

TIPS FOR CLUB MEETINGS

Rotary Clubs have to devise ways and means to make the weekly meetings interesting and entertaining. Only the complete involvement of and participation by members will ensure the health of the club apart from its growth. Here are various observations and tips by an experienced Rotarian, that may be adopted to retain their members and infuse life into their clubs.

- ✍ We do not find programmes interesting?
- ✍ We do not get good speakers?
- ✍ Members do not stay – They come late and go early.
- ✍ Members just sign and go.
- ✍ Members stand outside the meeting hall chit chatting

These and many other are problems often posed or faced by presidents and many members of the club, anywhere. To keep the weekly meetings interesting, to plan program for each meeting may appear a bit difficult. Let us analyze how it can be converted into a solution.

Why Members come late / go early, or do not stay throughout the meetings?

There are many reasons. Problems like illness, tour, family/business problems are beyond one's control. Most of the time they do not come because :

1. Programme information does not reach them in time. This could be avoided by sending/publishing advance information about programme, through club bulletins, letters or phone calls.
2. They do not find the programmes interesting. The solution is by involving members in planning the programmes.
3. Clubs lack good fellowship. This can be avoided by giving serious thought on how to increase inter-member relations. Fellowship does not necessarily mean only food, as is the notion with many Rotarians.
4. Logistics like venue of meeting, acoustics, dining and toilet facilities etc. are not good. Club should seriously think to improve the conditions.

The outcome of negligence of the above factor is, either they do not come, or they come, have snacks and go early.

Members chitchatting outside the auditorium or meeting place could be due to failure of the Sergeant at Arms to control these activities, or snacks are served longer than

the scheduled time. More than these, the in effectiveness of the president to control deliberations of the meeting may be another cause.

It may be ideal if all these issues, which are repellents for members from attending meetings, be discussed and sorted out in the club business meetings, club assemblies or through club bulletins. Many times some presidents or program committee chairmen are averse to criticism; hence members do not take initiative to put forth suggestions.

It will be better to create an atmosphere where members are free to express themselves.

Is organizing weekly programmes difficult?

Let us note down by enumerating the program events required in a typical year.

	Total	Balance
■ Weeks in a year on an average	52	52
■ Official meetings allowed to be cancelled in a year	4	48
■ Essential meetings every year Installation, DG Visit, Approval of Accounts, Nomination Committee election, AGM	5	43
■ Average Public Holidays - Festivals, Govt. Holidays etc	3	40
■ Assuming 6 Business Meetings in a year (Every 6-8 weeks) to discuss club issues.	6	34
■ Meetings which could be totally handled by say Annes or Rotaractors in a year	2	32

Spread these 32 meetings in the four Avenues of Service. For each avenue, you have 8 meetings to be planned. These are to be divided into subsection/committees in each avenue. These could be planned by delegating the work to the respective avenue director and his/her team members in association with the programme committee chairman. This also includes celebrating Rotary months with emphasis on specific areas.

Advance Homework Reduces Tension

It is seen that many clubs prepare a chart for 52 weeks, fill in the blanks, distributing the work as above. Many distribute these in printed form, booklets, etc. to all members in advance. No doubt, this needs some advance planning before start of the year. Program committee plays an important role and has to ensure that round the

year. programs reflects Rotary's philosophy and dignifies the club's working, as local community is going to judge the club and Rotary in general, own club members, and visiting Rotarians. Advance homework can reduce tension to plan the weekly programmes.

Some precautions to be taken :

PROBABLE SPEAKERS

The big problem or headache as many feel is to locate speakers. Here is an indicative list. This could be expanded to suit local conditions. Thus speakers can be located round the year who are in the proximity.

Within Rotary

- PDG'S, DGE, DGN, AG, (DG may be busy to come for weekly program but could be apped)
- District Officers like GSA'S Dist Directors, Avenue Chairmen, Sub Committee Chairmen or Members.
- President and Members of the other clubs. Members of Innerwheel, Rotaract, Interact, RCC, etc.,
- Members of IYE, GSE Team, Ambassadorial Scholars, Rotary Volunteers etc.
- District Officers from your own club.
- Past Presidents from your club or other clubs

Outside Rotary : (Govt. Officials)

MLA/MP in your area, Collector, Police Officers, Officers from Income Tax, Sales Tax, Shop-Act, Factories Act, Electricity Board, Telephones, Postal Dept. are the various offices or members from these committees, All India Radio, TV.

