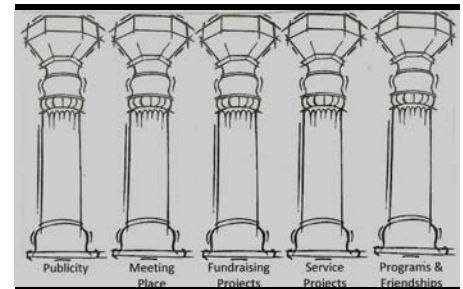
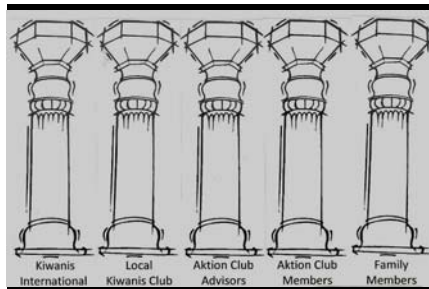




The 10 Pillars of Aktion Club

Aktion Club is a sponsored organization of Kiwanis International. The members of the club are adults living with a disability. At the local level, a Kiwanis Club sponsors an Aktion Club jointly with a community-based organization also serving adults with disabilities. To start an Aktion Club and help that club thrive, grow stronger and be successful, there are 10 “pillars” or fundamental rules that should be followed. They include:

- Pillar 1. Kiwanis International**
- Pillar 2. Local Kiwanis Club**
- Pillar 3. Aktion Club Advisors**
- Pillar 4. Aktion Club Members**
- Pillar 5. Aktion Club Family Members**
- Pillar 6. Publicity**
- Pillar 7. Meeting Place**
- Pillar 8. Fundraising Projects**
- Pillar 9. Service Projects**
- Pillar 10. Programs and Friendships**



Like any well-built structure, these pillars are desirable to ensure a solid foundation. If one or more pillars are weak or missing the structure will not be as strong and secure as it might otherwise be. Each pillar holds up and supports an important facet of an Aktion Club. It is a good idea to step back and evaluate how well your club implements each pillar. Following are a few ideas on how your club might do this evaluation and what to look for or provide in each pillar.

Pillar 1. Use Kiwanis International materials and services and follow their lead.

Kiwanis International publishes many excellent Aktion Club materials that are constantly being updated and improved. Regular use of the www.actionclub.org Website will assist you in following the best practices and keeping your club in compliance with filing required reports and optional contests and competitions. The Kiwanis International lead person for Aktion Club questions regarding services, publications, contests, etc. is Lisa Pyron. If you cannot find what you want on the Website, you may call her at 1-800-KIWANIS. Also supporting Aktion Club is an International committee that is constantly monitoring the program, taking and making suggestions and working to improve the services and materials available from Kiwanis International. Many Kiwanis district leaders also provide services and Aktion Clubs should take advantage of these available resources. It is important to remember that Kiwanis International is the only community service organization that sponsors a community service opportunity for adults that live with a disability. That makes Kiwanis unique and different from all similar service organizations.

Pillar 2. Ensure solid and continuous support from the co-sponsoring Kiwanis Club (or Clubs).

An Aktion Club needs substantial support and guidance from co-sponsoring organizations. The Kiwanis Club or Clubs, along with the local agency serving people who live with disabilities, must work closely together to ensure the greatest success for the club. Each co-sponsoring organization should have at least two representatives at each meeting. It is recommended that clubs meet at least twice-monthly, but some clubs choose to meet only once a month. Not only should the Kiwanis Club help in planning and executing meetings, but should also have joint meetings during the year. Sharing an annual Christmas party, Thanksgiving Day dinner, annual family picnic or

other similar joint meetings will be vital to building the fun and fellowship that will help members gain confidence as well as building enduring friendships for everyone involved. In addition, helping with fundraising projects, training new leaders and supporting and attending the annual District conference will also help create a sense of camaraderie that will help build a solid and long-term relationship. Remember, sponsoring an Aktion Club is one of the best and most rewarding “hands on” service projects a Kiwanis Club can do, and certainly one of the most beneficial to deserving friends and neighbors.

Pillar 3. Having a solid and reliable community service agency as a co-sponsoring Aktion Club advisor is critical to success.

Considerable time and effort should go into locating a capable, willing and cooperative local service agency. It might be a local chapter of the Arc, an independent adult day program, a provider of community living facilities, or a combination of more than one of these agencies. If the club meeting place can be held within the agency, the problem of transportation is made much easier. If you have more than one organization or agency providing living options, this can be very beneficial to club members. The ideal co-sponsoring organization should be an active and willing partner in the planning and execution of club meetings and activities. Once they see how much Aktion Club members enjoy doing community service and being a part of an energetic group of friends, they will want to help and participate even more. Again, there should be at least two representatives at every meeting and they should be expected to take an active role in helping plan ongoing activities of the club. Helping serve meals, provide transportation, set-up games and a variety of other tasks will also help ensure a fun, smooth running and productive meeting.

