The Four Pillars of Club Development:

A Strategic Plan for Club and Membership Development

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Preamble

This strategic plan is meant to be a “get-back-to basics” guide for club and membership development. It was designed to be used by all Rotary Clubs, but particularly by new and small Clubs, and those Clubs which would like to refocus their goals. It is meant to be used in conjunction with the District Visioning Initiative, the Club Leadership Plan, the Membership Resources available from Rotary International, the District 5020 membership resource book, “Getting and Keeping Good Rotarians”, and other relevant resource materials, as all of these materials deal with important organizational, planning, leadership and membership development topics in much greater detail.

This plan is a strategy based on three premises which are felt to be very important in enabling any Rotary Club to be a successful service club within its community.

The FIRST premise is that a Rotary Club must be a vital and integral part of its community. To put it in the context of a service industry, a successful Club would provide its community with readily identifiable services, which the community needs, wants, and appreciates. To identify such services, the Club must become familiar with its community; to deliver the service most effectively, the Club should also be known to its community, and be clearly seen to be providing its chosen services.

The SECOND premise is that a Rotary Club needs to know the organization within which it functions, and which it represents. Each Rotary Club is like a business which is part of a parent company, and therefore should function within the parameters of the larger organization, and be a reasonable representative thereof. In our case our “parent company” is, of course, Rotary International.

The THIRD premise is that, in order to be an effective and efficient Club, individual members, and especially those in leadership roles, must know their fellow members – their values, personalities, qualifications, likes and dislikes, proclivities, skills, attributes, traits, limitations and leadership potential. They also must understand both the collective ethos and the functioning style of the Club, that is, of the membership as a whole.

The Plan

Following from these three premises, the plan consists of the following four interrelated processes which I am calling the Four Pillars of club development:
1. Getting to Know your Community.

2. Getting to be Known by Your Community.

3. Getting to Know Rotary International.

4. Getting to Know your Club.

1. Getting to Know Your Community

This process is placed first in this strategic plan since the community is the primary source of the Club’s membership, as well as the principal source of its fund raising and operative partners.

It is very important for each Club to get to know, to the greatest degree possible, the community within which it operates. The following are considered to be particularly important community characteristics which should be understood: the governing body, including its structure, methods of functioning, vision and goals; the demographics; the types of businesses, their products or services, and community spirit; other charitable and community service organizations and what they provide; available facilities and resources; climate and geography; and social functions such as annual celebrations and inaugural events. Within the community it is vital to know how to get things done, who to approach for particular needs, supplies, and assistance, and how best to effectively advertise and announce.

It is particularly important to understand the Community’s special needs, problems and issues which are amenable to intervention by a service club, and which of those are not being addressed by any other organization. With that knowledge, a Club can identify an area, or areas, on which to focus its local service initiatives. An extension of this pertains to World Community Service projects and programs. Raising funds locally for its international service projects becomes relevant and easier if those international projects involve the same area of focus as those done locally.

2. Getting to be Known by Your Community

During the process of the Club getting to know its community, the community will get to know its Rotary Club, as well as Rotary in general. In addition, in providing the above services, the Club will come to be seen as a vital part of the community, and once it becomes known for them, it will be sought out when the need arises for those services. With time, such community services will define the club whose reputation and identity will be further enhanced.

To enhance its recognizability within its community with regard to the above services, however, the Club is advised to develop a theme. For example, one Club adopted the theme “Helping children locally and internationally”.

In addition to its activities involving community service initiatives, it is important for the Club to have an active Public Relations program to keep the community reliably and regularly informed regarding the Club and its activities and accomplishments, including progress on community projects and programs. The PR Committee should also keep the Club apprised of community activities of relevance to the club. A dynamic relationship between the Directors of Membership and Public Relations, and their respective Committees is seen to be of utmost importance.
3. Getting to Know Rotary International

In order to function effectively as a Rotary Club, the members should know and understand what Rotary International stands for, how it functions, and what it desires to accomplish. In other words, we need to know the organization within which we function so that we can reasonably represent it in an appropriate fashion, further its goals, and utilize the resources which it makes available. Therefore, it is desirable that all members know RI’s: history and purpose; principles, philosophies, and beliefs; vision, goals and objectives; organization and structure; policies and procedures; and programs and projects. The same pertains to the Zone and District within which the Club functions.

4. Getting to Know Your Club

In Rotary, the members provide each Club with the talent, energy and leadership to carry out the aims and objectives of the Club; they carry out the Club’s projects and programs, raise funds, and recruit new members; and they are ambassadors for both the Club and RI. They determine how the Club functions in delivering its services, both to the community and internationally. Choosing the right individuals for the various tasks is paramount to the success of the Club, and to the satisfaction of its members. This particularly applies to those elected to leadership roles within the Club, and the members of the Selection Committee whose responsibility it is to recruit those for election.

