

Focus on

Working Together

Smart Strategies
For Club Cooperation



PRESIDENT'S
*Retention
Campaign*





Retention Clinics Created for You

The President's Retention Campaign was developed to keep our quality club members interested and engaged. The campaign focuses on the three primary threats to retention and offers proven solutions to address these challenges. The President's Retention Campaign will help make your year as club president more successful and rewarding.

Research has shown that 50% of our new members drop out within the first three years. Fortunately, we know the main reasons why:

- Lengthy/boring meetings
- Club cliques and politics
- Lack of meaningful involvement

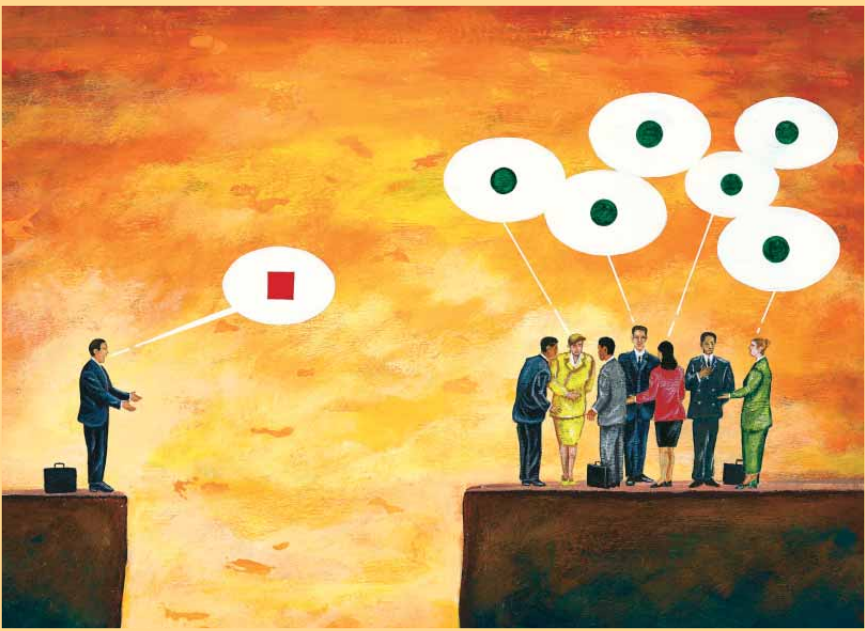
During the first few years of the President's Retention Campaign, we've found that clubs are also struggling with additional retention issues. One that has come to the forefront is working together effectively. This new clinic has been created to address the retention challenges that most directly affect the ability of a club to form a productive, cohesive group

The Retention Clinics spotlight each of these challenges individually, helping you uncover weaknesses in your club and develop a plan. Each Retention Clinic follows the same simple formula for identifying and solving the challenges:

- **LOOK** closely at the current state of your club
- **LISTEN** to input from fellow club members
- **LEARN** where problem areas exist
- **RESPOND** by implementing appropriate changes

This evaluation and implementation process is simple and not time-consuming. The benefits to your club will be well worth your efforts.

FIX IT FAST! Throughout the Retention Clinics, FIX IT FAST! features quick tips that are easily implemented. These ideas can be used on their own or to supplement more dramatic changes.



Building a Support System

As you go through this process, it will be helpful for you to share ideas, comments or concerns with other club presidents. You can contact other presidents in your district and suggest a brainstorming session. There is also help available via the Internet at the Club President Connection on the association's Web site (www.lionsclubs.org). The Club President Connection allows you to network with club presidents from around the globe. It is an excellent opportunity to learn what challenges others have faced and what solutions worked for them.

Retention Challenge

Clubs that are unable to bridge differences and unite for a common goal will create dissatisfied members

People join a Lions club for many reasons, but chief among them is to volunteer their time and help those in need. If they are not given the experience they are looking for, and don't feel that their contributions are needed or valued, they will look elsewhere for an outlet to volunteer.

LOOK at Your Club

Taking the time to examine your club and honestly assessing its current status is the key to making changes successfully. Without pinpointing the areas that need attention, you might be fixing a problem that doesn't exist and ignoring a potential trouble spot. It is helpful to write down your observations as you undertake this process.

