



## RETENTION

Retention of members is also a great challenge. Retaining good members is as critical to long term growth and success of the club and in turn of the organization as the induction of new members and new clubs. Bringing in new members is just half work done. The difficult part is to retain members – new as well as old ones. Avoiding turnovers is the key.

### **Problems of Retaining Member**

There are numerous reasons for members leaving the organization:

- (i) Health, old age, transfer and death – these are natural and one cannot do anything about it.
- (ii) Communication gap.
- (iii) Improper time and place of meetings.
- (iv) Lack of proper programs.
- (v) Groupism among members leading to fights and members leaving the club.
- (vi) Ownership of club by some members.
- (vii) Lack of involvement of member making them feel neglected.
- (viii) Lacunae on part of leadership.
- (ix) Failure to give proper information and education about Inner wheel.
- (x) Too much paperwork and that too in English and thus, if required to take up post, the member resigns.
- (xi) No fiscal discipline.
- (xii) President inducts friends during her tenure as President and when her tenure over her friends leave. It is the responsibility of the President to see that her friends continue in the club even after her Presidentship.
- (xiii) Rotary groups affect Inner Wheel.
- (xiv) Reluctance of Rotary members to encourage Inner Wheel.

These problems hamper membership development efforts and have to be tackled at the earliest.

Membership retention is an ongoing process, that requires constant attention, action and commitment. When clubs continually gain and loose members, a revoking door effect is increased making the club unstable and thus difficult to attract new potential members.



## Remedies for Retention

It is truly said that "Prevention is better than cure." Although clubs cannot prevent a certain amount of natural attrition, they can minimize its effect by working towards it. Following suggestions are recommended:

- (i) **Proper Communication:** of meetings, projects/activities and observation of events of Inner Wheel and happenings in family members - their achievements, birthdays, anniversaries or sad news, etc. **from time to time.**
  - **Circular of meetings and projects is appreciated at home address or by sms** (for fast and personal communication in case of emergency).
  - **Phone calls** could be used **for personal touch.** For example, in case of absence of member in a meeting or project it is necessary to enquire into the reason for her being absent. It makes her feel important and also they feel a part of the organization.
  - Regular **publication of club bulletin** is an important means of communication.

Under any circumstances **Communication Gap** should be **avoided.**

- (ii) **Time and Place of the Meeting:** It is also important to **be aware** of what **time of meeting suits the majority of members;** i.e. daytime meetings (possibly middle of afternoon), luncheon meetings or evening meetings. The **place** of meeting too **should be convenient, accessible and approachable.** Accommodating time and place for young working girls, family fellowships, dinner, and children is important.
- (iii) **Time Management: Meetings or programs** need to be well organized and punctual. They should **be started on time and be finished in time.** Members are not comfortable with disorganization and leader's lack of concern for their valuable time. It should not create lack of interest in members. Time is precious to members in today's environment. To encourage time maintenance, **Punctuality Gifts could be given.**
- (iv) **Variety in Meetings: Good and interesting programs be organized** during meetings to sustain interest. Meetings need to be geared toward interests and likes of members. Most members want a variety of meetings that include business and social speakers on current issues, educational tours and a community project periodically. No meeting should be all of one type. **Variety is the key.**



- (v) **Worthwhile Projects:** It is the duty of the club to take worthwhile projects to satisfy the needs of members who join Inner Wheel to be a part of the social service Inner Wheel does.
- (vi) **Healthy Environment:** A healthy family atmosphere is to be created inside the club. **Amongst members there should be a very friendly environment.** Friendly behaviour with one another creates a healthy environment. Personal contacts play an important role in strengthening the bond in club. Respect for each other should be there as they must understand that all are equal. By that they would like to keep attending meetings, functions, projects and programs. This is more important for new members as they should be made to feel welcome and comfortable by senior members. President should listen to the members, and encourage others to listen and not to discourage, dominate any member. Ego clashes should be avoided and hurting someone's ego need not be done.
- (vii) **Involve:** Involve **each member** – new as well as senior, throughout the year **in organizing some project, event or meeting on the basis of her capability and interest.** This will give them give importance and provide opportunity to their talent. Sense of belonging to Inner Wheel will be enhanced. Each member should feel responsible and important in club activities. Involving seasoned members as well as old members in activities is important otherwise they keep themselves away from the club activities. Their experience counts a lot and in case of new members they have the enthusiasm. Encourage **new members to speak in meetings** about Inner Wheel.
- Note:** Very few members like to do administrative work in Inner Wheel and new members at time are given this responsibility which should be avoided till she is not aware of Inner Wheel and its working.
- (viii) **Appreciation:** Appreciate **publicly those members who have helped** in projects/events. This will make them happy and they shall keep on helping. Even in the print, while giving news of the project/event, their names should be mentioned. Visibility to Inner Wheel Projects through print media, audio visual media, and as well as through media of information Technology also encourage members.
- (ix) **Awards:** Awards/prizes **for Best Member, Best Project Director, 100% Attendance** at General Body Meetings, Executive Meetings and projects, etc. will increase attendance and with regular

