**An Introduction to Vocational Service**

Membership in Rotary is based on a member’s vocation, with each club striving to

create a microcosm of its community’s business and professional world. This unique

feature provides the source for Rotary’s historic commitment to vocational service,

the second of Rotary’s four Avenues of Service. Through vocational service, Rotarians

are expected to adhere to and promote high ethical standards in all their business

dealings, recognize the worthiness of all useful occupations, and contribute their

professional expertise and skills to addressing societal problems and needs.

The club and its members share responsibility for promoting vocational service.

Each club should develop projects that allow members to use their business and

professional skills. Members are expected to contribute to these projects and to

conduct their own business dealings in accordance with Rotary principles.

**The Four-Way Test**

Of the things we think, say or do:

1) Is it the TRUTH?

2) Is it FAIR to all concerned?

3) Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?

4) Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?

**The Four-Way Test**

The Four-Way Test was conceived in 1932 by Herbert J. Taylor, a member of the

Rotary Club of Chicago who served as the 1954-55 president of Rotary International.

Having been assigned the task of saving a company from bankruptcy, Taylor

developed the test as an ethical guide to follow in all business matters. The

company’s survival was credited to this simple philosophy. Adopted by Rotary

International in 1934, The Four-Way Test remains an essential standard against

which Rotarians measure ethical behavior. The test has been translated into dozens

of languages and promoted by Rotarians worldwide.

**Declaration of Rotarians in Businesses and Professions**

As a Rotarian engaged in a business or profession, I am expected to:

1) Consider my vocation to be another opportunity to serve;

2) Be faithful to the letter and to the spirit of the ethical codes of my

vocation, to the laws of my country, and to the moral standards of my

community;

3) Do all in my power to dignify my vocation and to promote the highest

ethical standards in my chosen vocation;

4) Be fair to my employer, employees, associates, competitors, customers,

the public, and all those with whom I have a business or professional

relationship;

5) Recognize the honor and respect due to all occupations which are useful

to society;

6) Offer my vocational talents: to provide opportunities for young people,

to work for the relief of the special needs of others, and to improve the

quality of life in my community;

7) Adhere to honesty in my advertising and in all representations to the

public concerning my business or profession;

8) Neither seek from nor grant to a fellow Rotarian a privilege or advantage

not normally accorded others in a business or professional relationship.

**Declaration of Rotarians in Businesses and Professions**

This declaration was adopted by the 1989 Council on Legislation as a means of

more clearly defining the high ethical standards called for in the Object of Rotary.

It provides a framework for ethical behavior that all Rotarians can use, together with

The Four-Way Test, in their business and professional activities.

Historically, Rotarians have promoted the practice of high ethical standards as part

of their commitment to vocational service. Two tools developed by Rotarians —

The Four-Way Test and the Declaration of Rotarians in Businesses and Professions —

provide a road map for practicing ethical behavior in the workplace and other

areas of life.

**Advancing high ethical standards in the workplace**

Rotarians can use their standing as business leaders and respected members of all

professions to promote and advance high ethical standards by setting a positive

example among employees, associates, and the community in general. All types of

work-related interaction offer an opportunity to encourage ethical behavior. Here are a

few specific ways that Rotarians can integrate ethics into their daily work life:

• In hiring, training, and review procedures, include discussion and emphasis of

honesty, accountability, fairness, and respect.

• In internal communications, praise and encourage exemplary behavior both on

and off the job.

• In relations with customers, vendors, and business associates, communicate and

demonstrate your personal commitment to high ethical standards.

**Three keys to ensuring ethical behaviour in the workplace**

A 2009 article in *Forbes* magazine on leadership suggests that ethical business

practices depend on three things: honesty in use of language, insistence on

proper behavior, and a refusal to allow for gray areas.

1) Use honest language. “One of the most important things a leader

can impart to his or her organization is an honest and explicit use of

language.” Expose the unethical consequences that may be concealed

in such euphemisms as “strategic business practices” and “competitive

advantage.” Use your power of language to make a clear statement of

your ethical position.

2) Insist on proper behaviour. “Behaviour results from values, yes. But

values can result from behaviour too.” Make ethical practices a standard

component of your employees’ performance expectations to help them

develop and strengthen their personal integrity.

3) Refuse to allow for gray areas. “While moral absolutism may sound

like an archaic and austere concept, . . . it’s exactly what is needed to

establish a clear, strong, unwavering voice for doing the right thing.”

Mendhro, Umaimah, and Abhinav Sinha. 2009. Three keys to staying ethical in the age of Madoff. *Forbes*, 6 February.

www.forbes.com/2009/02/06/ethics-corruption-india-leadership-corruption09\_0209\_mendhro.html

**Classification**

The classification principle — the guideline by which nearly all Rotary membership

is determined — ensures that each club’s membership represents a cross-section of

its community’s business and professional population. Classification and vocational

service go hand in hand. Just as a Rotarians represent their vocation in Rotary, so too

do they represent Rotary in their vocations.

