



GYRO INTERNATIONAL GYRO CLUB SUCCESS STORIES

REPORT OVERVIEW

FirstPoint Management Resources was retained by the Gyro Membership Committee to “Conduct research that provides comparison and guidance on strategies successful clubs are using to maintain and increase their membership.” A list of 9 clubs was provided, some had multiple interview subjects listed. Video interviews were conducted with members of the following clubs: Clinton, Syracuse, Prince George, Edmonton, Long Beach, and Fort Lauderdale.

A base set of interview questions was developed to guide each interview. As expected, each interview went in a different direction based on the interview subjects and what they shared about their respective clubs. Permission to record and permission to use excerpts for a Gyro training video were secured from each participant during the interview process. The Video is on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFDYvTCCT3c>. A summary of each interview is also provided in the Appendix. Written questionnaire responses from the Nanaimo and Caloosa clubs are also included in the Appendix.

CLUB SIMILARITIES

The purpose of this exercise was to hear about “Success Stories” and find some common elements that may be applied in other clubs to assist with their membership recruitment model. There are some common elements and many other substantial differentiators, depending on the location.

1. **Fun.** All clubs stick very closely to the original mission of Gyro. They are all about having fun and building friendships. They methods they use to accomplish this differ by club, but the purpose is the same regardless of the club.
2. **Younger.** All the clubs understand the value of reaching younger members. “Young” is defined differently by various clubs, (one club had a member in his 20s,) but all the clubs recognize and appreciate that younger people need to be a part of clubs to keep them viable,
3. **Small Ask.** Limited responsibility for members is part of the special attraction of Gyro. New members appreciate that Gyro clubs are not community service clubs, (though some have a few projects,) and they will not be asked to do substantial fundraising and community events.
4. **Experience.** All clubs want to share the experience of a Gyro meeting or event with guests prior to allowing them to join. The quality, fun and fellowship associated with events are the central element of attracting new members and keeping them.
5. **New Energy.** New members, regardless of age, are the most likely recruiters. In the case of younger people, they are the most effective recruiters of younger members not related to other club members.



DIFFERENCES

Each of the clubs I spoke with has done a great job adapting to their local conditions. No two clubs are structured the same, meet in the same way, or engage the community in the same way. Each club ought to be studying the unique elements of their community to understand how they might adjust to take advantage of traditions, shifting demographics, local economy, club history, or networks of friends and contacts.

1. **Real Estate/Geography** – The Clinton Club has its own building. It was purchased many years ago and the club maintains it through personal work and fundraisers that involve a wider group of guests, (some of whom become Gyro members once they are exposed to Gyro.) The club schedule (seasonal from spring thaw through Thanksgiving) is weekly and club members consider the Monday night dinners at the building an extension of the weekend. Joining Clinton Gyro is like gaining access to a river cabin.
2. **Change the Rules...of Engagement** – Syracuse Gyro created additional membership categories to accommodate the changing needs of its members. Snowbirds, emeritus, as well as senior and regular memberships are available. Instead of focusing on member numbers or ages, club leaders focus on whether members engage, attend, or participate in some way. The club intentionally slows down its new member approval process. Everyone needs to have a chance to meet the guest being considered for membership. Better to take the extra time than risk creating a bad experience for other members.
3. **Young Recruiters** – Prince George club had turnaround from aging out 20 years ago. Recruited a single younger member 2 generations younger than most club members. Welcoming and networking kept the young member engaged and he recruited other younger members. Now the club philosophy is young members feed themselves, and all recruiting comes from members who have been in Gyro 5 years or less.
4. **Building Exercise** – Both Edmonton and Nanaimo have clubs with a long history of community involvement and philanthropy, primarily focused on building children's playgrounds in the area. Some scholarship programs have also been put into place from both clubs.
5. **Gyrette Power** – Edmonton (and Peterborough) have a very active Gyrette (Ladies) group with its own constitution and rules that meets on weeks that alternate with regular club meetings. This creates an opportunity for an immediate spouse connection whenever guests attend a joint event. Having spouses very active and engaged becomes a key recruitment and retention strategy.
6. **Golf Club** – Both Long Beach and Nanaimo had good success recruiting members from a golf club where other Gyro members belonged. Long Beach club was so successful at this they became a "club within a club" and there was high demand for membership.
7. **Keep It Small** – Long Beach has a charter that restricts the club size to no more than 40 members. The idea is to keep the club small enough to fit an event in someone's home.



This has created occasional waiting lists. Club members have extra time to cultivate potential members since there is usually a long wait time between vacancies.

8. **Stay Open to Growth** – Fort Lauderdale club works to keep their members open to the idea of new members joining the club. Long-term members who have grown comfortable with current club members may resist growth at some level because the impact of new members on the club’s chemistry is not known.
9. **Business Connection** – Peterborough club works hard on creating a tight and non-competitive business referral network based around the construction and provisioning trades. This provides tight targeting of potential members who can fill in gaps and the networking to produce business leads is a great retention strategy.

OTHER TIPS

Clubs were asked to give advice to other clubs about how to grow membership. Here are some additional items that were not on the list of similarities or differences.

- Recruit within 10 years of your age.
- Always be looking for potential members.
- Stick to the founding concept: fun & friendship
- Focus on connection among members
- Don’t be too picky – there is time to get to know them after they join
- Foster a sense of ownership in new members
- Concentrate recruitment on 50+ in age
- Leverage children/family of Gyro members to recruit younger
- Keep it fun
- Identify potential members who are very social
- Call Steve Anderson (for a shot of enthusiasm about Gyro)

SUMMARY & CHECKLIST

Based on the overall findings from interviews, the following steps are offered as a guide to Gyro clubs looking to refresh their membership recruitment efforts.

