 min) NLT twice/mo	member name	member name	member name	member name

Copies of forms can be found on this website on the About Us page.

The links are purple. [www.clovisrotary.org](http://www.clovisrotary.org)



## Implementation Timeline

The actions recommended in this paper represent a modest change in the operation of some clubs and a significant change in other clubs. We recommend full implementation on July 1 as the new Rotary year begins with planning a few months in advance to prepare for that conversion.

If that timeframe does not work for you club we suggest the recommended actions be accomplished in phases to ensure a smooth and lasting transition. We encourage clubs to focus sufficient time and attention to complete each phase in a timely manner. Once a phase is completed immediately devote the attention necessary to complete the next phase. Full implementation should be accomplished within 6 to 12 months of the Phase 1 Start Date.

- Phase 1 should be fully completed in 3 to 4 months from the Phase 1 Start Date.
- Phase 2 can be started at any time and should be fully completed no later than 6 months from the Phase 1 Start Date.
- Phase 3 can be started at any time and should be fully completed no later than 9 months from the Phase 1 Start Date.
- Phase 4 can be started at any time and fully completed no later than 12 months from the Phase 1 Start Date or the receipt of an application from a prospective new member, whichever occurs first.
- In Every Phase – have fun, enjoy each other and enjoy providing service.

### Phase 1

1. Board Size
2. Board Positions
3. Club President
4. Director Responsibilities
5. Team Responsibilities
6. Club Social

### Phase 2

7. Board Meetings
8. Responsibilities Timeline
9. Directors Timeline

### Phase 3

10. Website

### Phase 3 (cont)

11. Facebook
12. Newsletter

### Phase 4

13. Club Donations and Support
14. Membership
15. New Members and Retention
16. Seating at Meetings
17. Scholarship for Members
18. Corporate Membership
19. Club ByLaws

### In every Phase

20. Fun

Engage as many members as possible in the process. Having members take ownership of the process will improve retention and encourage the sponsorship of prospective new members. Do not take any shortcuts – fully implement each recommended action. Once in action – minimize deviations from the adopted methods – for example: do not accept a partially completed club service duty worksheet.