



Electing a New Rotarian

Ref: K/PA/CDS/PL/04-05PL/MS/Club.09/April 2006

Introduction and retention of new members is vital to Rotary's future not only to replace Rotarians who leave, but also to ensure that Rotary grows to meet the increasing needs of the world. It is only by the introduction of new skills and expertise that we will be able to offer that vital service to the World Community. All Rotarians should be encouraged to look for, and to actively suggest and introduce new members.

This information sheet offers practical advice on who can become a member of a Rotary club, and the procedure in completing that process. For the definitive wording on the election procedure please refer to RIBI Standard Club By-Law 7 Clause 1. For further advice on classification refer to RIBI Information leaflet 'Classification' Ref Club.06 (April 2004) available on the RIBI Web site or from the Secretariat at Alcester.

Who may be a new member of your Rotary Club?

- The underlying basic principle is that all new members must be adult persons of good character, with good business and professional reputation.
- They must hold, or have held, a managerial position with discretionary authority within a business or profession.
- They should have their place of work, or residence, located within the club's locality or the surrounding area.

Election procedure

Any member (other than an honorary member) or a former club may propose a prospective member. The prospective member should first be invited to several Rotary meetings as a guest, to experience Rotary fellowship. If interest in membership is shown, the host may suggest to the guest that if he or she would like more information, with a view to possible membership then a proposal form may be completed. It should be explained that this does not commit them, and they may withdraw at any time; nor does it commit the club to accept them. No reason will be given to the candidate (this is fully shown on the proposal form). The completed proposal form is passed to the secretary who will instruct the information sub-committee to meet the candidate and proposer.

Information meeting

The information sub-committee should be composed mainly of experienced Rotarians, who have the ability to convey their enthusiasm to others. As club leaders, the President and the Secretary should be members of the committee, with service chairmen called on when required. Experience has also shown that the inclusion of a newer member can be a useful asset, giving a fresh point of view.

This meeting with the prospective member is to inform them about Rotary, without overburdening them with too much detail. You may like to consider inviting their partner to attend.

However, it is important that prospective members understand the responsibilities of membership, attendance, activity and cost; and are aware of the benefits, privileges and pleasures of being a Rotarian. The meeting should be conducted with a formal structure, but in an informal atmosphere; the prospective member being encouraged to ask questions, with enough time being allocated, to ensure all are properly answered. The opportunity should also be used to extend knowledge of the candidate. The importance of the information meeting to all parties cannot be stressed enough.

At the end of the meeting, candidates should be asked if they wish their application to continue and it is inevitable that, after consideration, some will not wish to proceed to membership.

If the candidate wishes the application to proceed following the information meeting, the proposal form passes to membership sub-committee and classification sub-committee. Based on information gained from the proposal form and the information meeting, a decision is reached on the eligibility of the candidate, and if appropriate, a classification is assigned to the proposal form. The form then passes back to the club secretary to issue a '10 day letter' to every member, either by hand or by post. This letter informs club members of the application for membership, and gives the candidate's name, business address, and qualifications for membership and classification. It should also explain that any member (other than honorary) may object to the application within ten days, and such objection shall state reasons in writing signed by the member to the club secretary.

Following the expiration of the '10 day period' council will consider all reports, and, in the absence of any objections, the secretary is instructed to invite the successful candidate into membership and inform the proposer. After payment of dues, the candidate is inducted into the club at the first convenient club meeting.

If problems arise

Occasionally problems may arise in processing the proposal form. If following the information meeting it is found that for instance:

- the candidate does not have the necessary qualifications.
- the classification provisions cannot be met.
- concern is expressed about the candidate's ability to keep to the attendance rule.

then a report from the membership sub-committee and classification sub-committee is sent to the next council meeting, and the application for membership is placed on hold, without issuing the 10-day letter. If council accept the unfavourable reports and agree that the candidate is ineligible then the proposer and candidate are informed by the secretary that membership is denied. If council do not accept the reports, they can direct an alternative course of action in order for the application to continue, such as re-examining the classification of the applying member.

Objections which are delivered in accordance with Standard Club By-law 7, Clause 1 (iv) i.e. *“stating reasons in writing signed by the member to the secretary within ten days from the issue such written notice”* should be considered by the council and there is then a requirement that a vote of the club council be held requiring an affirmative vote of a simple majority of members of the council present and voting.

A club council meeting held for the purpose of electing a new member requires a quorum of two-thirds of the total members of the council.

As a reminder to Rotarians who are actively involved in the election of new members, the Rotary International By-laws explicitly state that *“no club may by provisions in its constitution or otherwise, limit membership in the club on the basis of gender, race, colour, creed or national origin or impose any condition of membership not specifically prescribed by the RI constitution or By-laws”*.

The club council should also recognise RIBI's concerns over discrimination in that it resolved that if a club:

- a) As a matter of general policy refuses, prevents or discourages the admission of a woman or a person of an ethnic or religious minority as a member of that club; or
- b) Refuses admission to or prevents or discourages a female Rotarian or female prospective Rotarian from attending a regular meeting of that club

Such conduct being contrary to the provisions of Article 4.070 of the By-Laws of Rotary International, then the General Council of RIBI, shall pursuant to its powers contained in RIBI By-Law 5, Clause 3 (c) recommend to the Board of Directors of Rotary International the immediate expulsion of the said club from membership of Rotary International.

Attention is drawn to the Information Sheet “RIBI Equal Opportunities Policy”.

The decision of club council on membership proposals is final, and is not subject to an appeal procedure. A letter from the secretary should only say that the candidate's application was unsuccessful.

Induction

This is a most important occasion for the new member and the members of the club. It should be carried out by the President of the club, giving it due time, and with suitable dignity that befits such an important occasion.

The precise format is not laid down, but guidelines are given in the “Manual for Incoming Club Officers” sent annually to clubs.

Care of the New Member

The retention of new members is as important as recruitment. Induction of a new member is the beginning of creating a Rotarian not the end. The sponsor or a mentor appointed by the President has a special responsibility to the new member, to ensure the new Rotarian is properly integrated into the club, and Rotary at large. For further guidance on this refer to RIBI Information leaflet 'Integrating the new Rotarian' Ref Club.10 (Jan 2003) and RI publication "Strategies for Member Education" 414-EN. See also the Information Sheet “Mentoring”. A checklist for mentors is contained in the New Member Pack and is also available from the RIBI Secretariat.

Honorary Membership

Eligibility for Honorary Membership: Persons who have distinguished themselves by meritorious service in the furtherance of Rotary ideals and those persons considered friends of Rotary for their permanent support of Rotary's causes, may be elected to honorary membership in a club. The term of such membership shall be as determined by the council. Persons may hold honorary membership in more than one club.

Rights and Privileges of Honorary Members:

- Honorary members shall be exempt from payment of admission fees and dues
- shall have no vote
- shall not be eligible to hold any office in a club.
- Honorary members shall not hold classifications
- May not propose a new member

With the exception of the above, honorary members shall be entitled to attend all meetings and enjoy all the other privileges of the club.

No honorary member of a club is entitled to any rights and privileges in any other club, except for the right to visit other clubs without being the guest of a Rotarian.

As with active members, Honorary members should be suitably inducted. A suggested induction address is published in the ‘Manual for Incoming Club Officers’.

Data Protection Act

Your attention is drawn to the Data Protection Act notice on the Proposal for Membership Form. As part of the process of integrating the new Rotarian, time should be taken to explain that personal data about the new Rotarian might be kept on one or more computer databases at club, district, RIBI and RI level. It is suggested that the new Rotarian's attention is drawn to RI and RIBI's statement on the use of data on the RIBI Web site.