Begin by observing your club closely:

- Does your club warmly welcome new members?
- Do you have a diverse membership base?
- Is there friction between club members?
 - If so, is it between the men and women members, younger and older members, or outgoing vs. more reserved members?
 - If so, does the friction interfere with the club's functioning?
- Do you encourage members to actively voice their opinions?
- Are there people in your club that you feel uncomfortable talking to?
- Do you regularly communicate with club members?
- Does your club feel like a unified group?
- Does your club have common goals?
- Do all your members know your club's goals?
- Has attendance at your meetings dropped?
- Has participation during your service activities dropped?

LISTEN to Input from Members

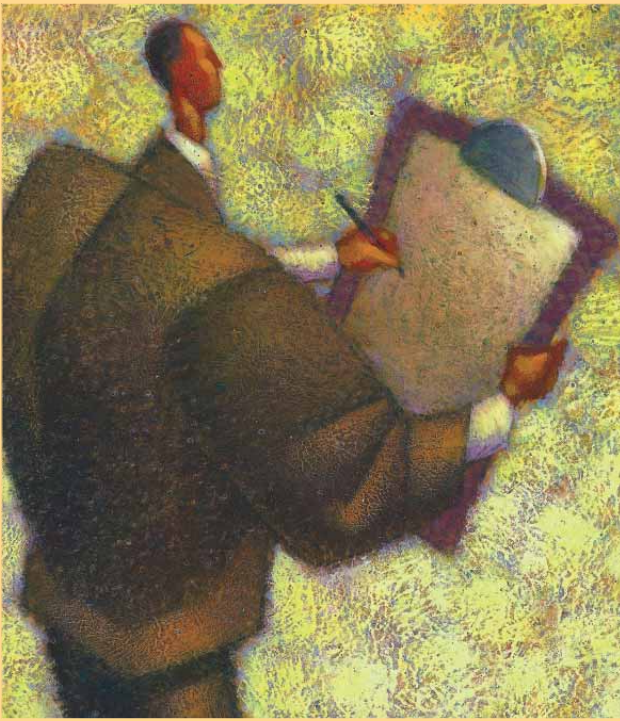
It is a good idea to enlist the help of several club members whose opinions you trust, or even your entire membership, to help with the evaluation process. To assist you in soliciting member input, a questionnaire is provided in the back of this publication.

FIX IT FAST! Share Your Enthusiasm – Attitude is infectious. Be upbeat, and enthusiastic about making positive changes in your club. Your members will be motivated to support your efforts.

LEARN Where Problem Areas Exist

Study your answers and the surveys from other members. Note the following:

- What trends do you see?
- Which areas need attention?
- Were you surprised at the responses you received?
- Was there a big difference between your assessment of your club meetings and your fellow members' assessment?



After examining feedback, decide which areas need attention. Use your best judgment when evaluating results. Certainly, if you notice a recurrence of the same comment you should look for strategies for solving that particular problem. You might find that there are areas where you thought the club excelled but members think otherwise. Depending on answers received, perhaps all that is needed are a few small changes. However, there may be situations where some members of your club feel strongly one way, and others

feel strongly another way. In these situations, you must consider what will be best for the club. If your club is trying to attract new, younger members, pay particular attention to the comments of those current members who are in the same demographic group you are trying to reach.

Your club members' involvement in this process doesn't have to stop with the evaluation. Report your findings and the changes you will make to improve your club. Enlist member enthusiasm and support. This is a great way to make club members feel valued and involved.

RESPOND by Making Appropriate Changes

Club members need to work together if a club is going to be successful. There is no way around it. For most clubs, this is an easy task – club members get along, share a common goal and work together to achieve it. However, in some cases, clubs need to work hard at trying to work together effectively. This is especially true in clubs where the membership is evolving.

Why is this the case? If a club has had many long-standing, dedicated members, and there is an influx of eager new members, the existing group can feel threatened by the likely redistribution of power. This fear can lead to stereotyping and discrimination. It is important to nip this behavior in the bud and not let it fester. Allowing it to fester will lead to an “us vs. them” atmosphere that will do nothing but cause resentment, potentially tearing apart the group. It will certainly not help your club be effective in serving the community!

Dealing with Diversity: Diversity is at the heart of Lions Clubs International. You are a part of an organization composed of men and women from more than 192 countries and geographical areas. Lions touch nearly every part of the globe. They are from different backgrounds and are various ages, professions and ethnic backgrounds. Some are from rural areas, others from suburban areas or cities. Some clubs are very diverse in and of themselves, others not as much. However, whatever the composition of a club's membership, the association's diversity should be embraced and celebrated. It is one of the qualities that makes us the world's largest humanitarian service club organization.

