What Makes Members Leave a Club?

There are many reasons why members will a Lions Club. It is obvious there are a number of reasons that the clubs and the members themselves cannot change, like death, illness, shifting, change in family situation. All that a club can do in these instances is be as supportive as possible in the circumstances. In fact, at times such understanding and support can be the difference in the member leaving or staying, even if that does mean transferring to another Lions Club. The member is not lost to Lions.

However there are many reasons why members do leave that clubs can prevent, but first the club and all its members must recognise the reality and the reasons. Not to do so is like an emu burying its head under the sand.

Reasons for members leaving clubs given by respondents to the recent MD201 GMT Membership Retention Survey confirmed already known reasons. Again there were many common reasons reported from the recent international survey from a range of countries around the world (Australia was not included). The key reasons quoted for loss of members were:

- Clubs not willing to change and accept ideas/suggestions from new members
- PDGs and Cabinet members within clubs often make newer members feel inadequate and question the validity of new members knowledge and ideas
- Boring and over long meetings. Interestingly many respondents commented that they had brought prospective members to a meeting, then never hearing from them again. Just the attendance at one meeting turned them off. If the problem is that easy to see then it must be as easy to fix! But recalcitrant leaders and members keep on living in their old glory days and ignore the obvious.
- Club project activities not matching the new members needs / expectations
- Poor or no new member orientation/mentoring
- Poor leadership within the club coupled with conflict between members
- Cost of being a volunteer

Exit Surveys (albeit in reasonably small numbers) of members who have resigned from Lions in MD 201 highlighted a number of key reasons for their departure. Not surprisingly there was a significant matching of reasons why. The exit surveys highlighted the following reasons for leaving our clubs:

- Uninteresting Activities
- Old fashioned culture
- Conflict in the Club
- Boring club and meetings
One point of key interest and difference between the survey of current club members and members who have resigned is the fact that cost was not a key factor in why the members resigned, yet it is often quoted by clubs/members as a key reason for members leaving. There could well be a couple of reasons for this difference in associating the part that fees had played in the decision to resign.

The first is it is an easy way or excuse for existing members to explain why members resign; a non-willingness to confront the real reasons for the departure of members. That could be seen as an admittance of guilt for being part of the reason for the departure. And that is hard to do.

So the first critical steps in changing this situation is for clubs to:

1. Recognise that we do have a membership retention problem, especially with our newer members
2. Determine what the issues are within our own club, as the reasons will vary from club to club
3. Make a real commitment to address the identified issues, even if some of the solutions are not that popular with some members.


**Lions Clubs International Purposes**

- To organize, charter and supervise service clubs to be known as Lions clubs.
- To coordinate the activities and standardise the administration of Lions clubs.
- To create and foster a spirit of understanding among the people of the world.
- To promote the principles of good government and good citizenship.
- To take an active interest in the civic, cultural, social and moral welfare of the community.
- To unite the clubs in the bonds of friendship, good fellowship and mutual understanding.
- To provide a forum for the open discussion of all matters of public interest; provided, however, that partisan politics and sectarian religion shall not be debated by club members.
- To encourage service-minded people to serve their community without personal financial reward, and to encourage efficiency and promote high ethical standards in commerce, industry, professions, public works and private endeavours.