

REPORT OF RESULTS: North American Resigned Member Survey

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rotary International deployed 2 surveys in the summer of 2007 to follow up on conclusions drawn from the resigned member survey of 2001 – 02. The primary goal of this project was to discover whether there is a substantial difference in the membership experience of current members and those that have resigned, and to seek suggestions clubs and districts can employ to retain a higher percentage of inducted members.

From resigned members, the **TOP REASONS FOR RESIGNATION** are (in order):

- 1) **Unable to meet attendance requirements**
- 2) **Relocating to a new community**
- 3) **Other** (in order of frequency): **Health, Too much fundraising, Not enough value**

If these **former Rotary club members were to volunteer again**, they would choose the following activities / organizations, in order:

- 1) **Single issue focused fundraiser < 1 day (ex. 5K Fun Run / Walk)**
- 2) **Youth oriented activities (ex. scouting, sports leagues, school board)**
- 3) **Community leadership (ex. city council, community boards)**

When asked, “**Why have you chosen to remain a member of your Rotary club?**” current members responded:

<i>Club fellowship</i>	80.2%
<i>Community service opportunities</i>	64.4%
<i>Networking</i>	34.5%

The following observations are the primary differences between the experiences of former and current Rotary club members in the USA, Canada, and the Caribbean:

- **Short term v. long term commitment** – based on the response order of organizations or activities that former and current members would choose for future volunteer opportunities it appears that individuals who stay with Rotary clubs may be more inclined toward longer term commitments.
- **Community v. international service** – Both groups indicate their number one motivational factor as being “Humanitarian COMMUNITY Service,” however, while former members put “Networking” #2, and “Fellowship” #3, current members report “Humanitarian INTERNATIONAL” service as their 2nd strongest motivational factor for joining a Rotary club.
- **Reason for joining, not always reason for staying** – Former and current members seem to have differing motivations for joining a Rotary club, however, the *reason for joining* does *not* seem to ultimately be the *reason for remaining a member*. When asked what the benefit of Rotary club membership is and why they have chosen to remain with their club, current members overwhelmingly report it is because of fellowship.
- **Spouse / family perception** – Spousal perception and / or family perception can be powerful motivator or demotivator for continuing involvement in an organization such as Rotary. Former members are twice as likely to report their spouse / family felt it consumed too much of their time; and, are 3 times more likely to report their spouse / family felt it was too expensive.

The recommendations that follow synthesize the comments made by respondents and address the top 2 reasons for resignation as well as several recurring themes: mentoring, leadership involvement, education, improving meeting experience, member involvement, and family and fellowship.

Unable to meet attendance requirements – Not enough education is covering meeting attendance and make up. The clubs are informing prospective and new members about the requirement to be at meetings, but stopping short of detailing how many meetings need to be in person with the club and how makes-ups can meet the remaining requirements. Clubs should consider pulling together a comprehensive tip sheet of make-up options based on their by-laws and Rotary International policy (50% every 6 months) and include it in both the prospective and new member information packets.



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This document should also detail the benefits of consistent attendance. Primary among them is fellowship which seems to be the glue that binds members to their club regardless of their initial motivation for joining.

Relocating to a new community – Club secretaries and membership committee members need to take an active role in relocations. Secretaries and committee members should anticipate the needs of a relocating member by either mentioning the self-service membership relocation form found on rotary.org, or offering to call ahead to the governor or local clubs in the new area.

Mentor – To improve Rotary education and strengthen fellowship, clubs should assign each new member an experienced mentor for the first 6 – 12 months. This mentor should be willing to meet with the new member periodically for a separate meal or coffee to provide the new member information about Rotary and the club, explain club dynamics, describe ways to get involved, and answer questions and address concerns.

Leadership Involvement – To improve Rotary education, meeting components and club effectiveness, improve relations with club members and leadership, and strengthen fellowship districts should organize a workshop for new members [and] explain Rotary's involvement with the district. Clubs should assign board members to new members for discussions outside of meetings to continue the education process. Arrange for new members to meet one-on-one with a cadre of existing members. Schedule new members an introduction with each committee to meet with & decide which committee to join. A designated membership committee member should meet with prospects after each meeting to explain the responsibilities and benefits of membership.

To address concerns that club leaders have their own agenda, club leaders need to actively make more effort to contact the membership on issues and allow more time and opportunity for member input. Board members should be assigned to tables to collect input, or distribute club surveys to solicit responses regarding members' wants and needs. Clubs could create a form to fill out quarterly with concerns, questions, or comments.

Education – To improve Rotary education, improve relations with club members and leadership, and strengthen fellowship, build an introduction / induction that emphasizes membership is valued, valuable and has relevance & importance. Develop a structured prospective member information program regarding membership responsibilities and club expectations (e.g. financial support, fundraising and community service project participation expectations, etc.).

Improve Meeting Experience – To improve all aspects of the club experience address weekly program speakers and content. Time and again respondents recommend more fellowship and networking time.

Member Involvement – Get new members involved in small groups or projects right away. Ask them what they want to participate in and then direct their energy by creating a short-term project or asking them to take charge of creating one and implementing it. For committee assignments, have new members interview committee chairs to find the one that best fits their interests. Be sympathetic to the varied structures of family.

Fellowship / Family – Think about the composition of the club and types of activities that are planned. Take a look at the age spectrum of the club. Embrace young working adults to balance the number of retired members. Evaluate the club's current commitment to women, and try building an environment that is accepting and open to women members. Consider the ethnic landscape of the surrounding business and professional community. Comments from both resigned and current members that appeared in many open sections of the surveys indicate that club members are seeking more a diverse and tolerant club.