Appreciating Differences: All people approach things in different ways, whether it is because they are a man or a woman, younger or older, have an outgoing personality or are more reserved, or because of their upbringing or culture. If a club member's approach to something is unsettling, take a look at his or her point of view. For example, members who like to take things slowly and deliberately may not appreciate those who are more aggressive and proactive; people who are sticklers for detail might not like those with a more casual attitude.

Accepting the differences that are inherent in the members in an organization such as Lions Clubs International will help form a more cohesive, better functioning club. Whether there are large issues to be bridged, or subtle differences, approaching either of them with understanding and patience is the key to success.



Avoiding Stereotypes: There are certain characteristics that are often attributed to different groups of people. It is important, however, not to make blanket assumptions about people based on their gender, race or age. It is far better to learn about the individual. Your efforts to understand the member will be greatly valued and will help bridge differences in your club.

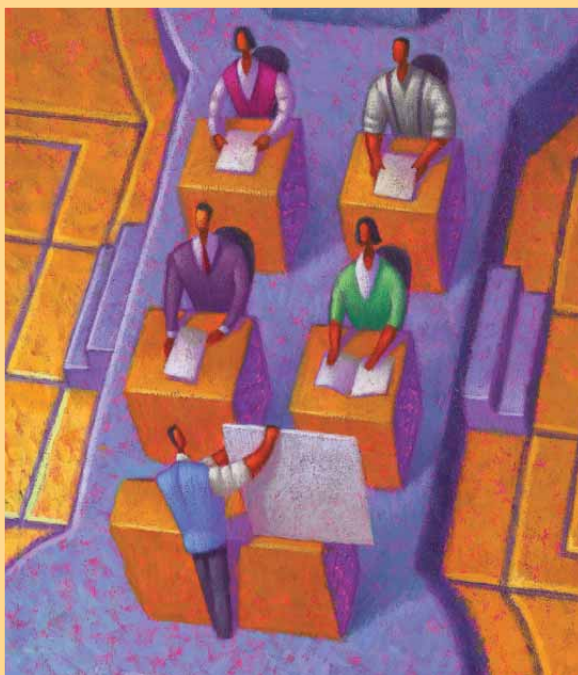
Accepting Change: Change can be very threatening to some people. They are comfortable with how things are, and don't want to confront the uncertainty that change may bring. As a club president, you need to be a champion of change in your club. You need to reassure those who are threatened by an influx of new members, revision of club goals or the introduction of a new project that the changes are meant to strengthen the club and allow it to be more helpful to those in need. Quelling their fears and assuring them that their contributions to the club will always be valuable can help alleviate the situation.

A special note: It is vital that your club members' attitude toward the introduction of new members be positive. If new members enter the club and they feel unwelcome, they are likely to drop out and relate their negative experience in your club to others.

Do not let a fear of change jeopardize the potential of your club to reach more people in need. With the increased emphasis being placed on recruiting more new members, you may notice the composition of your club changing rapidly over the next few years. As one example, women are an amazing resource for Lions clubs, and given that the association was one of the very first of the major service club organizations to accept women as members, we have the duty to support them in their efforts as Lions club members

Establishing Meeting Manners: You can create a positive atmosphere during club meetings by establishing ground rules for personal conduct. These guidelines allow members to express themselves freely and set the stage for constructive discussion. Ideas for meeting conduct guidelines include:

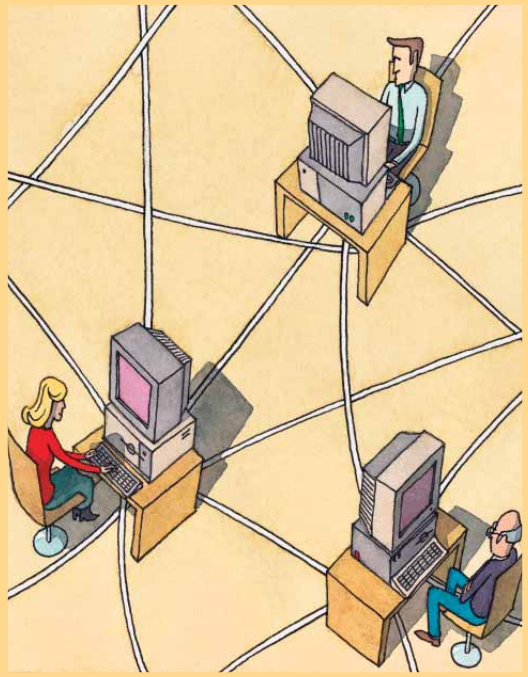
- All members should be treated as equals and peers.
- All members are encouraged to voice their opinions on subjects.
- All members should be encouraged to ask questions to clarify what they do not understand or if they want further elaboration.
- Members should be allowed to express themselves openly and candidly, however, all members must understand that personal attacks are not acceptable and all members should be treated with respect.
- When brainstorming ideas, no idea should be considered "bad." Every contribution helps pave the way to the solution.
- Club officers should take care not to show favoritism to individuals.



