

Saving Clubs at Risk

A Four Act Skit

**Zonta Membership Resource
Developed by Carol Pasanen
District 7 Governor, 2006-2008
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Cast of Characters:

Narrator

Club President

Membership Chair

Fellowship Chair

Member 1

Member 2

Member 3

Member 4

Jennifer (New member)

Marie (New member)

Act One: Recognize the Problem

Scene One

[**Setting:** Club members (no more than 10) are arranged around a table.]

Narrator: Zonta members from a club whose numbers have dwindled to 11 members are conducting their monthly business meeting. Let's listen in...

Club President: Now let's have the Membership Committee's report...

Membership Chair: I have nothing to report this month. Well, I guess I have one thing to report. Mary Jones resigned from our club a couple of weeks ago. That means we now have 11 members.

Club President: Thank you...now, let's have our Fellowship Committee report...

Fellowship Chair: I don't have much to report for this month. I guess we should start thinking about getting together to socialize some time in the next six months or so...

Narrator: Let's stop right here...this club's in trouble...and they don't even seem to know it. How should a club deal with dwindling numbers? Let's go back to this business meeting and try again...

Scene Two

[**Setting:** Club members (no more than 10) are arranged around a table.]

Club President: Now let's have the Membership Committee's report...

Membership Chair: I'm afraid I have some really bad news—Mary Jones resigned from our club earlier this month. That means we're down to only 11 club members!

Member 1: Oh, my gosh! We only have 11 members! How many members did we have a year ago?

Membership Chair: We had 16 members a year ago and 21 members two years ago.

Member 2: I see a pattern here. We've lost a total of 10 members in the last two years—that's a loss of 5 members per year. If we lose 5 more members during the next year, we'll be down to only 6 members...

Member 3: And in two years, we could be down to only 1 member...

Membership Chair: Well, actually, I think we'd no longer exist as a club in two years!

Club President: Zontians, the future of our club is at stake here! What are we going to do?

Membership Chair: We need to focus on growing our club; nothing is more important than that right now!

Club President: We need to develop a plan...

(All club members gather tighter into the table with great animation and enthusiasm—ad lib behaviors and dialogue for a few seconds.)

Narrator: This club is in crisis and in grave danger of disbanding within a year or two. Clubs with 20 or fewer members are at risk. Clubs must first recognize and acknowledge there is a membership problem before they will be ready to develop a plan. Clubs with membership problems must make “growing” their clubs their number one priority!

Act 2: Develop a Plan

Scene One

[**Setting:** Club members (no more than 10) are arranged around a table.]

Narrator: Zonta members from a club that has recognized a downward spiral in membership numbers are conducting their monthly business meeting. Let's listen in...

Club President: We're down to only 11 members in our club. We need to do something about this. Do any of you have ideas about what we could do?

Membership Chair: I think we have to take this seriously. We can't lose any more members. We're such great friends, and we all value Zonta and its mission. Let's stick together; we may not be growing but we have each other and can make the most of our small club! Maybe we'll even bring in a new member or two in the next year.

Member 1: I agree with you—small is all right as long as we're all active...

Member 2: That's it—we just have to make a pact to stay active...

Member 3: Wait a minute—what if someone moves away or someone becomes sick and can't attend meetings anymore...

Member 4: What if someone dies...

Club President: I see what you mean. Even if we bring in a new member or two, we could be losing ground as far as membership is concerned. I think we need to look at the big picture and think beyond keeping every member of our small club active.

Narrator: She's right! Clubs like this one need to keep their current members active AND develop a plan for significantly "growing" their clubs or, inevitably, their clubs will face disbandment in the not-so-distant future.

Scene Two

[**Setting:** Club members (no more than 10) are arranged around a table.]

Narrator: Let's go back to our club meeting to see how things are progressing...

Member 1: It sounds to me like we better develop a plan, but how do we do that?

Member 2: And what types of things should be part of our plan?

Member 3: I don't know if we can do this all by ourselves. I think we could use some help—where can we get help?