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PROJECT SCOPE

Rotary International deployed 2 surveys in the summer of 2007 to follow up on conclusions drawn from the resigned member survey of 2001 – 02. The following is a report of the results of the surveys. The surveys were sent to a random sample of current members in the US, Canada, and the Caribbean, as well as a random sample of former members who had terminated their club membership between 1 July 2006 and 15 May 2007 (*demographic overview can be found in Appendix 1*).

The primary goal of this project was to discover whether there is a substantial difference in the membership experience of current members and those that have resigned, and to seek suggestions clubs and districts can employ to retain a higher percentage of inducted members.

REASONS FOR RESIGNATION V. REASONS FOR JOINING AND REMAINING

From resigned members, the **TOP 5 REASONS FOR RESIGNATION** are (in order):

- 1) **Unable to meet attendance requirements**
- 2) **Relocating to a new community**
- 3) **Other** (in order of frequency): **Health, Too much fundraising, Not enough value**
- 4) Retired
- 5) Business pressure

If these **former Rotary club members were to volunteer again**, they would choose the following activities / organizations, in order:

- 1) **Single issue focused fundraiser < 1 day (ex. 5K Fun Run / Walk)**
- 2) **Youth oriented activities (ex. scouting, sports leagues, school board)**
- 3) **Community leadership (ex. city council, community boards)**
- 4) On-call for disaster relief organization
- 5) Cultural institution (ex. arts, entertainment)

Another “membership-based” organization placed 7th of 10 possible responses

These are **the same top three for current members**, however, the order is slightly different, and **current members seem to have more of a penchant for longer term commitments** as evidenced by the ranking at #4 of **“Single issue focused fundraiser 1 – 3 days.”** Another membership-based organization also appears in 7th place for current members.

- 1) **Single issue focused fundraiser < 1 day (ex. 5K Fun Run / Walk)**
- 2) **Community leadership (ex. city council, community boards)**
- 3) **Youth oriented activities (ex. scouting, sports leagues, school board)**
- 4) Single issue focused fundraiser 1 - 3 days (ex. Komen breast cancer 3-day, building a Habitat for Humanity home)
- 5) Cultural institution (ex. arts, entertainment)

Former Rotary club members report that their **primary motivation for joining a Rotary club** was (in order)?

- 1) **Humanitarian COMMUNITY Service**
- 2) **Networking**
- 3) **Fellowship**
- 4) Humanitarian INTERNATIONAL Service

Current members show a clear difference in their primary motivation for joining a Rotary club **with the placement of “Humanitarian INTERNATIONAL Service” in second place** (versus 4th place for former members), with “Networking” and “Fellowship” then appearing in the same order.

- 1) **Humanitarian COMMUNITY service**
- 2) **Humanitarian INTERNATIONAL service**
- 3) **Networking**
- 4) Fellowship



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It is interesting then to see how **current members responded** to questions about the benefits of Rotary club membership and why they continue to remain with a Rotary club:

What is the benefit of being a member of a Rotary club (primary motivation rank from previous page in [])?

Club fellowship [4 th]	79.1%
Community service opportunities [1 st]	72.4%
Networking [3 rd]	40.8%
Support of The Rotary Foundation (The foundation's goals and projects)	36.3%
International service opportunities [2 nd]	25.1%
International friendships	19.5%
Other:	5.0%

When asked, **“Why have you chosen to remain a member of your Rotary club?”** current members responded:

Club fellowship [4 th]	80.2%
Community service opportunities [1 st]	64.4%
Networking [3 rd]	34.5%
Support of The Rotary Foundation	29.4%
International service opportunities [2 nd]	16.9%
International friendships	12.8%
Other:	6.1%

Responses from both resigned and current members to the question, “Who invited you,” are remarkably similar:

- 1) **Rotarian friend**
- 2) **Rotarian business colleague / associate**
- 3) **Other Rotarian**

Only 5.2% of former members indicated they were invited by a Rotarian family member. Only 7.6% of current members indicated they were invited by a Rotarian family member. It is also interesting to note that 11 current members took the opportunity in the comments section for this question to highlight that their membership was an expectation of their employers. Further analysis shows no similarities among those who made this statement.

ROTARY EDUCATION

In general **resigned members attended 4 meetings before induction (v. 3 for current members)** during which 95% of them (same for current) were informed of the meeting attendance requirements. **68% of former members (69% for current) indicated that their introduction to their Rotary club MET EXPECTATIONS.**

For those **former members** whom their **introduction DID NOT MEET EXPECTATIONS**, reasons and solutions cited were:

- [It should be] less of an ad hoc approach ... need more structured orientation (similar to a new employee orientation company program)
- Have a packet of information / pamphlet that a prospective member can review prior to moving forward with induction including:
 - More information about the club, its activities, history, etc., and Rotary in general
 - Expectations for attendance, club service, personal time commitments
 - Information about financial obligations, meeting obligations, and other obligations as well as the **BENEFITS** (*emphasis respondent's*) of club membership
 - Even an annual report that simply highlights each goal / accomplishment / obligation
- Assign a buddy to meet with new / prospective member to provide info / explain club dynamics
- Meet one-on-one with existing members / leadership
- Follow up and speak personally about expectations



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Many of these same reasons and solutions were **echoed by current members**:

- [Provide] a series of intro training about club membership
- Assign a Rotarian as mentor for the first 6-12 months
- [Build] an introduction / induction that reflects membership is valued, valuable and has relevance & importance
- Make a formalized introduction / membership packet with history, bylaws, project info, financial implications (be forthright about financial obligation), et al.
- Go into more depth about the mission of Rotary and the local chapter

After induction, current members and former members received similar levels of information about the financial obligations to the local club, however, the gap grows between them regarding support of The Rotary Foundation, Rotary International, and the district.