Pillar 4. Recruiting additional Aktion Club members should be a constant goal of every club.

It is recommended that a new Aktion Club have at least 15 members. This is not mandatory but is recommended by Kiwanis International. Kiwanians learned a long time ago that having more members’ means you can do more community service, raise more funds and in general accomplish more for the club and the community. However, the most important reason to have more members is that you can offer more people the opportunity to share in the sense of accomplishment that comes from doing community service. You will also provide the opportunity to become better leaders, better citizens, and to share in the fun and fellowship of belonging to the Kiwanis family. Kiwanis International offers flyers, posters, etc. to help in recruiting more members. You should also consider creating a brochure that describes your clubs service projects and fundraisers and other activities. You are limited only in the capacity of your meeting place or the resources required to help support your club. Remember, Aktion Club is the fastest growing member of the Kiwanis family. There are many good reasons for this. People who live with a disability have not had this opportunity before. They might have belonged to a club but being a part of the Kiwanis family will give them access to being part of an international family that is vibrant and effective on a scale well beyond the local or even state level. Set your sights high and build your club membership by giving as many people as possible the opportunity to share in this great adventure.

Pillar 5. Find ways to include Aktion Club family members in your club activities.

Another often overlooked resource is the family members of Aktion Club members. Whether it is a sibling, parents or other relative, invite them to attend your meetings. Involve them in fundraising efforts, service projects and family meals or other events. If you think about it, relatives, especially parents and siblings are generally very proud of their family members. And once they see the joy that comes from doing good works, they will be even more so. Not many years ago the members of Aktion Club had little or no opportunity to participate in community life. There were no schools, no job opportunities, and no sporting events in which to participate and certainly no opportunities to do community service. They were thought of as recipients of, not providers of community service. This is no longer true. People who live with a disability have always been able to do the same things others do. Perhaps in a different way, but they can do it. That is why parents, brothers and sisters and other relatives are proud of their sons, daughters, brothers and sisters. Someone once said; “if a person can do even one thing well, they are of value to us all.” Family members no longer carry guilt or shame about their loved ones, especially when they see they are doing something good for others while doing something also good for them. Seek out and involve family members in club efforts and activities.

Pillar 6. Take advantage of the publicity opportunities available to your Aktion Club.

Aktion Club has a story to share. Your local newspaper is willing to print articles of interest in your community and be eager to know about what your club is doing. Find out the name of the person that does the articles on community service projects and keep them informed on a regular basis of your activities. You might want to consider printing a Newsletter for your club. It doesn't have to be long or elaborate. It can be just a single page describing club service projects or fundraisers. It can also be about joint meetings with your Kiwanis or service agency sponsors. Include pictures to illustrate these activities. Remember, "A picture is worth a thousand words". Send your contact at the newspaper information about your club on a regular basis. Let them know when your meetings are and what your agenda includes. If you do get an article in the paper, include it in your Newsletter or other mailings to interested parties. Having a club Website will also help publicize and promote your club. Develop and maintain a list of supporters; people or companies that have given you a donation or supported your club in some way. Over time you can expand your mailing list and use it when you need help or when you plan to do a fundraiser. Not everyone wants to help you but many people do. Once they know what you are doing and the good things that are resulting from club efforts, even more people will want to help. Some people are not joiners or doers, but they may be givers. If you publicize what and how your club is doing, they may very well want to share some of their resources. If you do get an article printed or other publicity, share it with Kiwanis International and your Aktion Club District Chair. They may want to include it in their publicity as well. The bottom line is that you should let people know what your club is doing to help others. You have every right to be proud of these efforts.

Pillar 7. Be sure to take good care of and respect your meeting place.

Having a good meeting place is critical to the success of any club. Some clubs meet where they receive other services. Some meet at restaurants, public facilities such as community centers, churches, or church fellowship halls and a variety of other meeting places. Some clubs have a meal or snack during their meeting and some do not. Some people feel that is better to meet in a public place in order to be more "integrated" into society. No matter where you meet, the most important thing is to take good care of the facility. Show gratitude for being able to use the space provided for your club meeting. Make sure you keep it clean and neat and always at least as good as you found it. Remember also that it costs to provide the heat, light, air conditioning, etc. and other amenities that are provided for your use. You might want to consider inviting the person or person responsible for letting you use your meeting space to a "thank you" meeting or dinner. If you have the resources, you might to also add them to your list of service project recipients. My club meets at a church fellowship hall and invites the minister to attend our annual Christmas party and gives the church a modest check to help defray some of the expense of the facility. Not every club can do this but a regular "thank you" goes a long way to show your appreciation for having a good place to meet.

