



Maintaining Member Engagement during the COVID-19 Pandemic

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we want to support the Rotary Clubs of District 9500 in their efforts to maintain engagement during times when many Clubs have reduced face to face meetings, projects or social events. As an offer of support we have developed this guide with ideas and strategies for Club Leaders to consider. Club Leaders are encouraged to consult with their boards to assess and determine which strategies will be useful at a local level.

None of these strategies is a replacement for timely, transparent and regular communication with your members about your plans to continue modified operations throughout this time. Be sure that all committee and office leaders in your Club are equipped with consistent messaging to minimise confusion to your members and to streamline communications about changes as they arise. Consider sending brief weekly updates to your members or provide a timeline for when decisions will be reviewed and modified if necessary.

Have a great strategy that's working for your Club? Why not share it with the District!

Remember the theme this year is Rotary Connects the World.

Stay healthy, support each other and your community.

Innovate



Seize the opportunity to innovate and improve using technology.

There are things we can do to ensure our communication, meetings, actions and decisions continue.

Now is a great time to enhance your electronic communications such as Club bulletins, websites and social media such as Facebook.

- ✿ Connect into the social media pages, other community groups and organisations in your community. This is a great way to stay connected and even broaden your reach.
- ✿ Many people are familiar with **Video Conferencing** programs with the District and E-Club using the **Zoom** program successfully on a regular basis for many years.
- ✿ There is an opportunity for Clubs to collaborate on a subscription to reduce the cost and share the access. Scheduling of meetings is available to ensure there are no clashes or Clubs can choose to meet with other Clubs online and share the cost.

Tips for hosting a “Virtual Meeting”

Consider shortening the length of the virtual meeting to make it more feasible for members to “tune in.” Do keep your fellowship activities if they can easily migrate online (for example, “getting to know you” activities, interesting speakers, and happy dollars)

Avoid taking up “video time” with elements of your meeting that would be better shared in writing such as basic announcements or upcoming dates to note - consider sending those in a follow up email once the virtual meeting concludes

Check out Rotary resources on virtual meetings

<https://www.rotary.org/en/how-take-your-Club-online>

<https://my.rotary.org/en/learning-reference/learn-topic/online-Club-meetings>

Topics for Online Meetings

“Getting to know you” activities like Hot Seat or Member Profiles

Mimic the fellowship your members enjoy during your meetings. Here are few examples:

What are you reading? / Picture Contest: Sunrises / Kindness is Contagious

Social Media Takeovers - Allow various members to “take the reins” on your social channels and let them use pictures and stories to share how they’re dealing with the changes to daily living brought on by the pandemic. Here is a useful guide: <https://blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-takeovers/>

Asks members or “guest speakers” to record video presentations to promote through social channels. Have a member with an interesting hobby like beekeeping? Any business owners getting creative during the pandemic? Have members who are passionate about particular service projects? Ask them to share a self-recorded video!

These can be recorded simply using a mobile phone. Try to limit video recordings to 5-6 minutes maximum. Remember to write engaging posts that encourage members and guests to interact with the content.

**Facebook Live is a great tool for short presentations featuring your members with interesting hobbies, because the audience can ask questions in real-time that the presenter can answer on the spot.

Use this opportunity for ALL Club Members to have a Facebook Account

IF A MEMBER IS NOT A FACEBOOK MEMBER

- Go to Facebook using this link <https://www.facebook.com/> and create an account. Note: signup only requires your name, email and date of birth. (*birthday is published but not DOB*) You must sign-up to view unobstructed.

- Now, open your Web browser and log in to your Facebook page. (*you can do this on your desktop, tablet or mobile phone via the Facebook App*)

- Start using Facebook. Explore other pages through the search function which is the little magnifying glass, Type in what you are looking for.

- Locate and “LIKE” your Club Facebook page and the D9500 Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/rotarydistrict9500/> This will keep you up to date of any posts.

More Information on Engagement through other Social Media Tools

Social Media is a great tool for engaging members and the general community every day. Clubs can optimize and concentrate their social media channels as a resource to bolster engagement during the hiatus from in-person contact. Many of these strategies can be used once you return to business as usual, so this may prove to be a pilot for your Club.

Highly Interactive Tools

There are many free and paid options for hosting virtual meetings. Chances are *someone* in your Club already has a pro version of one of these for their business, but there are also lots of great no-cost options that include basic features. Many of these programs are offering reduced fees and no-cost extended trials during this time.

