

Rotary Knowledge and Its Impact on Membership

By John Nie, District 5000 Rotary Academy 2008/2009

The first question is what is Rotary Knowledge? Simply put, it is the history of Rotary, your District, and your Club. It not only covers what has happened in the past but presently and in the future. How much Rotary Knowledge does your Club have? Most Clubs probably have little, if my Club is an example. Some of the old timers may remember some of it. Most members do not know when the anniversary of Rotary is, who their Mother Club was, when they were first established or who the District Governor was that was assigned to oversee their charter. You may ask why that is important. Well it is really a symptom of the overall problem of lack of knowledge that Rotarians have outside their immediate Club. Even that relates to only the past few years. Rotary has a tremendous history. Why do we not know it and share it?

What is this leading up to? It is leading up to membership. Let me ask this. If you were running a business and you asked your marketing department to sell your product. Would you not expect those people to have an understanding of the product, be able to talk extensively about it and the merits of the product? Of course you would. It is the same with Rotary. Our members all should be able to converse to anyone about Rotary, the District, and their Club. Your members are your marketing department. They are the first and best contacts for future members.

So what do you need to do? Educate-Educate-and Educate, Every meeting should have a short segment about Rotary Knowledge. Each issue of your newsletter should have an article about Rotary Knowledge. Assign someone to be in charge of Rotary Knowledge. Have that person use new members to research Rotary Knowledge. Use them to give that information to the Club. It

will make them feel like part of the Club. Invite a past District Governor to talk about Rotary and their experiences. Some have great stories. You might want to consider having a Historian to hold all the past history of the Club or develop it if not available. Someday down the road that information might lead to a small book or something similar for your Club. There are probably countless other things you can do to sneak in Rotary Knowledge.

Now while your members are your best source of new members you cannot discount target solicitation. How can Rotary Knowledge help here? Suppose you have new business in your area or an old business that you would like to have the owner or manager become a member. Let's be positive and use Rotary Knowledge and appeal to their sense of Community and Service. You need the Rotary Knowledge to be a credible community force to get this person's attention. Also, it is also important that more than one person signs the letter to show member support and a feeling that this is a real invitation.

The following is just an example:

“Dear New Member of the Rotary Club of _____

Our Club is writing to invite you participate in a great organization-ROTARY. We thought you were an excellent candidate and wondered why you have not joined yet. We came up with these 10 questions:

- 1. Why wouldn't you want to join an organization that has a history of over 100 years?**
- 2. Why wouldn't you want to join and International Organization that is in over 200 countries?**

3. Why wouldn't you want to join an organization that has as their Motto "Service Above Self"?
4. Why wouldn't you want to join an organization that when the United Nations was being planned, Rotarians were called to assist in that development.
5. Why wouldn't you want to join an organization that in 1985 saw the need to eradicate polio and took up the challenge? As a result polio went from 350,000 cases annually in 125 countries in 1985 to being endemic in only 4 countries with less than 1500 cases in 2008.
6. Why wouldn't you want to join an organization that the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation thought so highly of that they gave Rotary \$355,000,000.00 dollars in the last two years to help eradicate Polio?
7. Why wouldn't you want to join a District that leads other Districts in the United States in contributions for International and local community projects.
8. Why wouldn't you want to join our Club that stands out in the community with projects dealing with our schools, homeless, and graffiti?
9. Why wouldn't you want to join our Club that has given out countless scholarships to our local community high school seniors?
10. Why wouldn't you want to join our Club and stand up and be counted in the community you work and or live in?

We meet every _____ at _____ in the _____.

Have Fun! Come Join Us and the Community.

It's a Great Day to be a Rotarian

President

Vice president

Membership Chair

Member

Phone_____”

You can come up with many other questions based on Rotary Knowledge. Have at it. Final words: “Increase Rotary Knowledge and your Club will be stronger with increased membership, participation, and support.”