

ROTARY CLUB OF ST. JOHN’S NORTHWEST

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Strategic Planning Initiative, 2011 - 2012

**INTRODUCTION**

The renewal of our strategic plan was one of my priorities for 2011-2012. As club members know, our current three year plan, developed during Wendy Scammell’s presidency, has run its course. The Board agreed that we should proceed and I invited Lisa Hutchens of the St. John’s East Club to assist us with this exercise as she had helped her own club with its own strategic plan. Lisa attended our October 2011 Board meeting at which time we set out the framework for the strategic planning initiative and also decided on the questions we would ask Club members to solicit their input. Ten Board members agreed to share the interviewing workload.

We explained the strategic planning initiative to club members at several weekly club meetings in October 2011 and we urged all club members to participate. We then sent out the survey questions to all club members prior to beginning the interviews. We agreed that we would prepare an analysis of the responses and circulate a document to club members prior to dedicating a club assembly or meeting to discuss the findings and observations. We urged members to be honest and frank in their responses we promised that no comments would be attributed directly to club members. During October and November Board members solicited responses from club members and these responses were then sent to me for review and analysis.

We received responses from 56 members – 54 active and 2 honorary members. By my count there were 14 No Responses, which included a number of people on leave of absence. We had 56 out of a possible 70 responses, for a response rate of 80%. The remaining members were unable to respond. We are pleased with the responses and the response rate to the strategic planning initiative. Those who did not respond were prompted to do so by email and personal contact several times so I firmly believe we have done our best to invite members to respond.

I took all members’ responses and tabulated them into categories for each of the five survey questions. I have tried very hard to represent members’ comments fairly and objectively. I have combined similar comments into a single category. Some responses could have been placed in more than one question and again here I made the decision to place them where it seems most logical to do so. The numbers in the left hand column of the five tables below indicate the number of times a particular point came up in your responses. Some members made a number of points on a particular question; others may have made only a singular point; and, still others answered some but not all of the questions, thus the variances in total numbers for each question.

The enclosed document was reviewed by the Board at our January 2012 meeting and the Board agreed that this document was ready to go to the general membership. It was also decided that a weekly meeting would be the best forum to discuss the strategic plan as more members would likely be in attendance than if we held a special evening meeting where attendance would likely be lower.

The objective of the strategic planning initiative is to gauge the pulse of the membership on how the club has done over the past three years or more; seek ideas and suggestions on how we might improve our club; measure membership engagement; and, provide an opportunity for club members to raise other points of interest.

At our regular weekly club meeting on 7 February 2012 we:

* Informed club members of findings and observations;
* Provided an opportunity for members to discuss findings and observations; and,
* Discussed implications of the findings and observations for the club’s broad strategic direction over the next three years.

Several points should be made about our strategic planning document and this initiative:

* As one would expect, there are divergent comments on the same issue, for example fundraising;
* Club members feel stronger on some issues than on others, witness the number of responses to particular points;
* This is a strategic planning document and not an annual work plan document that sets out what the club will specifically do each year;
* The Board agreed to take into consideration members’ feedback from the meeting on 7 February to prepare a revised Strategic Planning Initiative document for the club for the next three years. As it turned out, there were no additional points raised at the meeting on 7 February so the following represents the responses to the five questions and our analysis of those responses.

STRATEGIC PLANNING INITIATIVE: FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

**Note**: We have selected the main responses to each of the five questions. The Board has maintained the complete tally of responses.

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| **# 1** | **What aspects of your membership in our Rotary Club bring you the MOST pride and satisfaction?** |
| 55 | Things we do that make a difference over the years (big and small);Strong service to community (local and international); Engagement and hands-on projects;Fundraising projects that set us apart and allows us to do good in the community |
| 30 | Camaraderie, great membership, fellowship and fun; Sense of family; our accomplishments; “pulling together” in good and difficult times (Tim’s passing); “We could move mountains; Knowing I am an important part of something big (ie Rotary) and that I can make an impact” |
| 4 | Weekly meetings + guest speakers |
| 2 | Recognizing those who give to the community (ie Aidan Maloney Award)Recognition of club members for jobs well done |

Analysis of the responses:

* There is strong support for the work Northwest Rotary does in our local and international communities;
* Club members feel strongly about doing hands-on projects as they provide members with a good feeling of engagement;
* Fellowship, camaraderie, fun and a diverse membership are key elements to our success and we need to continue our efforts in all of these areas – there can be no letting up;
* Support for the broad community and one another resonate with many in the club;
* We are on the right track with many things and need to maintain this positive momentum.

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| **# 2** | **What aspects of your membership in our Rotary Club bring you the LEAST pride and satisfaction?** |
| 25 | Nothing to suggest: stay the course |
| 12 | Need to engage everyone: everyone needs to do at least something;Need better attendance at weekly meetings (4)Small number of people appear to be carrying the load (2) |
| 2 | Any projects and fundraising that do not have a clear objective |

Analysis of the responses:

* A good number of club members had no comment on this question – essentially they want us to stay the course;
* There are issues about engagement of some members. This includes some members not attending weekly meetings on a regular basis, not engaging in club activities regularly, and not being seen to contribute to the health of the club;
* There is a variety of other (and often single response) issues raised by club members relating to the club and its activities.