involvement. Their interest in Inner Wheel also increases. Recognition Award for member's achievements and for performance in assigned duties at the end of the year could be done.

- (x) **Suggestion Box:** This enable members to give their **valuable suggestions**.
- (xi) **Encouraging Members to attend District Events:** like Assembly Conference and Rally, Inter District Meets, Zonal Meets, etc. which provide platforms for friendship and Inner Wheel knowledge.
- (xii) **Fellowship and Cultural Program:** Good interesting programs are like "Sanjivani" to the club. Such programs foster friendship bond among members and also help retain them. They also help in increasing attendance.
- Competitions like traditional dress, dance, cooking salad decoration, etc.
  - Games for club members
  - Snacks after the meeting by member/s whose birthdays fall in that month.
  - Demonstration and Talks on interesting subjects.
  - Celebration of "V" Days like Friendship Day, Inner Wheel Day, Charter Day, etc. and various festivals.
  - Lucky Draws and Games at meetings.
  - Meeting at Member's Residence by rotation.
  - Picnics.
  - Joint Meeting with Rotary and Rotaract Clubs.
  - Colour Code for Dress at Meetings/Projects.
  - Theme parties.

New members want to see good combination - mixture of community service and fellowship.

- (xiii) **Knowledge of Inner Wheel:** Each member should have basic knowledge of Inner Wheel and if the club functions as per Inner Wheel bye-laws, many problems can be avoided. For this, **in the meetings, Inner Wheel rules from Association Bye-laws could be simplified and told to the members** by senior members.



- (xiv) Follow **Fiscal Discipline** – Transparency of accounts is a must.
- (xv) **Choosing membership properly** and with consent of all is important. This can happen when women not related to Inner Wheel member or Rotarian is to be made a member. Be careful as it must be kept in mind that **quality is never to be compromised over quantity**. This will increase club's retention of members. Also **while choosing a member** related to Rotary or Inner Wheel or inviting, one **care must be taken** to see that **she meets the club's atmosphere, culture, preferably says in the vicinity of the meeting place** of the club, **or locality of the existing club member**. It is then becomes easier for the prospective member to continue to attend the meetings on a regular basis and take part in more activities, once she becomes a member. This will ensure good attendance at the monthly meetings also. If most of the members are above 50, some then induct members of younger age to balance it. A balanced club membership across all demographics is considered good.
- (xvi) **Exit Interviews:** When a club member resigns do club should ask her why she is resigning? Many times we get a clue from her as to the shortcomings of the club. And that shortcoming can be improved to attract new members and stop members from leaving the club.
- (xvii) **New members should feel welcome: A Welcome Committee** at club level **can be formed** to welcome new members.
- (xviii) **Induct Members Together:** It is observed many times that very enthusiastic members leave the Parent club to join a club where they can identify themselves better. They are comfortably with the atmosphere in some other Inner Wheel Club. If the average age of the club is around 50 and if a new member is younger, then try to induct 3-4 members of her age together so that she feels comfortable.

Message for every Inner Wheel Member.

**“Be proud of Inner Wheel and promoting ideas of Inner Wheel with others. Be friendly and outgoing and aware of the needs of others. Listen to others. Be open to other!”**

These ideas and recommendations may be just what is needed to revitalize the club.