	Resigned (yes)	Current (yes)
The club	95.20%	94.10%
The Rotary Foundation	71.00%	63.10%
Rotary International	70.70%	62.00%
The district	70.20%	58.70%
Total	77.00%	69.80%

In the table above, **resigned members report higher levels of knowledge regarding the financial expectations of The Rotary Foundation, Rotary International, and the district.** They also report all club expenses (below) as being “Reasonable.”

	Resigned (Reasonable)	Current (Reasonable)
TRF contributions	92.40%	95.50%
District dues	92.30%	95.50%
Service projects	88.50%	94.90%
Rotary International dues	92.50%	94.60%
Club dues (venue, meals, etc.)	88.00%	94.10%
Fines / assessments	89.60%	93.70%
Overall Perception	90.30%	94.90%

For those **former members** whom indicated that any of these costs were excessive, actions that could be taken to decrease them include:

Meals

- \$21 for sit down 4 course meal should change to simpler buffet. It would help people move around & have conversation while in the buffet line.
- Less extensive meals
- Make meals optional
- Provide a meeting-only fee for non-meal eaters

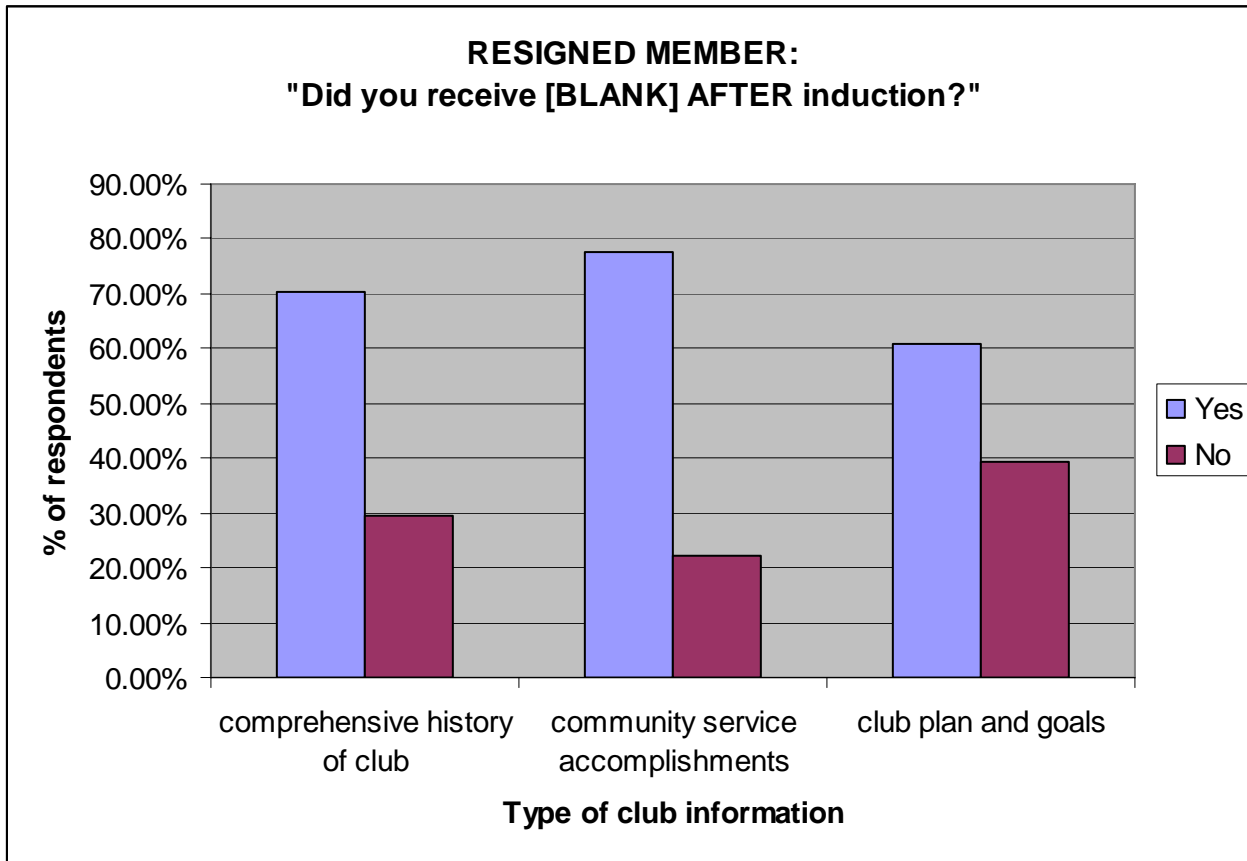
Other

- Reduce club dues (“They were higher than other clubs in [the area]”)
- [Establish and] follow club policy re: limits on annual contributions & rules for assessing fines
- Don’t charge when on a leave of absence
- Increase membership to defray costs, fundraisers, grants
- Use my services so [that, although I may not be the largest financial contributor I’m still a valuable member of the club]



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New member education is often more than just advising the new member about the expenses of club membership, often new members are given an orientation regarding the many programs of the club and Rotary International. **The chart below illustrates the percentage of former members who did or did not receive materials describing various aspects of their new club.** These percentages vary from current members' responses by only a few percentage points for each type of club information.



The table below shows the percentage of **current and resigned members who received information about the programs of Rotary International and its Foundation.**

	Resigned	Current
Vocational service (Rotary Volunteers, Group Study Exchange)	52.30%	51.60%
Youth study abroad (Youth Exchange)	57.90%	48.60%
Youth service (Interact, Rotaract)	50.50%	40.00%
Rotarian special interests (Fellowships, Rotarian Action Groups)	50.00%	47.60%
Youth leadership (RYLA)	40.90%	33.80%

In an effort to find good education communication strategies to pass along to clubs and districts we asked **current members what their primary source of information about Rotary is.**

The Rotarian magazine	55.50%
Other:	29.50%
www.rotary.org	10.80%
Rotary Interactive	3.00%
Rotary International's e-learning center	0.60%
Rotarian Video Magazine	0.50%



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Of the 264 “Other” responses 204 indicate **their primary source of Rotary information comes within club meetings or from direct interaction with Rotarians during Rotary meetings.** 46 mention passive learning materials such as club email bulletins / newsletters and other publications.