A. Purpose and Alignment

Before a new membership campaign or recruitment effort can take place, club members need to confirm the club’s programs, events and philosophy are consistent with Gyro’s founding principles.

- Is the FOCUS of the club on fun and friendship?
- Are club members open to the idea of recruiting new members?
- Are club programs fun and welcoming?
- Does the club meet regularly?



B. Sources

Based on information we've gathered from the clubs in this interview process, there are some good starting places for potential members.

- Is the current location of club meetings a gathering place for men aged 50 and older? If so, can you market through the meeting venue?
- Are several members of the club connected in some other way (country club, golf club, racquet club, gym membership, senior center) that you can leverage to contact more potential members
- Is there a fundraising activity the club could use for exposure to other potential members (raffle, hockey pool, chase the ace, etc.)?

C. Younger

All the successful clubs we interviewed seemed to have recruited some younger members in their club. There were several strategies mentioned. Here are some things you can try.

- Are there younger relatives of club members who might want to participate in Gyro? If so, invite them.
- Are there younger employees of club members who seem to be a good fit for Gyro?
- Advice from other clubs is recruit within 10 years of your age. Does that indicate any spot in your community that may have a concentration of men that are about the right target age to recruit?
- Can you invite a younger guest AND a few of their friends so that they feel more comfortable?

D. Empowerment

Club members we interviewed indicated that everyone in the club had a responsibility to invite guests, AND, that most who do have been a member less than 5 years.

- Do all members know the history and traditions of the club?
- Do all members understand the process to invite a guest and steps needed to confirm them as a member?
- If your club has resources members can use, (brochures, online,) have you communicated that to all members?

E. Experience

Once a guest agrees to come to a Gyro meeting, a lot depends on them having a positive experience while they attend.

- Are club meetings, socials, and events organized and well structured?
- Does the sponsor understand their responsibility of guiding the guest to connect with other Gyros?
- Is the atmosphere of the club open, welcoming, and enjoyable?
- If there are programs or activities, are these interesting and do they change to provide variety?



CONCLUSIONS

Gyro clubs are highly adaptive and will adjust their internal rules and processes to respond to local needs and pressures. Each club interviewed has its own approach driven by its history, traditions, assets, and member needs. Points of friction tend to focus more on “top down” rules which impede the club’s ability to respond to member needs. This has lots of potential ramifications for the broader organization, particularly on efforts that help decentralize power from international and distribute it more to clubs. That is a separate conversation but one that should carry a lot of potential for resolving this type of misunderstanding.

Rebuilding clubs is a lot of work and several clubs observed that some club members can resist recruiting new members because they are comfortable with the current friends they’ve made. They don’t want someone new to disrupt things. If that attitude exists within the club it needs to be corrected through open discussion and mutual agreement. It is also a lot of work. Several clubs mentioned that new members tend to be the recruiting engine that drives growth. Like starting a train that is stopped, it will take a great deal of energy to get the first member then the rest should flow easier. Once a cluster of new/younger members is in place, they will drive future growth.

During conversations with the clubs, there are some interesting nuggets that surfaced and may represent strategies that could be modified to assist some struggling clubs. These may not be practical for all, but it is worth mentioning these as personal observations based on information collected.

1. **Work Backwards** – for clubs who have no younger relatives to recruit and want to grow slowly and in a gradual and controlled way, use the advice of recruiting within 10 years of your age. The youngest members of the club should watch for slightly younger contacts, particularly those who are extroverts and socially active, and invite them as guests. This strategy will take some time to produce dividends but adding the slightly younger members then asking them to look for contacts who are slightly younger should produce results over time.
2. **Sponsor** – for clubs who don’t have much time left and want to maintain a Gyro legacy in their community, club members can provide the knowledge and guidance to help a new club charter in their community. This strategy would allow a core group of younger men to learn about Gyro and how the organization works. Once the new group is started and functioning the sponsors can merge the clubs together, function as emeritus consultants to the club, or continue to meet separately with occasional joint gatherings.
3. **Borrow Visibility** – clubs can investigate other organizations or gathering places in their community to determine whether an opportunity exists to create a “club within a club” or a purely social and fun club from the general membership of an organization that serves a different purpose. Current members should look at other organizations they are involved in (or were involved with). Clusters of people who already know each other can join at the same time to help build the club.



4. **Open Event** – even though the club is for members, there is nothing to stop members from throwing a larger event for some segment of the community and leverage attendance at that event to identify potential guests. Several clubs do this with their fundraisers but an ordinary social event like a wine tasting, miniature golf tournament, or a book club could also be used for this purpose.

What seemed to come through all the interviews is enthusiasm and genuine appreciation for their club and other club members. If there was a single magic ingredient to drive club growth, focus more on this level of energy. If that enthusiasm is present, club members will do the work if they receive the tools. The guidance from this report and checklist may be one of those tools. What would be extremely powerful is to have the committee track clubs who apply some of these tools and measure the results. These could become helpful case studies to supplement existing materials and show other clubs the success that can occur with effort, the right attitude and a smart application of tips from other clubs.

LIST OF DOCUMENTS IN THE APPENDIX (Separate Document)

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| A. Clinton IO | Interview Report |
| B. Syracuse NY | Interview Report |
| C. Prince George BC | Interview Report |
| D. Edmonton AB | Interview Report |
| E. Long Beach CA | Interview Report |
| F. Fort Lauderdale FL | Interview Report |
| G. Peterborough ON | Interview Report |
| H. Nanaimo BC | Written Response |
| I. Caloosa FL | Written Response |