FIX IT FAST! Set the Tone – Club leadership has an enormous impact on the atmosphere of the club. Making it clear that all members are to be accepted and respected as essential parts of the club, and setting a welcoming, tolerant atmosphere will go a long way in bridging potential gaps.

Benefits of Diversity: Pointing out the benefits of diversity often helps to bridge gaps and bring people together. The benefits of diversity are:

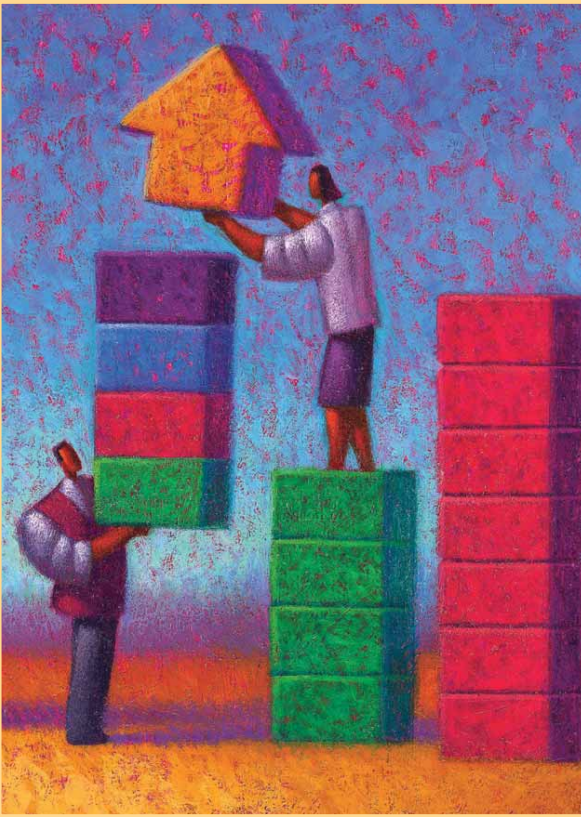
- **Fresh Ideas and Perspectives:** New members carry with them their collective life experiences, which helps them bring new ideas to the club. All clubs benefit from perspectives that help them see things in a different way.
- **Better Ability to Serve:** A diverse membership allows the club to reach a broader spectrum of people in need.
- **Develop Personal Relationships:** Diversity allows your club members to develop friendships with people that they may not otherwise have the opportunity to meet.



Finding a Common Ground: No matter what your members' backgrounds or beliefs, they all have one thing in common: the desire to serve those in need. While they may have become Lions for varying other reasons, their commitment to community service was among them. Sharing this common ground can help bridge myriad gaps that may come your way. If differences of opinion ever seem to be too great, take a step back to remind everyone why they are Lions.

Setting Common Goals: One key to any organization's success is a clear statement of goals. The association has a mission statement to guide it, as well as the Purpose and Code of Ethics. Consider drafting your own version of a mission statement that is specific to your club. From that, create yearly objectives to help meet your mission statement. These objectives should be measurable. They will guide your club throughout the year. Communicate your mission statement and objectives with your members, post them on your Web site, print them in your bulletin. Make them the guiding principles of your club.

Association Mission Statement: To create and foster a spirit of understanding among all people for humanitarian needs by providing voluntary services through community involvement and international cooperation.



Building a Team: You will find that club members will respond positively if they feel they play a significant role in the club and are an important part of the team. Team building fosters cooperation, enthusiasm, gives your club direction and helps bridge differences.

