

Engaging the Member that Disappears Pixel by Pixel

A Guide for Rotary District 6690



In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many Rotary Clubs have made the creative jump to virtual meetings to stay connected. But what happens when a member starts to disengage? Typically, a Club Leader wouldn't hesitate to grab a coffee or a beer with a member to sort out their waning participation, but what do you do when your community is in a crisis and you can't meet anyone in person? Check out this flow chart to consider your options. Have a great strategy that's working for you? Send details to [District Membership Chair Jenny Stotts](#) so it may be shared with others.

Inquire First

- Check with your gut. Do you have an idea about what might be going on?
- Touch base with the member's sponsor. Perhaps they know a little more about the situation.
- Reach out personally. Consider starting with an email and following up with a phone call a day or two later. If the member is experiencing a personal difficulty, an email is a polite "heads up" that you'll be reaching out.
- Be kind and discreet. This is a time when many Rotarians are facing troubles in their personal and professional lives. Your grace and your respect of their privacy will be appreciated.
- Is this a permanent disengagement or a temporary situation?

Below are a few factors that might lead to member disengagement, as well as some ideas about how to address these issues. Remember, that the points below are *offerings*, not requirements. Remember to communicate clearly with your members and be honest as decisions are made.

Technology

- Is the member uncomfortable with the needed technology for virtual meetings? Can another member call them and walk them through it step by step? Try using screenshots or taking photos of each step to send along.
- Do they have the needed technology? Do they have an adequate internet connection? Ask other members if they have an old smartphone or tablet that could be wiped of data, cleaned and dropped in someone's mailbox or on their porch?
- Some members might not want or be able to use technology to stay engaged with Rotary. That's ok. Consider pairing them up with another member or club leader to check in via phone or even handwritten letter exchanges. The key is to connect.
- Make sure that the member continues to receive updates from club leadership in other ways.

Finances

- Many members are facing layoffs and job insecurities. Many employers may no longer be able to pay dues on behalf of members. Be mindful of this reality.
- Schedule a virtual or phone board meeting soon to discuss how your club will handle the issue of dues billings.
 - Consider extending invoice due dates or making accommodations for members facing hardships.
 - Decide as a board and communicate the procedures for accessing help to all of your members.
 - Consider arranging a fund for members in a position to make contributions that might be used to support other members facing hardships.
- Try not to make assumptions about individual members' financial situations. Keep an open mind and be a listening ear.

Other Commitments

- For many members, Rotary has taken a backseat to other personal and professional obligations. Be gentle and kind when discussing these issues with members.
- Club leaders are not in a position to judge the commitment of other members. Be compassionate and keep an open mind.
- Remind members often that your Rotary Club isn't going anywhere. Start talking about how the club will look once face-to-face meeting restrictions are lifted.
- Consider holding virtual meetings or happy hours during the same times that they would happen if you were still getting together in person. This will help members "hold space" for their Rotary meetings.

Impact

- It's important that Rotary Clubs stay relevant to their members. Assign a few club leaders to monitor community needs and brainstorm ways for your club to rise to the occasion (safely).
- Continue to offer service opportunities for club members and keep planning for service projects that will take place later in the year.
- Invite members to join committees and participate in virtual or phone meetings.
- Form a small group or subcommittee to apply for a district grant and be excited when you share the details of the future project with members.