To gauge whether or not the amount of information provided to new members had an impact on resignations, both groups were asked to evaluate their Rotary education. **62% of former members indicated that their Rotary education MET EXPECTATIONS (v. 71% of current members).** Of those for whom their new member education DID NOT MEET EXPECTATIONS, reasons and solutions cited were:

- Provide one meeting a month for education about Rotary (Rotary and Foundation history, goals) and my chapter
- Create a comprehensive introduction to what Rotary is over the course of several weeks in addition to club meetings
- Schedule an introduction with each committee to meet with & decide which committee to join
- Host an initiates dinner meeting ... every 6 months to cover important club & Rotary items with an agenda supplied a week or more ahead of time to the new members
- More partnering is needed of an officer & new member
- New members need a mentor and need to be involved in projects as early as possible
- Follow up and speak personally about expectations & contents of new member packet
- Ask what the new member wants to participate in & then direct their energy by creating a short-term project

Current members offered their perspectives on ways to improve early Rotary education. This came up time and again...“I had no expectations. It took 6 months to understand what the heck I was doing in Rotary.” Suggestions for improvement include:

- A designated membership committee member [should meet] with prospects after each meeting to explain the purpose of Rotary and the benefits
- Mentor / buddy could invite a new member to a separate lunch or coffee meeting to:
 - go over all opportunities (orientation to committees & national & international opportunities)
 - run through a series of Q& A sessions about the different aspects of Rotary
 - give new members written information regarding Rotary programs
 - explain the difference between The Rotary Foundation and the club foundation
- Host a new Rotarians afternoon or evening – a couple of times, once a month, or twice a quarter – with snack or meal, and interesting interactive presentation
- The district should organize a workshop for new members [and] explain Rotary’s involvement within our District
- [Concentrate] fewer programs on area business & more on Rotary / Focus on a Rotary topic per month for an entire meeting
- [Develop] a video explaining all the programs of Rotary as well as member responsibilities... to be lent out to prospective members.

MEETING COMPONENTS & CLUB EFFECTIVENESS

Former members were generally complementary about weekly meeting components, such as time, location, program, fellowship, and networking. However, 44.7% agree or strongly agree that **their meetings would benefit from a better variety of speakers,** and 46.7% agree or strongly agree that **their meetings would benefit from an increased variety of program topics.** **Current member percentages were slightly higher** on these two dimensions: 49% agree or strongly agree that their meeting would benefit from an increased variety of speakers, 51% agree or strongly agree that their meeting would benefit from an increased variety of program topics.



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Resigned members were also asked to indicate their agreement with the following statements:

I did not believe new members were qualified	67.5%	strongly disagreed
Members did not interact with me	64.4%	strongly disagreed
I felt demographically isolated	60.5%	strongly disagreed
The club was disadvantaged by influential sub-groups	52.7%	strongly disagreed
Increased focus on fellowship would improve the club experience	31.9%	agreed

Many **former members offered suggestions for improvements:**

Meeting logistics

- Whoever is in charge of programs must be willing to work hard at putting together really quality speakers / programs!
- Seek out county wide speakers – don't have one if not quality
- Allow / encourage members to be part of the Program [planning]
- To some extent, using a club meeting doesn't give enough time to get something done - Need special meetings where [projects, etc.] can be talked out and planned
- Allow more time for guest speakers

Other

- Allow time to network
- Provide a \$5 no-meal attendance fee to cover room-rental and logistics
- Offer option to buy lunch, coffee, etc. Don't assume and bill me. I preferred the other clubs that give option to buy food or not.
- Make members more aware of Rotary special interest opportunities
- More fellowship time and events
- Club needs stronger leadership / Better training for the Board
- Use club surveys to solicit responses articulating potential concerns

Current members also had **ideas for improving club meetings:**

Meeting logistics

- Change meeting frequency (monthly / bi-weekly)
- Confront challenges with venue
 - Cleanliness
 - Space requirements
 - Quality, healthfulness (breakfast options are high calorie and high fat content), and alternatives for meals (more vegetarian, diabetic, whole foods, local organic, lower carb options)
- Address weekly program speakers and content
 - Would like a program once a quarter on Rotary club business
 - Rotate responsibility for speakers
 - Set up a speakers bank to have better and more variety of topics
 - Have a program chair who would encourage and screen program choices
 - **HAVE A MORE RACIALLY / ETHNICALLY DIVERSE GROUP OF SPEAKERS** (*emphasis respondent's*)
 - Broaden & diversify topics
 - Not always someone asking for money / Fewer or no coaches coming to talk about their teams and ambitions for their team
 - More topics that relate to us and how we can help (and not just financially... more service opportunities)



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Other

- Need more leadership from our president / Last few Presidents have been less than prepared
- More fellowship less fund raising

Resigned members seem to indicate **clubs could be performing better in several membership development dimensions**. When asked to rank on a scale of Poorly, Fair, Good, and Excellent how they felt their club was performing in several membership development dimensions, **no single dimension earned a majority rating of Excellent, and Good ratings range from 35.8% of respondents to 51.1% of respondents**. The totals below illustrate the percentage of respondents who graded their club performance “Good” and “Excellent.” In 4 categories and overall, the percentage spread between resigned and current members fell within 5 percentage points. The dimensions in which the spread was greater than 5% have been italicized in the table below.