The following are considered important factors to be known about each Club member: their reasons for joining Rotary; the personal goals which they wish to achieve as a member; how they see themselves fitting into the Club; what they would like to see the Club accomplish; how they would like to see the Club function; how, when and where they would like to be involved in the various Club activities; whether they would like to serve the Club in a leadership capacity; what Rotary training they would like to receive; and how they are, and would like to otherwise be, involved in the community. With this knowledge in hand, the Club’s leadership can then ensure that the members are engaged appropriately in club activities so that they can feel wanted, needed and appreciated while accomplishing their personal goals within Rotary.

The How

The following are some suggestions designed to facilitate the implementation of the four processes, the first two of which are combined together for simplicity’s sake. The list is deemed to be neither all-inclusive nor the only way to build the Four Pillars, since “getting to know and be known” is seen as a dynamic, creative, and evolving process, which will, to a large degree, depend on the special and unique situations and circumstances occurring within each community.
Getting to Know, and be Known by, Your Community

- Each Rotarian must recognize themselves as an ambassador of both the local Rotary Club and RI. To a greater or lesser degree, each Club will be known within the community, through and by each of its members.
- Addresses to the Club can be requested from members of: local businesses; the Chamber of Commerce, or other business organizations; other service clubs; religious and charitable groups; other community organizations; the Municipal Council; municipal service organizations such as police, fire, schools, and health care; members of the community who have undertaken notable endeavors; and others which the Club sees as enhancing its knowledge of the community.
- Members of the Club can offer to address other community organizations.
- The Club can put on local functions such as dances, BBQs, and other celebrations to which the community at large is invited.
- Presentations of official Rotary Awards, such as Paul Harris Fellowships, or locally initiated, "unofficial" awards, for example, those for "Vocational Service", "Business of the Year", and "Community Service", can be made, at annual or other public ceremonies, to members of the community who exemplify the attributes of Rotary.
- Establish a Youth Recognition Program in the Community, including components such as Student of the Month and/or Year Award, and Student Employee of the Year.
- The Club can have a presence at community functions such as markets, fairs, parades, and other types of community celebrations.
- The Club can establish formal and informal relationships with other community organizations and individuals.

Getting to Know Rotary International

- Make the annual Governor’s visit a “Be sure to be there” special celebratory meeting.
- Invite the Area Assistant Governor to update the Club periodically on District happenings.
- Have a “Rotary Moment” at each meeting.
- Have meetings, or special events such as Fireside Chats, devoted to learning about Rotary.
- Have Rotarians from other Clubs address the Club on initiatives of note.
- Have District Officers give presentations to the Club on their areas of responsibility.
- Have local members of Interact and Rotaract give presentations to the Club.
- Have students returning from RYLA, Adventures in Citizenship, and Adventures in Technology, Youth Exchange, and like programs share their experiences with the Club.
- Encourage members to read Rotary literature.
- Entertain the idea of having a Rotary Library from which Club members can borrow.
- Encourage members to learn how to access the Club, RI and District web sites; local seminars may be necessary.
• Members should be encouraged to attend Rotary educational sessions such as the District Leadership Training Assembly (DLTA), District Assemblies, District Committee Meetings, Training Seminars and both District and RI Conferences.
• Establish an Educational Program for prospective members.
• Establish a Mentor Program for new members.
• Educate membership on the duties of the club executive positions.

Getting to Know Your Club

• Devise and administer a “New Member Questionnaire” containing the “important factors” outlined previously.
• Administer a regular “Member Satisfaction Questionnaire”.
• Have the Club Directors and Officers brief the Club periodically on their areas of responsibility.
• Have regular Assemblies or “working meetings” to discuss, in open format, major issues facing the Club, and the solutions recommended for the Club by its Board of Directors.
• Establish a Classification Talk Program for new members.
• Have long-standing members give periodic mini classification talks with regard to their business and Rotary activities.
• Acknowledge at meetings the special activities of Club members, and, if appropriate, have them give a short presentation to the Club.
• Establish a Member Recognition Program, including acknowledgement of birthdays, wedding anniversaries, Rotary anniversaries, and notable non-Rotary events in the members’ personal lives.
• Conduct periodic Club Surveys, analyze them, and report the results to the Club for discussion and resolution of problems so identified.
• Have periodic working parties to build and maintain Club facilities and equipment.
• Establish a regular social program within the Club with the goal of promoting fellowship.
• Establish a Nominating Committee for the selection of candidates for the Board of Directors, and other leadership positions.
• Publicize the responsibilities for each member of the Board.
• Announce the slate of Directors proposed by the Selection Committee, and have the candidates brief the Club on their vision and plans for the coming year.
• Have a regular annual meeting to announce the successful candidates for Club office.