Team building requires shared goals and effective communication. Have your club members help set yearly club goals and develop a plan to reach those goals. The team then works together to implement the plan, address challenges, evaluate the process and celebrate successes.

FIX IT FAST! *Member of the Meeting* – This solution works very well for smaller clubs, committee meetings or board of director meetings. Randomly draw one person’s name and that person becomes your “Member of the Meeting.” The other members need to state one thing they appreciate about the member being recognized, and no one can repeat what another person has said. It is a simple way to make a member feel special, and stimulate others to think about what they admire in this person.

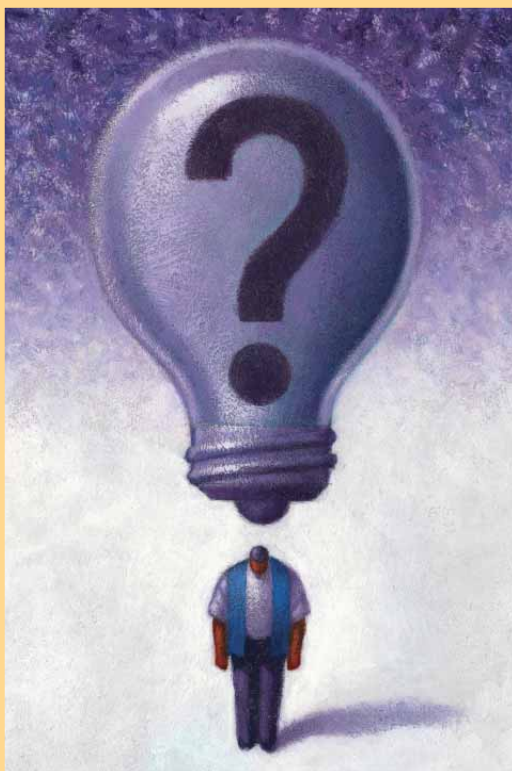
Dealing with Conflict: Even in the best, most productive clubs conflicts arise at one time or another. As a leader, you will need to deal with conflicts that develop in your club. It is essential to handle them in a timely manner. Ignoring the situation and hoping it will go away, or making vague, broad-based comments during a club meeting that do not directly address the parties involved will not solve the problem. One of the best ways to handle the situation is to discuss it with the parties in a relaxed, non-threatening manner. You don’t want to put anyone on the defensive or take sides. You want to listen, mediate and help the parties to come to a mutually satisfying conclusion.

Welcoming New Members: It is essential for new members to feel immediately welcomed by the club. The sooner they are made to feel like part of the team, the quicker they will become active, vital members. If you are finding that your club is having a particularly difficult time welcoming others into the fold, or that well-established cliques are having an adverse effect on your club, the Retention Clinic that focuses on Cliques and Club Politics has many helpful suggestions to combat this retention challenge.

FIX IT FAST! Communicate Constantly – Open communication – on both sides – is vitally important to the success of your club. It creates a comfortable, productive environment that will motivate members to do their best. Encouraging input from members (see below) and using your club meetings, newsletter and Web site to communicate club happenings will help you with this task.

Encouraging Input: Making all club members feel that they have a voice in the club is vital for stimulating cooperation among members. Members should feel that they can offer suggestions during club and committee meetings, comment on activities or express a complaint. They should also feel that their comments, suggestions or complaints are valued and will be appropriately addressed. Encouraging input, but then not following up with it will create frustration for your members. Some ideas for actively encouraging input:

- Create a suggestion box for soliciting member ideas. Acknowledge the ideas that are implemented during club meetings or in your club's newsletter or Web site.
- Hold brainstorming sessions to discuss new service activity ideas or a new way of handling an activity or club function. During a brainstorming session, no idea is considered "bad." The goal is to create a free-flow of ideas and get participants thinking in a different way. Write down all ideas that are presented. At the end of the session, workable ideas can be culled from the list. Brainstorming not only produces fresh ideas, but is also an excellent team building activity.