	Resigned	Current
Asking prospective members to join	66.90%	62.30%
Identifying qualified prospective members	57.80%	57.50%
<i>Communicating with members at all levels of the club</i>	<i>63.70%</i>	<i>76.90%</i>
<i>Getting members involved in service activities</i>	<i>61.50%</i>	<i>71.10%</i>
<i>Encouraging members to get involved in club administration</i>	<i>58.60%</i>	<i>65.90%</i>
New member orientation	60.70%	64.50%
Pre-induction education	53.50%	56.80%
Total	60.40%	65.00%

It would seem that current members’ experience is such that they have received more communication and were given more opportunities to get involved in service activities and club administration than individuals who resigned their membership.

CLUB MEMBERS & LEADERSHIP

As seen above, many current and former members commented on the current state of their clubs’ diversity in open ended sections of other questions. Specifically the next question asked respondents to evaluate **how closely their club reflects the diversity of business and professional community in which the club resides**. Both groups responded similarly. **81% of resigned members and 82% of current members feel their club accurately reflects the business and professional landscape of their community.**

In the next section of the surveys an assumption was made that current members by virtue of the fact that they have remained with their club, feel comfortable in it. As such only resigned members were asked if they felt welcome in their club. **89% of resigned members responding to the survey indicated that they felt welcome in their Rotary club.**

Reasons cited for **NOT FEELING WELCOME** were (in order):

- 1) **Too many small cliques**
- 2) **Most of the club members were older than I**
- 3) **The club was very gender biased**

66% of former members (v. 79% of current) report club leaders sought input from the general membership. 61% of former members (v. 73% of current) felt comfortable sharing concerns with club leaders. Of those that did not, reasons cited were (in order):

- 1) **I felt my club’s leaders had their own agenda**
- 2) **I did not want to be perceived as a complainer**
- 3) **I was not a member long enough**
- 4) **My club leaders were not receptive**

Current member reasons fell in the same order.



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OTHER OBSERVATIONS:

- It seemed like an old men's breakfast club. Very few women and almost no minorities. Did not feel comfortable with the atmosphere at all.
- I WAS THE ONLY WOMAN AND MAYBE THE 1ST IN CLUB HISTORY (*emphasis respondent's*)
- I also belong (& still do) to another community service organization. I was made to feel that I shouldn't be a part of another organization and that Rotary should be my exclusive interest. I disagree!
- Hispanic decent
- For the past couple years the president and several members were disrespectful of women, minorities and gays.

Both groups were asked, **what might the club have done differently to create a more welcoming, inclusive atmosphere.** Resigned member comments include:

- Have a club member as the welcoming person of the day and ask each member for a personal tidbit that can be shared with the group during the meeting
- Do some more "meet & greet" activities during the meeting
- Encourage some long time member "tables" to move around
- Make a point to have more networking and fellowship time (meals are too time consuming leaving little room for club business, fellowship, networking, and relationship building -- which needs to happen before fellowship can grow)
- Concentrate more on relationships & less on money making (too frequently meetings are just about "passing the hat" and not enough about building strong relationships among members)
- Invite more members from visible minority community (small business owners)
- Develop more age variety or family-oriented events (just being sympathetic to the varied structures of family: two adult dual income households with or without children of all ages; two adult single income households; single adult single income households; senior adults living-in with adult children and their families, etc.)
- More visitations to members' workplace or lunches together
- Be more sensitive to all members in terms of appropriateness of invocations, political points of view, nutritional needs (diabetic, vegetarian, etc.), and provide the ability to discreetly opt out

Current members were generous with comments for creating a more welcoming, inclusive atmosphere as well:

New / Prospective Members

- Making sure new members get involved at the outset
- Become attentive to new members - sit with them - ask if they have questions - offer to go to a make-up at another club with them
- Better / more structured pre-joining information re: membership responsibilities / club's expectations (e.g. financial support, fundraising and community service project participation expectations, etc.)
- Assign board members new members to meet with them outside of meetings to continue the education process
- Get prospective members and new members involved in small groups or projects right away

Increase diversity

- Be more accepting and open to female members
- Increase the diversity of our group / invite more young professionals and women to be members
- More diverse speakers in terms of race / ethnicity and much more outreach to diverse racial / ethnic groups to be guests and to join
- Recruit more working professionals and fewer retired people from the community
- We need...to embrace reaching out to youth / college / young working adults and make the cost of involvement more reasonable



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Leadership

- All members work more on recruiting and bringing in more interesting speakers
- Allow more time and opportunity for member input
- Change seating occasionally (*frequently mentioned*)
- Get members involved in activities, not using committee structure
- Have board members assigned to tables to collect input
- [Create] a form we can fill out quarterly with our concerns, questions, or comments
- Have the leaders make more effort to contact the membership on issues
- Greeters
- More social events

INTERESTING OTHER COMMENT:

“Rotary is the least diverse group I am part of. It is an embarrassment in this regard. All us clubs need to ask themselves the following: “what can our club do to become more diverse?” Rotary is (or is becoming a club for older white men.)”

FAMILY & FELLOWSHIP

Regarding fellowship, it was shown earlier that **31.9% of resigned members felt that increased focus on fellowship would improve the club experience.** The next set of questions further explored the concept of fellowship and family involvement in the Rotary club experience. When asked whether their clubs should provide more / the same / or fewer opportunities for fellowship:

30% of resigned members said MORE; 68% said THE SAME

35% of current members said MORE; 64% said THE SAME

When asked whether their clubs should provide more / the same / or fewer opportunities for family involvement:

36% of resigned members said MORE; 60% said THE SAME

34% of current members said MORE; 64% said THE SAME

Resigned members were generous with **suggestions to foster greater fellowship:**

- Reach out to everyone...call if I missed a few meetings
- Use place cards for seating to break up the little groups that always sit together
- Induction could include long time members talking with candidates
- Fit new members in with committees, etc.
- Make new members welcome and make an effort to encourage participation - especially Rotarians moving into the area from elsewhere
- Mentoring program (“so people BOND”)
- More outside social activities (such as a “small group dinner in the home”)
- Survey of membership wants/needs
- More activities involving the whole club & have all people help instead of a few people organizing
- More social and project activities involving spouses/families

Current members echoed these recommendations.

