



# An Introduction to Vocational Service



## THE OBJECT OF ROTARY

The Object of Rotary is to encourage and foster the ideal of service as a basis of worthy enterprise and, in particular, to encourage and foster:

- FIRST.** The development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service;
- SECOND.** High ethical standards in business and professions; the recognition of the worthiness of all useful occupations; and the dignifying of each Rotarian's occupation as an opportunity to serve society;
- THIRD.** The application of the ideal of service in each Rotarian's personal, business, and community life;
- FOURTH.** The advancement of international understanding, goodwill, and peace through a world fellowship of business and professional persons united in the ideal of service.

What is vocational service? If you are an active, engaged Rotarian, you probably view vocational service as a way of life, even if you find it difficult to articulate a clear definition. This handbook can help you gain a better understanding of vocational service and equip you with ideas to help you practice it through your club activities and in your career.

## THE CONCEPT OF VOCATIONAL SERVICE

The Object of Rotary is a philosophical statement of Rotary's purpose and the responsibilities of Rotarians. The concept of vocational service is rooted in the Second Object, which calls on Rotarians to "encourage and foster":

- High ethical standards in business and professions
- The recognition of the worthiness of all useful occupations
- The dignifying of each Rotarian's occupation as an opportunity to serve society

As a Rotarian, how can you put these ideals into action? Consider these suggestions:

- Talk about your vocation in your club, and take time to learn about fellow members' vocations.
- Use your professional skills to serve a community.
- Practice your profession with integrity, and inspire others to behave ethically through your own words and actions.
- Help a young person achieve his or her career aspirations.
- Guide and encourage others in their professional development.

If you do any of these things, you are performing vocational service. And if vocational service motivates and energizes you, then you're in the right place, because vocational service is the very essence of Rotary. It is what sets Rotary apart from other service organizations.

### TAKE ACTION

Throughout this handbook, look for examples of ways that you can take action through vocational service. Consider undertaking some of the activities described or introducing similar ones in your club.

## CLASSIFICATION

What first brought you to Rotary? In all likelihood, someone identified you as a prospective Rotarian because you are a respected member of your business or professional field — in Rotary parlance, your “classification.” Each Rotary club’s membership represents a cross-section of its community’s business and professional population, which ensures diversity in experiences and perspectives. Classification and vocational service go hand in hand. Just as Rotarians represent their vocations in Rotary, so do they represent Rotary in their vocations.

### TAKE ACTION

- **Host a classification talk** at your next club meeting. These presentations give members the chance to learn the inner workings of jobs other than their own and can plant the seeds for professional networking opportunities. The talks also are useful for introducing guests and prospective members to your club.
- **Organize tours of members’ workplaces.** Members who find public speaking difficult might prefer to conduct a workplace tour rather than give a classification talk. If logistics can be worked out, schedule an occasional meeting in a member’s place of employment.
- **Join or form a Rotary Fellowship** related to your vocation. Rotary Fellowships are international associations of Rotarians, Rotarians’ spouses, and Rotaractors who share a recreational or vocational interest. There are vocational fellowships for doctors, law enforcement officers, editors, and members of other professions. Learn more at [www.rotary.org/fellowships](http://www.rotary.org/fellowships).
- **Volunteer for a service project** that uses your vocational skills. Think about the skills that make you successful in your profession: Maybe you are trained in some branch of science or medicine, are handy with tools or mechanical things, know how to start a business, have expertise managing finances, or can influence others through public speaking or writing. Use your unique set of talents to make a difference in your community.

## INTEGRITY AND ETHICS

Promoting integrity through ethical behavior is an essential part of what it means to be a Rotarian. Two standards developed by Rotarians — The Four-Way Test and the Rotary Code of Conduct — provide a road map for ethical behavior in the workplace and other areas of life.

### The Four-Way Test

The Four-Way Test was conceived in 1932 by businessman Herbert J. Taylor, a member of the Rotary Club of Chicago who served as Rotary International president in 1954-55. Having taken on 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. It has been translated into dozens of languages and promoted by Rotarians worldwide.

