



Understanding the Success Track to Membership Growth

Overview

Rotary's semi-annual billing cycle presents an unintended consequence – a “clear the books” dynamic in December and June, as clubs drop members ahead of dues billing dates. This self-inflicted “seasonality” is not well understood by District leaders, and dramatic membership losses in the last **hours** of December and June cause major disappointment to Governors and other District resources, when it's too late to recover.

Were this a seasonal business, we would understand this seasonality dynamic and plan accordingly, expecting peaks and valleys in our business. Not doing so in Rotary causes unnecessary surprises and disappointments. This pattern has been carefully observed and modeled, and a “**Success Track**” for the necessary pace of month-to-month membership growth has been identified. The purpose of this document is to explain the **Success Track**.

What are the dynamics of Rotary's "membership seasonality"?

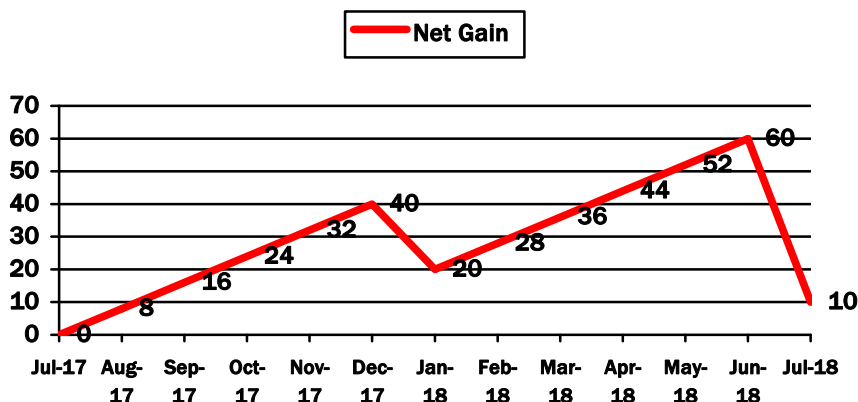
Reviewing multiple years of history across multiple Districts, it becomes clear that the “clear the books” declines experienced by most Districts cluster about some consistent values. A rough model of this history can be built around these averages:

- On average, Districts lose roughly 1% of membership during the last few days (or hours) of December
- On average, Districts lose roughly 2.5% of membership during the last few days (or hours) of June

Therefore, Districts must anticipate these losses in advance and build membership gains sufficient to absorb them. To finish the year with a net gain of roughly ½% of membership, Districts must:

- Go into December 1 with a net gain of 2% to finish the month up 1%, **and**
- Go into June 1 with a net gain of 3.0% to finish the month (and year) up ½%
- This “ramp” pattern of membership gain is called the **Success Track**

For a 2,000 member District, the Success Track looks like this:



This model has proven to be remarkably, almost frighteningly, predictive. A District behind the Success Track by, say, 20 members in February or March can expect to fall about 20 members short of the ½% growth target on June 30. For most Districts, that represents a net loss for the year. Districts that get excited about net gains of 5, 10 or 20 members in the spring are always disappointed when they finish the year with a net loss. Variances (plus or minus) from the Success Track early or midpoint in the year provide an excellent advance predictor of year-end membership gain (or loss).