



Eight Ways to Reduce the Cost of Rotary Membership

So if you are a traditionalist who believes that attendance is one of the fundamental core values that Rotary has promoted for more than 100 years and therefore unwinding tools and techniques that encourage attendance is a big mistake, you aren't going to be happy with some of the suggestions below.

See if any of these ideas might work for your club:

1. Unbundle your meal costs from your dues. "Prepaying" for meals by adding them to member dues payments is a great way to encourage attendance, but it's a lousy way to promote engagement and higher membership. Pay as you go meals take the financial pressure off of members who could save \$100 in costs if they miss five meetings at \$20 per meal. If you think that isn't a lot of money, you are correct. But the optics of having to pay for meals when you can't attend are terrible.
2. Closely following number 1, once you unbundle meals, you can now discuss your dues without including meal costs. "Our dues are \$350 per year. Oh yes....and you pay for your meals when you attend the meetings." That sounds a lot better than "our dues are about \$1,000 per year." Traditionalists say this encourages members not to attend. Engagers say you will gain 20 new members at a lower price point, and if the meetings are interesting, then all members will attend. If the meetings stink, then paying for meals in advance will not rescue the club anyway.
3. Get rid of all fundraising commitments. Some Rotary clubs ask members to sell tickets and sponsorships to the club's fundraiser, with the provision that if the member doesn't sell a specified minimum number of tickets, they must pay for the difference themselves. Engagers say that if your members don't sell tickets, then don't bother with a fundraiser. Fundraising commitments are nothing but a giant negative to membership growth where Rotary membership costs may already be daunting. If the non-profits in your community need your club's financial support, then rally your membership and have a great fundraiser. If no one sells

any tickets, then you might want to rethink why you are doing a fundraiser in the first place.

4. Rule of 35. Try offering special discounted dues to members who are younger than age 35. The 50% discount comes with the expectation that younger members are active participants in "hands-on" Rotary projects. Rotary clubs can choose any age they want for offering discounted dues, and they could create their own rules for who is eligible for discounts. Discounts don't necessarily have to be based on age; use your imagination. Any negotiation that exchanges service work in the community for lower dues payments meets the spirit of choosing engagement over attendance.
5. Have your club schedule a busy season of service projects that can take the place of club meetings. What if your club scheduled one service project each month and encouraged members to make up at these service-oriented events? As long as the club takes attendance at the service project, they will get the double barrel benefit of reducing the cost of membership as members don't pay for a dozen meals during the year, AND they get a much healthier Rotary club that is seriously engaged in doing service work in the community. RI tells us service projects count as makeups. Why not take advantage of the rules as a part of your club's financial structure?
6. Reduce the cost of your meals. Happy Hour clubs are a lot like dinner clubs, with the exception that 1) the happy hour menu is a lot cheaper than buying dinner, 2) you don't have to order anything if you don't want to, and 3) the meetings are finished a lot earlier in the evening, so members with children get home in time for family commitments. Breakfast clubs have a similar advantage. Have members bring their coffee and bagels twice a month and save on meal costs. Yes, you have to negotiate with the restaurant where you meet, but reducing meal costs is doable if you are committed to growing your club and prioritizing engagement over attendance. Maybe mix in a Happy hour meeting instead of dinner once each month? Be creative.
7. Ask members with deep pockets to "sponsor" a new member by offsetting 50% of their membership dues for one year. The club recognizes the sponsoring member, and the new member is expected to attend all service projects and club social projects during the year.

8. Corporate or family memberships are an exciting way to reduce Rotary costs. No, a business can't be Rotary members. Invite the owner/CEO to join and pay full dues, including meal costs. Since the owner is worried about attendance, they can name two other employees to be members of the club where they only pay RI and District dues. In this structure, all three employees are Rotary members, and any of the three can attend the meetings. If a junior employee participates simultaneously as the CEO, they are charged for the meal. This is a great deal for younger members of the business who should be involved in community service and promote the business locally anyway.

EXAMPLES OF FAMILY OR CORPORATE

FAMILY MEMBERSHIP

Family Membership consists of any family member (e.g., Spouse, partner, and adult aged child). Family members are all active members and have all the same rights, privileges, and obligations as other members. Obligations include:

- RI dues and District dues: Payable for each member
- Annual club dues as determined by the club (with a significant reduction for all family members after the initial family member)
- Meal/beverage costs as determined by the club.
- The "Spousal Membership" where a spouse (or partner) can become an eligible member of the Rotary club by having a spouse or partner who is already a club member and has been a member for at least one year. The Spouse pays club dues, but not District or RI dues, as the Spousal Member is not an official member for RI purposes.

Business or Family Membership

Cost: \$100 per month plus \$50 per person initiation fee. For a small increase of \$30 per month, you may register up to 3 members of your business or your family under the same membership. All three people will enjoy Rotary membership benefits, and the group will receive four breakfasts per month. Additional breakfasts are billed at \$10 per meal. Billing is made via automatic payment on a credit card of your choice. This type of membership is designed for coworkers who do not expect to attend all four meetings each month and want to share the cost of multiple memberships.