What Makes Club Rebuilding Work

The MD201 Questionnaire of 2017/2018 highlighted two key factors where clubs were able to address their falling membership and were than able to grow their club again. These critical first steps were:

1. They recognised they did have a membership retention problem, especially with their newer members and that they had to make a serious fully committed attempt to correct the situation.

2. Undertake some form of club health/membership review to determine exactly what the issues were within their club. There are a number of well publicised LCI programs to review club health or member satisfaction surveys, what is important is that the clubs undertake one that is relevant and achievable to them and then really commit to it.

Many clubs reported that their membership drive projects failed, however the probable reason for that was that they did not carry out any real review and critique of their club health or member satisfaction before the membership drive. So they were selling their old, “on the nose club” that had lost its way. No wonder they failed.

So, to rebuild a club the first step must be to carry out a real review of club health/membership satisfaction via a survey. These can turn out to be challenging, and sometimes the truth hurts, especially if you have dedicated 20, 30, 40 or more years’ service to Lions.

Exit surveys in MD201 and worldwide have clearly identified the key reasons why we lose Lions members. These are:

- Uninteresting Activities
- Old fashioned culture
- Conflict in the Club
- Boring club and meetings

These reasons clearly identify the core areas of any club health review, these are:

- Do we have the right mix of club projects?
  - How does our community see us? Are we considered relevant in our community?
  - Do our members have fun and enjoy participating in our projects?
  - Do our long term projects still reflect our membership capability
  - Do we have the right mix of community service based activities, fund raising projects, local, state, national and international
  - Do we facilitate new members and their passions in possible new project areas?
Do members feel as though they are making a real difference, after all that is why most Lions sign up, “to make a difference”

Do we have a good mix of social activities (i.e. to counter the offerings of social only organisations like Probus?)

• Meetings are boring and inconvenient.
  o Too long, unstructured, talk fests. i.e. boring meetings that just waste member’s time. Not fun
  o Older members dominate, new members views/suggestions not respected
  o Old fashioned club culture, member cliques

Why hold meetings? Can we do it differently from the past, i.e. do we have a lunch-time meeting? Do we have a morning meeting where mums have some free time from the kids who are school or kinder?

Does the club go cyber, and only meet socially or at project activities. Can necessary planning/decision making activities be held using email/Facebook groups, Messenger or GoToMeetings? Do we close the club during harvest season?

• Are there cliques to disbanded or ongoing tensions/conflicts between members that need to be fixed/resolved

• Is there a proper new member orientation/mentoring program given to all new members? Are they involved in activities of interest to them? Do they feel valued?

If your club health review or membership satisfaction survey identifies any of the above or other issues, then just fix them. If the club still carries on with a project that is the baby of a long time member yet everyone else just hates, then drop it, even if it does mean the possible loss of a member that may “spit the dummy”! Lose one or two, but you will quickly replace them if the club is healthier, happier and more members start enjoying themselves, as they will then believe they are making a difference.

Again all clubs are different, local communities are different, so the issues and needs will differ, as will the solutions. There is no one solution that fixes all, that is why it is critical for each club to review its own health/membership satisfaction levels and then act accordingly.

There are two major side effects of a health/active club where members are proud to be part of, these being:

1. Membership retention will cease to be a problem and

2. A healthy active club will attract more NEW members. Prospective members that attend a club function for the first time, will say, yes I want to part of this instead of the now common, “ah look I’m a bit busy now I’ll think about it and never return again”. 