

CLUB PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE MANUAL



ROTARY INTERNATIONAL®

This is the 2006 edition of the *Club Public Relations Committee Manual*. It is intended for use by 2007-08, 2008-09, and 2009-10 club committees. The information in this publication is based on the Standard Rotary Club Constitution, the Recommended Rotary Club Bylaws, the Constitution of Rotary International, the Bylaws of Rotary International, and the Rotary Code of Policies. Changes to these documents, by the 2007 Council on Legislation or the RI Board, override policy as stated in this publication.

Introduction

The *Club Public Relations Committee Manual* was developed to help you establish goals and understand your responsibilities related to increasing club effectiveness. An effective Rotary club is able to:

- Sustain or increase its membership base
- Implement successful projects that address the needs of their community and communities in other countries
- Support The Rotary Foundation through both program participation and financial contributions
- Develop leaders capable of serving in Rotary beyond the club level

Under the Club Leadership Plan, the recommended administrative structure of Rotary Clubs has the following five standing committees:

- Club administration
- Membership
- Public relations
- Service projects
- Rotary Foundation

Each committee has a manual which provides an overview of the committee and its responsibilities as well as available resources, specific committee duties, and other relevant materials to support you and your committee members. Copy related sections of the *Club Public Relations Committee Manual* and distribute to committee members. Additional copies of this manual can be downloaded for free at www.rotary.org. The *Club Officers' Kit* (225-EN), including this manual, can be purchased through the *RI Catalog*.

Club Public Relations Committee Chair

Before the district assembly, review this manual in order to understand your role and responsibilities. Bring it to your district assembly to use as a reference.

At the district assembly, club leaders, including the club president-elect and the incoming secretary, treasurer, and committee chairs, will discuss their role and responsibilities, work on annual goals, and develop their working relationship for the coming year.

Complete the following discussion questions in advance to fully participate in the discussions at the district assembly:

What is the role of the public relations committee?

What are your responsibilities in this role?

How can committee members help their club promote positive public relations?

How has your club established relationships with the media?

How can you help committee members serve effectively?

What are your long-range and annual goals?

Comments?

If you have questions or comments about this manual or any of RI's training resources, please direct them to:

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Role and Responsibilities

Public relations informs communities around the world that Rotary is a credible organization that meets real needs. When a Rotary club has a positive public image, current members are motivated to be active and prospective members are eager to join.

Role

The public relations committee develops a plan to provide the public with information about Rotary and promotes the club's service projects and activities.

Responsibilities

The public relations committee has the following responsibilities, which are explained in this manual:

- Achieving club public relations goals for the coming year (see Public Relations Section of the *Planning Guide for Effective Rotary Clubs*)
- Familiarizing yourself with RI resources (see Public Relations Resources)
- Creating awareness of club activities among club members, media, and the general public (see Key Rotary Messages)
- Enhancing projects and activities to make them more appealing to the media (see Components of Public Relations)
- Helping to create a public image conducive to membership development (see Developing Membership through Public Relations)

Working with Club Committees

The public relations committee should work with the following club committees to meet public relations goals:

- Service projects committee (to be aware of upcoming projects that would be of interest to the media)
- Membership committee (to tailor your efforts to target potential members in the community)
- Rotary Foundation committee (to be aware of upcoming Humanitarian Grants projects or visiting scholarship recipients)
- Club administration committee (to notify the media in advance of who is on the weekly club program and to design the club's Web site to appeal to the media and general public)

Enhance your public outreach capabilities by assigning a liaison to each of the standing club committees. This will ensure your committee is up-to-date on all club activities.

Plan weekly meetings and activities in observance of Rotary Awareness Month (January).

Working with Rotarians

Get your fellow club members to help with public relations by having them

- Be fully informed about the Object of Rotary and Rotary's programs and activities.
- Seek opportunities to further the aims and accomplishments of Rotary through personal, business, and professional contacts.

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Copy and distribute these materials to committee members as needed.

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Public Relations Resources

Informational Resources

Order publications through the *RI Catalog* (019-EN), or download them at www.rotary.org.



***Effective Public Relations: A Guide for Rotary Clubs* (257-EN)** — Tools and tips for promoting club activities to attract positive attention from the community and potential members.