#### 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?

### Rotary Code of Conduct

The Rotary Code of Conduct (formerly known as the Declaration of Rotarians in Businesses and Professions) provides a framework for ethical behavior that all Rotarians can use, together with The Four-Way Test, in their business and professional activities.

#### ROTARY CODE OF CONDUCT

As a Rotarian, I will

1. Exemplify the core value of integrity in all behaviors and activities
2. Use my vocational experience and talents to serve in Rotary
3. Conduct all of my personal, business, and professional affairs ethically, encouraging and fostering high ethical standards as an example to others
4. Be fair in all dealings with others and treat them with the respect due to them as fellow human beings
5. Promote recognition and respect for 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. Honor the trust that Rotary and fellow Rotarians provide and not do anything that will bring disfavor or reflect adversely on Rotary or fellow Rotarians
8. Not seek from a fellow Rotarian a privilege or advantage not normally accorded others in a business or professional relationship

## Advancing high ethical standards in the workplace

As leaders in their businesses and professions, Rotarians can 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:

- Discuss and emphasize honesty, accountability, fairness, integrity, and respect when hiring and training employees.
- Praise and encourage the exemplary behavior of your colleagues.
- Demonstrate your personal commitment to high ethical standards in relations with customers, vendors, and business associates, treating each business interaction with care and consideration.

## Rotary's commitment to corporate social responsibility

Corporate social responsibility is a company's commitment toward the community and environment in which it operates. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development defines it as "the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large." According to a 2012 article on social ethics,\* there are currently three defining trends in corporate social responsibility:

1. **Giving aligned with core business expertise**, in which corporations target their philanthropy to issues related to what they do as a company
2. **Employee engagement through company-sponsored volunteer programs**, which raise morale and attract employees who share the company's social values
3. **The communication of a company's social values and commitments** through social media or other methods

### ROTARY NAME

The name "Rotary" originated with the practice of rotating meeting sites among members' places of business. That tradition remains an excellent way for Rotarians to share their vocations with their club.

\* O'Keefe, Linda Novick. 2012. Social Ethics: A Peek Into 2012. Huffington Post, 4 April, [www.huffingtonpost.com/linda-novick-okeefe/corporate-social-responsibility\\_b\\_1401187.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/linda-novick-okeefe/corporate-social-responsibility_b_1401187.html)

The following statement in the Rotary Code of Policies (section 26.020.1) describes the organization's commitment to integrity and corporate social responsibility:

- From its origins, Rotary has built a philosophy based upon integrity in businesses and professions. Rotary clubs and individual Rotarians are committed to vocational service and high ethical standards in all of their interactions. These are summed up in the Object of Rotary, our core values (Service, Fellowship, Diversity, Integrity, Leadership), The Four-Way Test, and the Rotary Code of Conduct, carried out through our worldwide network of Rotary clubs and Rotarians.
- For Rotary International, as a corporate entity, its social responsibility philosophy can be summed up by our commitment to transparency in governance, stewardship of financial resources and the environment, and fair labor practices.

### TAKE ACTION

- Have your club dedicate time to discuss the importance of The Four-Way Test and the Rotary Code of Conduct. In particular, be sure to educate new members and prospective members on the importance of these documents as guiding principles for Rotary's commitment to integrity.
- Organize a workshop on ethics in the workplace and invite local non-Rotarian business leaders to attend. To help participants build practical problem-solving skills, consider including an open discussion exploring how to deal with examples of ethical dilemmas.
- Give ethics awards to businesses or professionals who demonstrate high ethical standards in their treatment of employees, customers, and the communities in which they work.
- Sponsor an essay or speech contest for young people. Many clubs hold local or regional competitions for junior or senior high school students to address the theme "What The Four-Way Test means to me." These contests are an effective way to get young people engaged with the concepts of ethics and integrity.

## VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Rotary's guiding principles emphasize the importance of work. Work provides people with a livelihood and gives them dignity, and society benefits from having all of its members employed in a manner that maximizes their talents and ambitions. It should therefore come as no surprise that those who join Rotary clubs are committed to promoting professional development. Rotarians can pursue this commitment through activities that enhance their own knowledge, and by guiding and training others to find gainful, fulfilling employment.

### TAKE ACTION

- **Network with non-Rotarian professionals in the community.** Consider hosting business networking events through your club or get involved in a professional association in the community. Making these connections will expose your club to potential members and provide opportunities for existing members to enhance their professional knowledge and connections.
- **Provide career counseling for unemployed or underemployed adults.** The recent global recession has left many talented people looking for employment. Reach out to those in your community and help job seekers develop the skills and confidence they need to compete in the job market.
- **Give career guidance to a young person.** Participate in a career day at a local high school or get involved in a one-on-one mentoring or job-shadowing program. By sharing knowledge about your profession, you can expose a young person to new possibilities and help them make sound career choices. Consider working with your local Interact or Rotaract club, or contact local school administrators.

### Vocational training teams

Vocational training teams offer a hands-on approach to vocational service. In VTTs, groups of professionals travel either to learn more about their vocation or to teach local professionals about a particular field. A VTT helps create sustainable change by strengthening the knowledge and skills of individuals and communities and thereby improving their capacity to serve. In addition to experiencing a new culture and fostering global connections, Rotarians participating in a vocational training team have the opportunity to make an impact long after their travels end.

Teams that address one of Rotary's six areas of focus and follow certain specific guidelines for scope, sustainability, and measurability can qualify for a global grant through The Rotary Foundation. Funded teams must consist of a minimum of one Rotarian team leader with general Rotary knowledge, leadership skills, international experience, and experience in the area of focus, and at least two other participants (Rotarians or non-Rotarians) with two years of work experience in the area of focus. Learn more and see complete guidelines for global grant-funded VTTs at [www.rotary.org/grants](http://www.rotary.org/grants).





## VTT EXAMPLES

- A district in the United States used district grant funds to partner with a district in Australia to exchange vocational training teams focused on the environmental impact of oil spills. The teams traveled to disaster sites to evaluate the effects and recovery efforts, then shared their analyses and ideas for ensuring access to clean water.
- A district in South Africa used district grant funds to send a vocational training team to a community in another part of the country to provide teacher training in mathematics, science, and classroom skills. With the help of teachers, parents, and the community, this training will help two high schools increase the number of students who pass university entrance exams.
- A team of medical professionals from the United States traveled to Uganda to teach specialized pediatric heart surgery skills and techniques for postoperative care to surgeons at a hospital in Kampala. This VTT qualified for a global grant through The Rotary Foundation because its project related directly to maternal and child health — one of Rotary's six areas of focus — and met criteria to ensure that the training would have a significant, sustainable impact.

## RESOURCES

Take advantage of these resources and opportunities, and start promoting vocational service in your club today!

### **Contact your district vocational service chair**

District governors are encouraged to appoint a district vocational service chair to provide guidance and project support to Rotarians. Consult your district directory or email [rotary.service@rotary.org](mailto:rotary.service@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 in this guide as a starting point.

The RI website offers resources to help you promote Vocational Service Month, including a downloadable flier and PowerPoint presentation.

### **Sign up for *Vocational Service Update***

*Vocational Service Update* is Rotary's free e-newsletter of vocational service news and resources. It is available in English, French, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, and Spanish. Subscribe at [www.rotary.org/newsletters](http://www.rotary.org/newsletters) or email [rotary.service@rotary.org](mailto:rotary.service@rotary.org).

### **Rotary Showcase**

Post your vocational service project on Rotary Showcase and tell your story to the world. Rotary Showcase enables you to share project information, upload photos, participate in discussions, and even join projects launched by other Rotarians. And it can connect directly to Facebook with a simple click. Go to [www.rotary.org/showcase](http://www.rotary.org/showcase) to see what other clubs are doing.

### **Questions? Contact us**

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