■ **Zoom** –There is a free version which provides unlimited time for 1 to 1 meetings or 40 minutes limit for group meetings up to 100 participants. There are other priced plans that allow larger groups and more time. Go to the Zoom website <https://zoom.us/> for details on pricing plans, features and resources including tutorials.

■ **ZOOM Communications** – **Our District has several ZOOM licences**, which are being offered to all Clubs and District Team Leaders. We also offer full support and One-to-One training sessions. Click on this link for more support: <https://rotary9500.org/sitepage/zoom-communications-support>

Less Interactive

There are other tools that are still incredibly useful and may be the perfect fit, but don't require that everyone log in at a specific time, which could be the perfect level of flexibility for your Club.

Facebook Live | <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/facebook%20live-guide>

Instagram TV | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EaRxgAW9mUY>

Other Social Media Tools for Individuals or Committees

WHATSAPP –



WhatsApp is an ideal Social Media tool for members of a Rotary Club to use. The App is a free download for both Android and iPhones and allows solo or Group chats via text, voice or video. It is easy to install and use and connects via your Contacts on your phone where you can easily locate Contacts who use WhatsApp

Facebook Messenger



Is another alternative to communicate with others via text or phone, but this will depend on member's privacy settings?

Engagement through Service (from Afar)

Of course, the BEST way to engage members is the same in-person or on-line! Get creative with ways to keep the spirit of service alive with your members!

Walking Group



Walking is good for you and a great way to maintain your social connections. Just follow the current rules -i.e. don't shake hands, stay 1.5 m apart, don't turn up if you have a cough or cold symptoms. This means that you can enjoy conversation whilst staying fit and enjoying some fresh air. It is also great to maintain your mental health.

It can be short or long, quick or slow paced, but whatever you do or wherever you walk it is a great way to maintain contact with both Rotarians and members of your community.

Start a group and use social media and/or emails to update on times and locations for walks.

Outdoor Activities



Hosting outdoor activities is a great way to maintain social distancing while still creating personal connections. Fishing, hiking, and swimming are great ways to connect, relax and get fit.

Buddy System



Create a buddy system where tech-savvy Rotarians check in with those who are unable to keep up to date electronically, either by phone or dropping in in person. Assign a Wellbeing Rotarian to coordinate checks on those who are socially or self isolated to ensure they are coping.

Reignite Fireside Chats



Create fireside chat opportunities in person. This could be a planned event where several Rotarians choose to host one or two people (maintaining social distancing) in their home on a selected evening. This could then link in with other Rotarians in other homes via FaceTime or Zoom and create a virtual meeting effect whilst maintaining some personal interaction.

Donate

As always, you can ask members to donate to The Rotary Foundation (hint: use the array of Rotary assets including videos to promote; all available on My Rotary). Other considerations include initiating "friendly competitions" with other Clubs to see which can raise the most money for a particular focus area or fund to earn "bragging rights" (or maybe the "losing" Club has to provide the manual labour for the winning Club's future project). Get creative and use this opportunity to bolster promotion of opportunities for Rotarians to give.

Spread Good Will

Choose a **local charity** and ask all members to highlight it using their social channels.

Choose a **new charity each week!** This is a great way to leverage the influence of Rotarian leaders to elevate causes that matter to your local community (and it might even sprout a future project collaboration!).

Coordinate with local hospitals or nursing homes for members to **send cards or letters** to combat loneliness from isolation in facilities that have limited visitors.

Challenge members to look through their homes and sort items that can be donated to charity. Once it is safe to do so, hold a group donation day to a local charity thrift store (remember to take pictures!).

Ask members to record themselves reading children's books and post through your Club's social channels for parents to share with their children for "alt-tv time" during school closures.

Start a gift card drive. Ask members to purchase gifts cards (bonus points if it's a local small business) and then mail them along with a note from the Rotarian to organizations that would be able to put them to good use.

Look out for each other



Assist health authorities to communicate best practices or provide needed equipment or support into your communities.

Connect with your communities by helping our less fortunate neighbours cope with the effects of isolation and fear, or by supporting our health authorities to address this situation.

Monitor your own and other's mental health during this time. We need to distance ourselves physically, not emotionally from each other. Ongoing mental health support may be necessary for those who are struggling.

Important Links & Resources

<http://www.rotary.org/>

<https://www.sa.gov.au/>

<https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/Public+Content/SA+Health+Internet/>

<https://www.facebook.com/SAMentalHealthCommission/>