Membership Chair: I'm going to contact our district's Lieutenant Governor (insert name); she's our district's Organizational, Membership, and Classification Chairman. I bet she'll have some ideas for us.

Club President: I think we should get in touch with our Area Director (insert name) right away to see if she can help us put our plan together.

Member 1: I was checking out the District's website, and I saw links to a number of membership resources. I bet there are resources on the International website, too... I'll go online and download everything I can find!

Membership Chair: I'm going to contact clubs that are growing in our district to see if they have any tips for us.

Member 2: We can't forget to meet the needs of our current members, too—we don't want to lose any more members.

Member 3: And, we have to figure out who to recruit into our club—we have to find people who buy into our mission...

Club President: That's a good point—we need to develop a comprehensive plan for recruitment, retention, and rejuvenation! OK—it sounds like we have work to do before we can actually put our plan together. Let's gather

all of the resources we can, make contacts with other clubs, our area director, and our lieutenant governor—I should probably e-mail our governor, too, to make sure she knows what we're up to here! Let's gather information and bring everything to our next meeting. It will be a one-agenda item meeting: DEVELOPING A GROWTH PLAN FOR OUR CLUB! Now, let's make a list of what each of us will do before our next meeting...

Membership Chair: I'll make the list.

Member 1: Put me down for searching our district and international websites for resources.

Member 2: I'll help with that, too...

(Other members raise their hands and volunteer to help...ad lib for a few seconds.)

Narrator: This club is off and running! There are many resources out there for clubs to use, but many clubs fail to put together a comprehensive plan that utilizes these resources. When a club works together building a growth plan, they become a more cohesive group, and everyone feels part of the process. Once a plan is in place and implementation has begun, what's the next step?

Act 3: Monitor and Adjust

[**Setting:** Club members (including two new members) are arranged around a table.]

Narrator: Four months have now passed. Let's listen in on our Zonta club's business meeting as they assess their progress in "growing their club".

Club President: The focus of today's business meeting is to assess the progress we're making on adding new members to our club. Let's start with our Membership Chair giving us an update on our progress.

Membership Chair: We've added two new members in the past four months, so we're up to 13 members now! It's really exciting to have Jennifer and Marie in our club—I hope everyone will take time to get to know our two new members!

Club President: Let's take a look at what we've done during the last four months on our quest to add more members to our club. Let's go over everything we've done.

Membership Chair: After gathering information from our District OMC chair, our Area Director, and from the website, we set up a plan to bring in more members. We constructed a list of prospective members and sent letters to each of them inviting them to attend a social.

Member 1: How many of those invited attended our social?

Membership Chair: Well, actually only one person attended, and she didn't stay long.

Member 2: What other things have we done?

Membership Chair: We invited our Area Director to attend the next social, and each of us personally contacted people we knew who might be interested in Zonta and invited them to attend. Some of us even made arrangements to pick up our guests and drive them to the event. Our Area Director talked about some of Zonta's international projects, we had some games where we interacted with each other—we used an idea from another club in our district for the games. We had lots of fun.

Member 3: How successful was that event in bringing in members?

Membership Chair: Both Marie and Jennifer attended that event, and they have joined our club. Let's have them tell us how that event went?

Marie (New Member): I had a great time at your event—I really liked learning about Zonta's international projects and knew I'd found an organization that would really be worth my time.

Jennifer (New Member): I went to your social with Mary who's a member of your club. She and I have been friends for a long time. I really enjoyed getting to know the people who were there. I work in a job where I don't interact with people very much, so it was wonderful meeting the interesting women in your club.

Narrator: Let's stop there and take a look at how the club is assessing their progress to this point. With any plan, it is important to monitor its effectiveness along the way. If the club does not take a close look at whether or not their plan of action is successfully bringing in new members, months could stretch to a year before they would be back where they started with little success. This club is doing the right things—they're looking at what they've been doing and getting feedback from new members. Talking with the new members themselves to get feedback on their recruitment plan and finding out what prompted them to join the club is a great idea. If some of their planned activities did not yield any new members, they should most likely discontinue doing those things and concentrate on activities that were successful. Here are a few questions that could be asked during the monitoring phase of a plan to "grow a club".