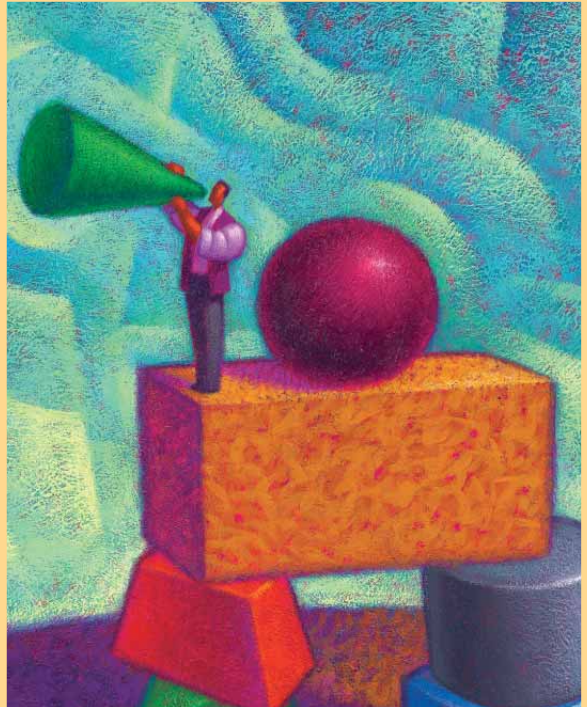
- Evaluate activities at their conclusion. Have club members comment on service activities – did the activity run smoothly? Did the club meet its goals? What could be improved for next time? Write the suggestions down for future reference. This should be done as soon as possible after the activity so the experience is fresh in everyone’s minds.
- Periodically have a few members visit other area Lions clubs to share ideas. Encourage those clubs to send members to visit your club. This is a great way to learn something new and build fellowship.

FIX IT FAST! Plan a Summit – Including members in your retention campaign plans is an excellent way to involve them in your club. Consider holding a membership and retention summit. During the summit, review your club’s recruitment and retention strategies; look at your club’s strengths and weaknesses; brainstorm new ideas and develop an implementation plan. You could also hold summits on the individual retention challenges: boring/long meetings, cliques/politics, lack of meaningful involvement and working together effectively.

Implementing Changes:

Continue involving members by thoroughly explaining **WHAT** changes you are making, **WHY** you are making them and **HOW** they will affect the club members. They will appreciate being included, and it will help motivate them to support your changes.

Be sure to let those members who are “slipping” and not regularly attending club functions know what changes you are making. Call these members personally, or enlist the help of a few members to phone these Lions and let them know that their attendance is missed, and what new changes are taking place. Chances are, if they aren’t attending meetings, they won’t actively read the Web site or newsletter to learn about the changes. Phoning them will let them know you care about the status of their membership.





A Final Note...

Retaining members is a critical, ongoing process. While advice suggested in the Retention Clinics should have a positive impact on the functioning of your club and therefore, the successful retention of members, you should always keep your eyes open for potential stumbling blocks. Each year, the dynamics of a club change. Sometimes these changes are subtle, with the effects not being easily recognizable. Other changes will be obvious. Keep your observation skills honed and handle challenges as they occur. Be flexible and willing to make adjustments when needed. Offer to help the next leadership team make their meetings the best they can be. Share your success stories with other club presidents worldwide via the Club President Connection.

Good luck as you work together with your members to plan and implement a successful retention campaign in your club!

For More Information

Please contact the Extension and Membership Division at (630) 571-5466, ext. 356; fax (630) 571-1691; or e-mail retention@lionsclubs.org.

To network with fellow club presidents, log on to the Club President Connection at www.lionsclubs.org.

Working Together Effectively Questionnaire

Please help us evaluate the quality of our club by taking a few minutes to complete this survey. Your input is important to our club. Please return it to _____ by _____.

Always: 5 Often: 4 Sometimes: 3 Seldom: 2 Never: 1

Please use the lines underneath each question to add comments. Use the back of this sheet for additional comments if necessary.

- 1) Our club has common goals. _____

- 2) Our club works together harmoniously to reach those goals. _____

- 3) Club leadership has effectively communicated the club's goals to members.

- 4) Our club warmly welcomes all members into our club. _____

- 5) The women and men in our club get along well. _____

- 6) The older members and younger members get along well. _____

- 7) Members of different cultures get along well. _____

- 8) All members in our club are treated with respect. _____

9) The input of all members is encouraged and valued. _____

10) Club officers communicate with members effectively. _____

11) New ideas are encouraged. _____

12) There is friction between club members. _____

13) Friction between club members causes our club to be unproductive. _____

14) There are people in my club that make me feel uncomfortable. _____

15) Our club has a diverse membership _____

16) A diverse membership is one of the great things about Lions. _____

I believe these are our club strengths:

These are the primary areas I think need improvement:

I would like to make the following suggestions:

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