Outside Rotary : (Others)

- Authors, Poet, Newspaper and other periodicals - editors and writers, Critics, news reporter, sports reporter etc.
- People related with sports, players.
- Social workers.
- People in other voluntary organizations.
- Religious Leaders, Priests etc.

- Members from various professional organizations.
- People from Business, Industry, Trade.
- People from Educational Institutes.
- People in lime light you see newspaper or TV/Radio for this from time to time.
- Awardees from various organizations.
- Artists – Movie, Drama, Stage, Hobbies etc.
- Identify speakers through engagement columns in local news papers.

Identify and Utilize Club Talent

Every Rotary Club is expected to develop its own members, utilize their talents, bring them to light, thereby propel their interest in the club's projects. By this, fellowship amongst members improves and such members feel elevated.

1. Tell club members to prepare and speak on different aspects of Rotary.
2. Tell them to tell about their family members, profession / vocation or hobbies on interesting anecdotes / experience therein. If they are artists or have specific skills in any field, opportunities to perform in weekly meetings could be provided to them.
3. Members can also speak about their professional organizations like Medical Association, Institute of Engineers, Chamber of Commerce and so on.
4. They could also tell about the Rotary programmes they have attended outside, the activities they found interesting.
5. Giving them responsibilities to make announcements, introducing speakers and proposing vote of thanks can reduce the stage fright.

Some hints

- If you invite speakers from outside Rotary, Please take following care.
- Give them advance information, on Rotary as an organization, agenda for the date, time allotted for speech, questions/answers session, etc.
- Whether any honorarium to be paid?
- Any arrangement needed for travel, etc.

There are also protocols involved to greet and welcome Rotary officers if they attend meetings. You can get the details in Manual of Procedure. Other guests are also to be welcomed.

Agenda for weekly meetings

If you are inviting outside speakers, the way you conduct meeting will be the impression they carry.

- Ensure good attendance. Advise members to come
- Be punctual in starting meeting.
- Give agenda in advance to speakers.

Manual of Procedure gives minimum agenda to be followed in club bylaws.

- Meeting called to order by President
- National Anthem or silent invocation.
- Welcome.
 - Chief Guest
 - Rotary Dignitaries as per protocol
 - Other Guests
 - Visiting Rotarians
- Birthday / Wedding Anniversary greetings
- Project reports if any / recognitions for the work done
- Rotary information in 2-3 minutes
- Secretary's announcement:
 - Last Week's attendance
 - District Circulars if any
 - Next week's program
 - Today's programs
- Announcements by club officers/Directors/Committee Chairman etc.
- Introduction of Chief Guest
- Speech by Guest Speakers @ 20-30 minutes
- Question / Answers if time permits
- Vote of thanks
- Meeting Adjourned.

(One hour should be duration of any meeting)

Manual of Procedure gives a few hints on weekly programs which are worth following.

- Clubs in its bylaws should give agenda for weekly meetings and its sequence.
- Outsiders should feel that Rotary is not just for eating, entertainment and enjoyment but also a serious business.
- Members should be encouraged to tell about service projects.
- Rotary and club information should be given in advance to outside speakers.
- Take proper care to receive and see off Guest Speakers.
- Visiting Rotarians to be treated properly and information about their attendance given to their clubs.
- If any doubt, about credentials about person's posing as visiting Rotarians, club has full right to verify credentials.
- Drinks be served only if social customs in the area allows.
- Weekly meeting can be cancelled only for the reasons given in club bylaws/constitution.
- Regular meeting cannot be taken with other service organizations on regular basis. It can be on occasional/casual basis.
- Time needed to be allotted positively for Rotary information in weekly meetings.

Key Success

- Enough publicity in advance to forthcoming program especially to club members.
- Advance planning for:
 - Escorting Guests
 - Looking after Guests
 - Introduction
 - Vote of Thanks
 - Timely meetings should last for 60 minutes only
 - Allot time for questions/answer & if available within this limit.
 - Post publicity for program in local media
 - Appreciation of members who have arranged program