

Report on the Recruitment of RI and TRF Alumni as Prospective Rotarians - Executive Summary

Every year Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation invest significant amounts of time and money in their youth programs. Because of their previous experience with Rotary and their dedication to Rotary's values, it seems that **program alumni should make great Rotarians**. To explore the recruitment of RI and TRF program alumni as prospective members, the Membership Development Division initiated a research project including survey research, statistical analysis, and the compilation of anecdotal information.

Results

Regarding the current status of alumni recruitment:

- Approximately **2.9% of current Rotarians are program alumni**.
- **58% of clubs** admit that they **don't recruit program alumni** for membership.
- Only **22% of clubs** both claim to **recruit alumni and actually have alumni in them**.
- **80%** of Rotarian alumni respondents said they were **recruited** by their club, while **20%** had to **seek out information** on local clubs.
- Of those that were recruited, **68%** said they were recruited **specifically because** they were a program alum, while **32%** said their club recruited them **without knowing** they were a program alum.
- Rotarian alumni frequently indicate that their **exposure to Rotary through their program had a significant impact on their desire to join**.

Program alumni who have **not** become Rotarians generally had very **positive experiences in their program**. 90% of alumni have been to a Rotary club meeting either during or after their program, and most had positive impressions of the meeting.

84% of current program participants and 66% of program alumni are interested in joining Rotary. Additionally, **as more years pass after leaving the program, fewer and fewer alumni remain interested in joining a Rotary club**.

This decline in interest over time could be due to the fact that **contact with Rotary significantly drops off once participants are finished with their program**. Additionally, **alumni with more frequent Rotary contact after their program correspond to a higher rate of interest in joining Rotary** than those alumni with less frequent Rotary contact.

The top five reasons alumni identified for **not being interested** in joining Rotary are:

1. Too many other commitments / Not enough time for Rotary
2. Cannot make attendance at weekly meeting
3. Membership is too expensive
4. Age difference between self and current members
5. Clubs are all (or mostly) men

The top five reasons alumni identified for **wanting to join** Rotary are:

1. Community service
2. Meet a variety of people
3. Make a difference / Create a better world
4. Help others have the same experience
5. Rotary is a good organization to be involved in

However **many of the alumni who are interested in joining also expressed concerns and reservations about joining**, including the following:

1. Large time commitment required
2. High cost of membership
3. Weekly attendance requirement
4. Inconvenient meeting times
5. Age difference between self and current members

Another issue seems to be that **many alumni simply aren't asked to join**. Of those alumni who are both interested in joining and currently hold a professional, proprietary, executive, or managerial position:

- **58% of GSE alumni** have **not** been pursued for membership.
- **67% of Rotaract alumni** have **not** been pursued for membership.
- **82% of Scholarship alumni** have **not** been pursued for membership.

When asked **why more alumni aren't joining Rotary**, many **Rotarians** indicated the following:

- Many **clubs don't participate** in RI and TRF programs.
- Many clubs **don't develop a relationship** between themselves and their program participants.
- Because many alumni are not yet qualified for Rotary when they leave their program, Rotarians have **difficulty seeing them as future Rotarians**.
- Many clubs and districts have **poor record-keeping** and **lack organization** regarding alumni.
- Many clubs and districts have **difficulty maintaining up-to-date contact information** for alumni.
- Many communities **lack Rotaract clubs**, which makes it difficult to keep younger alumni involved in Rotary until they are qualified to join.
- Many clubs **don't ask alumni to join**, or don't extend a second invitation if the first was declined.
- Many alumni feel alienated by the **large age difference** between themselves and current Rotarians.

Recommendations

There are many **strategies** that **clubs and districts** can implement to **better utilize alumni as a source of potential members**, including:

- **Build strong relationships** with current program participants.
- **Develop an action plan** for keeping alumni involved in Rotary activities and transitioning them into Rotarians.
- **Promote alumni** so that other Rotarians understand their importance.
- **Ask alumni to join** – and continue asking even if an initial invitation is declined.
- Help alumni **find clubs that meet their needs**.
- Use alumni to **start new clubs**.
- **Maintain contact** with younger alumni until they are qualified for membership.
- **Involve alumni in other programs**.
- **Involve alumni in club and district activities**.

Potential for Growth

In 2004-05, **Rotary programs produced over 100,000 alumni**. Most of them have had great experiences in their programs and are excited about Rotary. They are members of the Rotary family and have had significant exposure to all that Rotary has to offer. Some are already qualified to join Rotary. Others aren't qualified yet, but someday will be.

If clubs and districts think about these alumni as **future community leaders**, they may be more likely to see them as **future Rotary leaders**, and therefore be more interested in continuing their relationship with the alumni and eventually pursuing them as prospective members.