When asked how their **spouse / family felt about their club membership** resigned and current members responded somewhat differently. Of note are the placements for resigned members of “Felt it consumed too much of my time” (4th) and “Felt it was too expensive” (5th) with nearly two to three times the percentage response as given by current members.

RESIGNED MEMBERS	
Proud	44.60%
Other:	26.40%
Wanted to be involved	15.20%
<i>Felt it consumed too much of my time</i>	<i>12.90%</i>
<i>Felt it was too expensive</i>	<i>9.60%</i>
Wanted to know more	8.20%

CURRENT MEMBERS	
Proud	58.90%
Other:	17.70%
Wanted to be involved	11.40%
Wanted to know more	6.70%
<i>Felt it consumed too much of my time</i>	<i>6.80%</i>
<i>Felt it was too expensive</i>	<i>2.90%</i>



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INTERESTING OTHER RESPONSES:

Resigned members

- 10 respondents indicated their spouse is also a member
- 1 respondent indicated that daughter is participating in RYLA this year
- 1 spouse thought it was a cult
- 1 spouse thought it was unfriendly and elitist
- A few spouses thought it was an old boys club; not suitable for women
- Some spouses felt cost / time commitment not worth it

Current members

- Responses range from Not interested / Doesn't care to Supportive and partially involved
- 28 respondents indicated their spouse is also a member (one is a PHF)
- One has a daughter participating in Youth Exchange

CONCLUSION

The primary goal of this project was to discover whether there is a substantial difference in the membership experience of current members and those that have resigned, and to seek suggestions clubs and districts can employ to retain a higher percentage of inducted members.

The following observations are the primary differences between the experiences of former and current Rotary club members in the USA, Canada, and the Caribbean:

Short term v. long term commitment – based on the response order of organizations or activities that former and current members would choose for future volunteer opportunities it appears that individuals who stay with Rotary clubs may be more inclined toward longer term commitments. All of the top four responses for former members fall into short term categories: 5K fun run / walks for example; youth sporting activities which typically have set practice and performance schedules over a defined “season;” participation on city councils or community boards, where typically an election schedule potentially limits the length of participation terms; and, being on call for a disaster relief organization where participation is sporadic and acute.

Conversely, while the top three remain the same for current members, the appearance of “Single issue focused fundraiser 1 – 3 days” in fourth place for current members may indicate that these individuals are more likely to participate in a long term commitment like Rotary clubs, with weekly meetings and long term service and fundraising projects. These individuals may value the journey as much as accomplishing the goal. This distinction may be something clubs wish to keep in mind as they seek out and qualify potential new members.

Community v. international service – Also of note is the difference in responses regarding former and current members’ primary motivations for joining a Rotary club. Both groups indicate number one motivational factor as being “Humanitarian COMMUNITY Service,” however, while former members put “Networking” #2, and “Fellowship” #3, current members report “Humanitarian INTERNATIONAL” service as their 2nd strongest motivational factor for joining a Rotary club. These results may be related to the phenomena at play in the short term / long term factor. It may be that prospective members who favor shorter term commitments perceive local community service projects will meet this desire. International community service may seem too daunting and far reaching. This distinction may be something clubs need to define for themselves: is this club locally or internationally focused, and be certain this message is clear to prospective members.



REPORT OF RESULTS: North American Resigned Member Survey

Reason for joining, not always reason for staying – As discussed, former and current members seem to have differing motivations for joining a Rotary club, however, the reason for joining does not seem to ultimately be the reason for remaining a member. When asked what the benefit of Rotary club membership is and why they have chosen to remain with their club, current members overwhelmingly report it is because of fellowship. Although it placed last in the motivation for joining, Fellowship is overwhelmingly the number one benefit of Rotary club membership and the number one reason current members are still with their clubs. It becomes the tie that binds them to Rotary.

Perhaps members who have resigned, regardless whether their primary motivation for joining was being met and the amount of orientation / education they were provided, they lacked the connectedness of fellowship. Only 63% of former members report that their club performed good or excellent when communicating with members at all levels of the club. Only 61% felt the club performed good or excellent in getting members involved in service activities, and fewer than 60% report the club performed good or excellent in encouraging members to get involved in club administration. It would seem that current members' experience is such that they have received more communication and were given more opportunities to get involved in service activities and club administration than individuals who resigned their membership.

Spouse / family perception – Spousal perception and / or family perception can be powerful motivator or demotivator for continuing involvement in an organization such as Rotary. Only 44% of former members report their spouse / family feeling proud of their club membership versus nearly 60% of current members. Additionally, former members are twice as likely to report their spouse / family felt it consumed too much of their time; and, are 3 times more likely to report their spouse / family felt it was too expensive. These spousal perceptions may prove too strong for a member weakened by a lack of fellowship to prevent a member from resigning their membership. This may be an area of opportunity for clubs to strengthen internal bonds of fellowship among all members, while increasing spousal / family involvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations that follow synthesize the comments made by respondents and address the top 2 reasons for resignation as well as several recurring themes: mentoring, leadership involvement, education, improving meeting experience, member involvement, and family and fellowship.