Classification talks are a great way to promote vocational awareness in your club.

These presentations give members the chance to learn the inner workings of jobs

other than their own, including the various problems that arise and the solutions used

to address them. Classification talks may also serve as a starting point for initiating

club projects that help young people and the unemployed develop marketable skills.

Organizing tours of members’ workplaces is another way to recognize the value of

each member’s vocation. The name Rotary originated with the practice of rotating

meeting sites among members’ places of business, and that tradition remains an

excellent way for Rotarians to share their vocations with their club. Those members

who find public speaking difficult might prefer to conduct a workplace tour rather

than give a classification talk.

If the size of the workplace and the size of your club permit, schedule an occasional

meeting in a member’s place of employment. Consider inviting young people to

participate as well. Getting firsthand knowledge about various occupations may help

them make sound career choices. You can also use this opportunity to introduce

future prospective members to your club.

 **R I Programs**

Individual Rotarians and Rotary clubs can support the RI Strategic Plan and

emphasize Rotary’s unique vocational service commitment by undertaking any of the

following recommended project ideas.

**Promote Rotary’s commitment to high ethical standards**

• Post The Four-Way Test on a prominent billboard in your community.

• Display The Four-Way Test and/or the Declaration of Rotarians in Businesses and

Professions in your office or work space and use it as a conversation starter to

tell your colleagues about Rotary’s commitment to business ethics and personal

integrity.

• “Walk the talk” by ensuring that your actions in the workplace, community, and

family demonstrate a personal commitment to high ethical standards.

• Sponsor an essay contest in which participants describe how they can apply

The Four-Way Test to their lives.

• Sponsor a “character literacy” project for young children that integrates lessons

about ethics with children’s reading activities. For additional information,

contact the RI Literacy Resource Group at www.rotary.org/literacy.

• Conduct a RYLA event with special emphasis on ethics.

• Organize a discussion or group workshop on maintaining high ethical standards

in the workplace and consider inviting local non-Rotarian business leaders to

attend. Following are some recommended discussion questions you can use to

get a productive conversation started.

**Discussion questions for workshops on ethics**

• What are the benefits of making ethical decisions in your

profession? In your Rotary club?

• How can one person encourage ethical behavior in others?

• How can Rotary’s high ethical standards influence the community?

• How can Rotary’s high ethical standards enhance our public image?

• How do you handle situations in which an unethical decision has

been made?

**Recognize and promote the value of all useful occupations**

• Make classification talks and tours of members’ businesses a standard component

of your club’s program.

• Join or form a Rotary Fellowship related to your vocation. Rotary Fellowships are

international associations of Rotarians, Rotarian spouses, and Rotaractors who

join together to pursue a shared recreational or vocational interest. Learn more at

www.rotary.org/fellowships.

• Sponsor a career day for Rotarians to bring young people to their places of

business to educate them about career opportunities.

**Support professional development**

• Encourage club members to join and take leadership roles in business and

vocational associations.

• Sponsor a seminar for small business entrepreneurs and invite members of the

community to participate.

• Hold informal professional networking events where members can meet other

local professionals and introduce them to Rotary.

• Start a career counseling program geared towards equipping unemployed or

underemployed adults with the skills they need to compete in the job market.

**Volunteer your vocation**

• Mentor a young person. Share your knowledge, skills, and values to help prepare

your mentee to succeed in his or her academic and vocational pursuits.

• Register as a Rotary Volunteer and use Rotary’s Project LINK database

(www.rotary.org/ProjectLINK) to identify a project in need of your specialized

vocational skills.

**Promoting Vocational**

**Contact your district vocational service chair**

District governors are strongly encouraged to appoint a district vocational service chair

to promote awareness throughout the district and provide project support and guidance

to Rotarians. Refer to your district directory or e-mail vocationalservice@rotary.org to

obtain contact information for your district’s chair.

**Observe Vocational Service Month**

Vocational Service Month in October is an opportunity to initiate significant

vocational service projects. Consider using some of the suggested project ideas

provided in this publication as a starting point.

Visit www.rotary.org to find resources to assist you in promoting October as Vocational

Service Month, including a downloadable flier and PowerPoint presentation.

**Sign up to receive *Vocational Service Update***

*Vocational Service Update* is a free newsletter produced by Rotary International that

provides vocational service news and resources. Sign up at www.rotary.org/newsletters

or e-mail RI at vocationalservice@rotary.org.

**Sponsor club and district awards**

Clubs and districts are encouraged to develop their own award programs to recognize

Rotarians and non-Rotarians for demonstrating outstanding commitment to the

principles of vocational service.

**Share success stories on ProjectLINK**

ProjectLINK is an online, searchable database that lists Rotary club and district

service projects in need of funding, volunteers, donated goods, or Rotary Foundation

grant partners. It also features a sampling of model project descriptions that other

clubs and districts can adapt. After completing a successful vocational service project,

consider submitting a model project description so that others may benefit from your

example. Use the form at www.rotary.org/ProjectLINK.

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