1. Which activities have been most successful in bringing in new members?
2. Which activities have not been successful in bringing in new members?
3. What feedback have our new members given us about their reaction to our recruiting activities? And the reasons they joined the club?
4. How should we adjust our plan of action? Are there activities we should discontinue? Are there new things we should try? How can we include our new members in our recruiting efforts?
5. What other resources can we use to help us recruit new members?
6. What is our plan of action for the next three months?

(At this point, the narrator could lead the audience in a discussion using the questions above with regard to this act in our skit.)

Act 4: Retaining Members

Scene 1

[**Setting:** Club members are arranged around a table. The club secretary is writing down ideas that are being mentioned.]

Narrator: Let's listen in as the club president is leading a brainstorming session about possible future fundraisers.

Club President: It's time to start planning for our spring fundraiser. I realize it's now October, but spring will be here before we know it. Our secretary will be writing down your ideas. As you know, we use the money we raise to help support our Zonta International projects and our local women's shelter. OK—what type of fundraiser should we have in the spring?

Member 1: We've held our spring tea every spring for the past twenty years. I just love that tea. We make some money, and we know just how to put it together...

Member 2: Yes, but the number who attend and the profits have been going down the past few years.

Member 1: Well, I like having the tea—I don't like the idea of trying something new and having to start from scratch.

Jennifer (New Member): I know I'm a new member, but what if we sold hotdogs at the...

Member 3: Wait a minute, we're not going to sell hotdogs. We did that 25 years ago, and it was a disaster. Joyce burned her arm on the hotdog cooker, and I ended up with 50 dozen hot dog buns in my freezer that I finally fed to the squirrels in my yard. We've done that, and it doesn't work!

Narrator: How do you think the new member felt after this meeting? Would she feel valued as a member? Let's try this again and see if the club can present a more accepting and welcoming atmosphere for new members.

Scene 2

[**Setting:** Club members are arranged around a table. The club secretary is writing down ideas that are being mentioned.]

Club President: It's time to start planning for our spring fundraiser. I realize it's now October, but spring will be here before we know it. Our secretary will be writing down your ideas. As you know, we use the money we raise to help support our Zonta International projects and our local women's shelter. OK—what type of fundraiser should we have in the spring?

Member 1: We've held our spring tea every spring for the past twenty years. I just love that tea. We make some money, and we know just how to put it together...

Club President: Let's put that on the list. Once we've compiled a list of ideas, we can discuss the pros and cons of each idea. Other ideas???

Member 2: Let's have a spring golf tournament that includes a silent auction...

Member 3: Maybe we could hold it at the Fairway Club!

Club President: Let's hold off for now on discussing the details until after we have our list of possibilities.

Jennifer (New Member): I know I'm a new member, but how about selling hotdogs at the Women's Spring Festival in April?

Member 4: That's an idea!

Club President: Add that to our list—other ideas???

Narrator: Let's stop there. This is an overly simplified example of how a new member or any member, for that matter, can either feel valued in an organization...or not. Sometimes the smallest snub or a thoughtless remark can make someone question whether they would like to continue in an organization. What are the actions in the first scene that were problematic? What specific actions in the second scene made everyone feel valued? How did the club president set the tone? What can the other club members do to help others feel valued?

It is important to plan acceptance and encouragement into every meeting—not only for new members but for every member as well. In addition, the meetings need to be interesting, enjoyable and meaningful. Some membership loss is normal because members' lives change; however, inappropriate behaviors and attitudes of club members should never drive other members away.

[The discussion can continue using the following questions to guide the conversation.]

1. Why do people resign from club membership?
2. What types of attitudes, behaviors, and activities contribute to the loss of club members?
3. What can we build into our meetings to make sure everyone looks forward to the meetings?
4. What can we do to meet the needs of young professional women in today's world in order to retain and attract members?

The End