Resignation reasons:

Unable to meet attendance requirements – While pre- and new member orientation are reportedly meeting expectations members are still leaving clubs unable to meet attendance requirements – notwithstanding the myriad ways to make up, and the newly reduced attendance requirements. It would seem that not enough education is covering meeting attendance and make up. The clubs are informing prospective and new members about the requirement to be at meetings, but stopping short of detailing how many meetings need to be in person with the club and how makes-ups can meet the remaining requirements. Clubs should consider pulling together a comprehensive tip sheet of make-up options based on their by-laws and Rotary International policy (50% every 6 months) and include it in both the prospective and new member information packets. This document should also detail the benefits of consistent attendance. Primary among them is fellowship which seems to be the glue that binds members to their club regardless of their initial motivation for joining.

Relocating to a new community – Club secretaries and membership committee members need to take an active role in relocations. District leaders should train them to think in terms of retention in Rotary, not just retention within a club. Secretaries and committee members should anticipate the needs of a relocating member as soon as the move is made public, by either:

- a) mentioning the self-service membership relocation form found on rotary.org, or
- b) offering to call ahead to the governor or local clubs in the new area.

What better way to take care of the Rotary family than to have a club ready and waiting in the new area to welcome the relocating Rotarian and family to the community.



REPORT OF RESULTS: North American Resigned Member Survey

Recurring themes:

Mentor – To improve Rotary education and strengthen fellowship, clubs should assign each new member an experienced mentor for the first 6 – 12 months. This mentor should be willing to meet with the new member periodically for a separate meal or coffee to provide the new member information about Rotary and the club, explain club dynamics, describe ways to get involved, and answer questions and address concerns.

Leadership Involvement – To improve Rotary education, meeting components and club effectiveness, improve relations with club members and leadership, and strengthen fellowship districts should organize a workshop for new members [and] explain Rotary's involvement with the district. Clubs should assign board members to new members for discussions outside of meetings to continue the education process. Arrange for new members to meet one-on-one with a cadre of existing members. Schedule new members an introduction with each committee to meet with & decide which committee to join. A designated membership committee member should meet with prospects after each meeting to explain the responsibilities and benefits of membership.

To address concerns that club leaders have their own agenda, club leaders need to actively make more effort to contact the membership on issues and allow more time and opportunity for member input. Board members should be assigned to tables to collect input, or distribute club surveys to solicit responses regarding members' wants and needs. Clubs could create a form to fill out quarterly with concerns, questions, or comments.

Education – To improve Rotary education, improve relations with club members and leadership, and strengthen fellowship, build an introduction / induction that emphasizes membership is valued, valuable and has relevance & importance. This program should include face-to-face interactions and materials for individual study and should be customized to meet the needs of prospective and new members.

Develop a structured prospective member information program regarding membership responsibilities and club expectations (e.g. financial support, fundraising and community service project participation expectations, etc.). This program should include long time members talking with candidates.

A video / DVD explaining all of the programs of Rotary as well as member responsibilities could be developed and lent out to prospective members. This video / DVD could be reviewed in conjunction with a packet of information / pamphlet that a prospective member can review prior to moving forward with induction including:

- More information about the club, its bylaws, its activities / project info, history, etc., and Rotary's mission
- Expectations for attendance including make-up options, club service, and other personal time commitments
- Information about financial obligations, meeting obligations, and other obligations as well as the BENEFITS of club membership
- An annual report that simply highlights each goal / accomplishment / obligation

Become attentive to new members - sit with them - ask if they have questions - offer to go to a make-up at another club with them. For new members, provide one meeting a month for education about Rotary and its Foundation including history, accomplishments, and goals. Host an initiates dinner meeting ... every 6 months to cover important club & Rotary items with an agenda supplied a week or more ahead of time. Host a new Rotarians afternoon or evening – a couple of times, once a month, or twice a quarter – with snack or meal, and interesting interactive presentation.

Follow up and speak personally about expectations and the contents of the new member packet

- Go over all opportunities (orientation to committees & national & international opportunities)
- Run through a series of Q& A sessions about the different aspects of Rotary
- Give new members written information regarding Rotary programs
- Explain the difference between The Rotary Foundation and the club foundation and their respective programs



REPORT OF RESULTS: North American Resigned Member Survey

Improve Meeting Experience – To improve all aspects of the club experience address weekly program speakers and content. Time and again respondents recommend more fellowship and networking time. This could mean more “meet & greet” activities during the meeting, shorter meals, perhaps even skipping the meal occasionally. Think “friendraising,” rather than fundraising which will come naturally as members become closer to one another and passionate about the work of the club. Be aware of speakers always asking for money and discourage community sports coaches from coming to speak only about their teams and ambitions for their team. Present more topics that relate to club members and how the club can help (and not just financially... with more service opportunities). Allow more time for guest speakers and schedule a program once a quarter on club business. Concentrate fewer programs on area business & more on Rotary. Focus on a Rotary topic per month for an entire meeting.

Rotate responsibility for speakers and allow / encourage members to be part of program planning. All members can be encouraged to work on recruiting and bringing in more interesting speakers whom the program chair should then screen. Set up a speakers bank to broaden & diversify topics and ensure a more racially / ethnically diverse group of speakers. Whoever is ultimately in charge of programs must be willing to work hard at putting together quality speakers / programs. They should seek out county wide speakers – don’t have one if not of an acceptable quality.

Other ideas for improving the club meeting experience include implementing a greeter program. Have a club member as the welcoming person of the day and ask each member for a personal tidbit that can be shared with the group during the meeting. Change seating occasionally. Encourage some long time member “tables” to move around and consider using place cards for seating to break up the little groups that always sit together. Be more sensitive to all members in terms of appropriateness of invocations; political points of view; nutritional value, quality, and healthfulness of meals (breakfast options are often high calorie and high fat content); provide more alternatives for meals (more vegetarian, diabetic, whole foods, local organic, lower carb options); and, provide the ability to discreetly opt out. And, if a club meeting doesn’t give enough time to get something done, committees need special meetings where projects, etc. can be talked out and planned.