Pillar 8. Having good on-going fundraising projects is vital to a successful club experience.

You can do some service projects without spending a great deal of money. For example; cleaning up a park or roadside, taking care of a flower bed in a public place, visiting a nursing home to play bingo, collecting pop-tabs for Ronald McDonald House, and many other worthwhile projects. But also rewarding are those service projects that do require funding. And that funding will usually come from either donations or well-planned and executed fundraising projects. What works well for some clubs might not work so well for others. A lot depends on how many members and advisors the club has to help plan and execute a good fundraiser. Some of the most successful projects may be similar or identical to the fundraisers of the sponsoring Kiwanis Club. Sometimes joint projects work well. Examples might include some form of preparing and serving a meal. Pancake breakfasts have been one of the best fundraisers for Kiwanis Clubs for many years. Why not pick another time of year and have the Kiwanians help Aktion Clubbers do a pancake breakfast? Spaghetti or chili suppers are favorites during the winter months. Car washes work well during nicer weather. You might want to consider designating a specific service project as the recipient of proceeds from a fundraiser. This might include Special Olympics, a special education class, the co-sponsoring service agency or a local Headstart program would be good possibilities. The sale of a product such as candy, peanuts, Christmas ornaments or similar items will always earn money for your service projects. Remember, advertising and publicizing your projects will not only help, it might soon become an expectation of friends,

neighbors and co-workers in your community. Your success in doing good service projects is, in large part, directly related to your success in raising funds.

Pillar 9. The service projects you select will provide assistance to the recipients and to your club.

The Aktion Club international service project is “Sleeping Children around the World (SCAW).” This wonderful program provides an otherwise homeless child with the items required to have a good night’s sleep. It also provides materials needed for school and some clothing items. For only \$35.00 US dollars, one child can receive a SCWA kit and we cannot imagine how much the child’s life is improved. Kiwanis also supports and advocates other programs for children. Programs like Headstart, local children’s hospitals, pre-school programs, special education classes, and other similar programs can be supported and improved by the purchase of materials and supplies to help improve the lives of children. Also, don’t forget your local parks, boys’ and girls’ clubs, Special Olympics and other similar programs. Some clubs collect materials and supplies as well as donate funds to local animal shelters. In Indiana, Riley Children’s Hospital and the Ronald McDonald House are programs serving children having health problems and their families. Many members of Aktion Club have themselves been treated or served by these services. Of course, helping our elderly citizens is always a worthwhile and rewarding experience. Whatever service projects your club decides to support, be sure your projects include some “hands-on” projects as well. The visibility and publicity received will really help your members feel good about themselves and the projects they have selected.

Pillar 10. The programs and friendships your club engages in will last a lifetime.

Having speakers at your club meeting can be a rewarding experience for all members and advisors. You might begin by inviting the representatives of the service projects you already support. If you help them, they will likely be willing to come to a club meeting and tell you about their services and how they are using the support your club provides. You can also invite representatives of “prospective” service projects. Other possible programs include the city police public relations officer, the K-9 officer, the same officers from the county sheriff’s office, parks department staff, etc. There are literally dozens of qualified speakers that are more than willing to do a program if only asked. These same people will also become important supporters of your club and help you spread the word about the service your club is doing. Another of the benefits of having people speak to your club is the friendship that is formed by them becoming familiar with your members. Other friendships are formed from your service projects, family members and, of course, among the advisors and member themselves. One of the objectives of Aktion Club is for members to be more involved and integrated into society. One of the best ways to do this is by having guest speakers do programs and by doing service projects in the community. These two things are compatible with the goal of integration and will be a big help to members.

Almost all of the ideas and recommendations mentioned in this article are covered in more detail on the Aktion Club Website and in the materials offered by Kiwanis International. It is hoped that by listing these 10 pillars of an Aktion Club Foundation that it can serve as a “checklist” of important points to focus on as you work from day-to-day with your Aktion Club. If you are able to implement all or some portion of these pillars, your Aktion Club should do well. Someone once said; “If you always do the things you’ve always done, you will always get what you’ve always got.” We should never be satisfied with the same result; we should always try to do better. This is especially true when we talk about helping our friends, neighbors, co-workers and relatives who live with a disability. They deserve and need our ongoing help and support.

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