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| **# 3** | **What do you think should be the priorities for the club for the next three years?** |
| 21 | Strong selective membership is critical; encourage members to recruit others (includes diversity); recruit younger members and engage them |
| 12 | Consider another signature club project;Work with other Rotary clubs and community based organizations to identify and take on signature projects |
| 11 | Consider donating more and doing more to deserving smaller community projects to support those who may need the support such as Buckmasters Rotary Park (Hands-on projects important) |
| 8 | Engage some members who appear to be members on paper only - better weekly attendance; Buddy system to contact those who do not make meetings |
| 8 | “Stay the course”; very pleased with how things are going; continue strong fellowship events especially as membership grows; try new things to broaden engagement – have fun! |
| 3 | We should have a Fundraising Planning Committee to have a new project “in the works” in case either of the existing ones starts to fall off. Could think about a joint clubs’ fundraiser |
| 3 | Support a broad range of local and international projects |
| 2 | Recognition of club members when good things are done |
| 1 | Continue to support youth exchange |
| 2 | In an aging society, more emphasis on elder and incapacitated to ensure balance coverage and support of the family life cycle |

Analysis of the responses:

* Strong member recruitment, engagement and retention of members is a priority;
* Signature club projects are a priority for some members;
* Smaller community projects are a priority for other club members;
* These two previous points are obviously not mutually exclusive;
* Working on joint projects with other Rotary clubs is supported by a number of members;
* A Fundraising Committee is mentioned as a good thing by at least three respondents;
* Various other responses were noted by members.

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| # 4 | How would you like to become more engaged in the club? |
| 34 | Currently fully engaged to my comfort level |
| 7 | I can do more but I will need to make the time available to do so at some point |
| 3 | Fellowship is a key to engagement; find people’s strengths; slow growth, integration and engagement help members involvement |
| 3 | Likes the choice of being engaged or not depending on circumstances |
| 1 | Member awareness about legacy projects helps promote engagement |

Analysis of the responses:

* Over 60% of those responding to this question feel they are fully engaged at the present time;
* Some want to do more but they will need to find the time to do so;
* Other important points about engagement are noted above: fellowship; allowing each member to decide on level of engagement, choices about involvement, etc.

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| **# 5** | Do you have anything else to add that you think should be considered in the strategic planning process? |
| 5 | This strategic plan exercise is a worthwhile initiative |
| 3 | We have a fine club of the highest standing |
| 2 | Encourage older and newer members to attend more meetings and increase engagement |
| 2 | Continue with quality members and quality speakers |
| 2 | Build on social media to attract younger folks |
| 2 | Address future fundraising possibilities |
| 1 | Explore an Interact Club for Torbay area |
| 1 | Consider inviting former members back for lunch |
| 1 | Explore a new supper hour club downtown |
| 1 | Broaden our membership base |
| 1 | Increased awareness of housing issues and focus on community service |
| 1 | Flexibility is one of our strengths. Too many rules /regulations may not work: if something fits the 4 Way Test then it should be good for us |
| 1 | Love the socials to promote fellowship |
| 1 | Add club documents including club assembly material on “members only” ClubRunner  |
| 1 | Always remember that Rotary is about humanity |
| 1 | “Joining Rotary has been the best personal decision I’ve made in a long time and I have felt nothing but positive about it from the get-go.” |

Analysis of the responses:

* There is a variety of comments to this question, some of which replicate points raised in earlier questions. However, taken as a whole these responses do provide food for thought for the club.

**General Comments:**

This has been a worthwhile exercise that provides strong evidence that the membership of the Rotary Club of St. John’s Northwest club members feels we should continue our current direction and there should be no major directional shift is needed at this time.

In essence, this means that:

* We want to continue with a strong, engaged and diverse membership;
* We want to make a difference in our local and international communities;
* We want to embody the Rotary 4 Way test in all that we do;
* We want to stress camaraderie, fellowship and fun;
* We want to support both small and larger projects;
* We want to stress hands-on projects whenever possible; and,
* We want to identify a signature club project whenever possible;

Through our four club assemblies each year the membership has an opportunity to hear about our annual plans, have input into them, question Board members throughout the year on how we are doing and suggest ways of improving our performance.

The response of the membership to our five questions, captured in summary form above, provides the broad strategic direction to the Board to carry on for the next three years (2012-13; 2013-14; 2014-15). The Board will review this document annually, especially in the beginning of a new Rotary year. Members are invited to comment on the document at any time and to provide further feedback to the Board.

In closing and on behalf of the Board of Directions, I want to thank everyone for their input into the strategic planning initiative.

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Carman V. Carroll

Club President, 2011-2012

March 2012