Member Involvement – To improve Rotary education, meeting components and club effectiveness, and strengthen fellowship, get new members involved in small groups or projects right away. Ask them what they want to participate in and then direct their energy by creating a short-term project or asking them to take charge of creating one and implementing it. For committee assignments, have new members interview committee chairs to find the one that best fits their interests. Alternatively, give all members the opportunity to create ad hoc committees to accomplish goals that may not already have a home, think outside of the committee hierarchy. Think actively about getting transferred Rotarians involved early, they bring a wealth of experience from their previous club membership.

Be aware of the varied personal circumstances of club members. Use everyone’s services so that, although one may not be the largest financial contributor each is still a valuable member of the club. Make all members more aware of Rotary special interest opportunities. Develop more age variety or family-oriented events (be sympathetic to the varied structures of family: two adult dual income households with or without children of all ages; two adult single income households; single adult single income households; senior adults living-in with adult children and their families, etc.)

Fellowship / Family – To improve relations with club members and leadership, build better family ties, and strengthen fellowship think about the composition of the club and types of activities that are planned. Take a look at the age spectrum of the club; are there poorly populated age groups? If so, consider targeting recruitment to business leaders and professionals of these ages. Embrace young working adults to balance the number of retired members. Evaluate the club’s current commitment to women, and try building an environment that is accepting and open to women members. Consider the ethnic landscape of the surrounding business and professional community. Encourage members of this community to be program speakers, guests, and members. Comments from both resigned and current members that appeared in many open sections of the surveys indicate that club members are seeking more a diverse and tolerant club.



REPORT OF RESULTS: North American Resigned Member Survey

Think about how fundraising can result from greater “friendraising,” and create interactions that stimulate fellowship such as, concentrating more on relationships and less on money making. Are meetings more about “passing the hat” than about building strong relationships among members? Consider a nod back to Rotary’s roots and schedule a series of visitations to members’ workplaces. Reach out to everyone...ask board and committee members to place a call to members who have missed a few meetings.

Show all club members that the “family of Rotary” is alive and well in your club by arranging more outside social activities such as a small group dinner in the home of various club members. Create more activities involving the whole club and have all people help instead of a few people organizing. And, develop more social and project activities involving spouses / families.



REPORT OF RESULTS: North American Resigned Member Survey

APPENDIX I

DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

Age at induction:

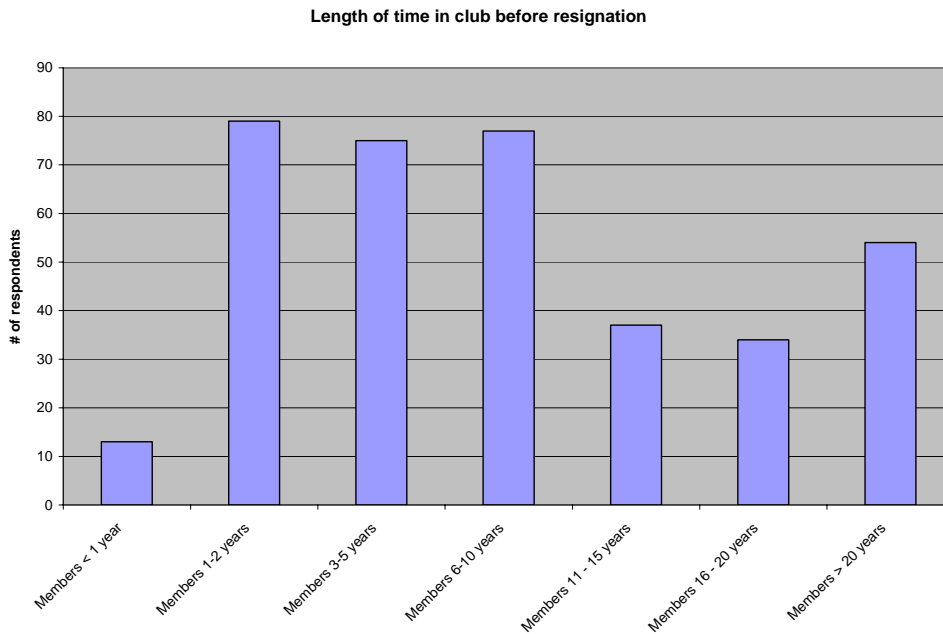
52.7% of resigned members and 51.6% of current members were inducted into their club between the ages of 40 – 59.

Gender balance:

Resigned member male to female ratio = 72%:28%

Current member male to female ratio = 78%:22%

The range of membership before resignation is illustrated in the chart below.



Regional Response distribution:

87% of former and 90% of current member respondents are from the US

5% of former and 7% of current member respondents are from Canada

Less than 1% of former and current member respondents are from Caribbean

8% of former and 3% of current member respondents did not identify their home region

Within the US, responses covered all 9 sub-regions. The following table ranks the regional response distribution within the US.

Resigned members

- WESTERN:PACIFIC
- CENTRAL:UPPER GREAT LAKES
- EASTERN:SOUTH ATLANTIC
- EASTERN:MID ATLANTIC
- WESTERN:SOUTHWEST
- CENTRAL:SOUTH
- CENTRAL:PLAINS
- WESTERN:MOUNTAIN
- EASTERN:NEW ENGLAND

Current members

- WESTERN:PACIFIC
- CENTRAL:UPPER GREAT LAKES
- EASTERN:SOUTH ATLANTIC
- EASTERN:MID ATLANTIC
- CENTRAL:SOUTH
- CENTRAL:PLAINS
- WESTERN:SOUTHWEST
- EASTERN:NEW ENGLAND
- WESTERN:MOUNTAIN