- *Planning Guide for Effective Rotary Clubs* — Club assessment and goal-setting tool used to plan club public relations goals (see page 11).
- *Public Relations: Make It Work for You* (269-EN) — Videotape showing the importance of communication in the information age.
- *The Rotarian* (or Rotary regional magazine) — RI's official monthly magazine, which reports club and district projects, RI Board decisions, and RI meetings. In addition, 30 Rotary regional magazines in 23 languages serve Rotarians around the world.
- *This Is Rotary* (001-EN) — Colorful illustrated brochure providing a brief overview of Rotary for prospective Rotarians and the public.
- *Visual Identity Style Manual* (547-EN) — Guidelines for the design of publications at all levels of Rotary and the proper use of the Rotary Marks.
- *What's Rotary?* (419-EN) — Wallet-size card answering frequently asked questions about Rotary.

www.rotary.org

The RI Web site provides online resources and up-to-date information on all aspects of Rotary. You can download free publications, shop the online catalog, and locate the meeting time and place of any Rotary club.

Keyword searches:

- Fact Pack — RI and Foundation fact sheets available for free download.
- Public relations — Contains information about public relations, including examples of successful public relations efforts undertaken around the world, sample press releases, and other tips and suggestions.
- *PR Tips* — E-mail newsletter featuring ideas for clubs and districts to promote Rotary in their communities; two issues each month.
- Public service announcements — RI print, radio, and television announcements that clubs can use to promote Rotary in their communities.
- Recognition programs — RI and Rotary Foundation awards and recognition programs, including the RI Public Relations Award.
- Key messages — A supplement to the key Rotary messages listed on page 12 of this manual.

Human Resources

- District public relations committee — Rotarians appointed to support clubs in their public relations efforts. (Request contact information from your district.)
- RI Club and District Support representative — Staff member at RI World Headquarters or international offices available to answer administrative questions and direct other inquiries to appropriate RI and Foundation staff. (Find contact information at www.rotary.org.)
- RI Public Relations staff — Staff members at RI World Headquarters dedicated to assisting clubs, districts, and RI in their public relations efforts. (Find contact information at www.rotary.org.)

Club Public Relations Committee Chair

As the chair of your committee, you're responsible for ensuring your committee achieves committee and club goals.

Responsibilities

Before taking office, you have the following responsibilities:

- Reviewing your committee's manual
- Attending the district assembly
- Reviewing your club's bylaws, which should contain information on your committee's purpose
- Working with the president-elect to recruit committee members based on their professional abilities and personal interests, and preparing them for the year
- Reviewing and establishing club long-range and annual goals with the president-elect using the *Planning Guide for Effective Rotary Clubs*
- Developing an action plan for your committee to achieve annual goals

During your year as committee chair, you have the following responsibilities:

- Planning and conducting regular committee meetings and activities
- Holding members accountable for the responsibilities they've accepted
- Reporting committee activities and progress to the club president and board of directors and the full club
- Cooperating with the appropriate district committee on multiclub activities or initiatives
- Recognizing committee members' work and efforts

Committee Members

Work with the president-elect to select committee members to fill vacancies and conduct planning meetings before the start of the year. When feasible, committee members should be appointed to the same committee for three years for continuity. Committee members should be articulate and knowledgeable about Rotary International and your club. Other important characteristics to consider include:

- Professional media experience or relationships
- Strong speaking, writing, or photography skills
- Web site development experience
- Prominent community members

The club president serves as an ex officio member of all club committees.

To prepare committee members:

- Supply newer members with information on the committee and its activities.
- Pair new committee members with more experienced ones.
- Encourage networking with counterparts in other clubs (use the district directory).
- Know the resources available to your committee.
- Give members a list of district activities and meetings.

Goal Setting

The *Planning Guide for Effective Rotary Clubs* is a goal-setting tool that helps the club president-elect work with club committees to assess the current state of the club and establish annual goals that support the club's long-range goals for the year. The planning guide also provides strategies that committees can use to achieve their goals. Each recommended club committee has a section in the planning guide. You'll have an opportunity to work on the planning guide with your club president-elect and other incoming club leaders during the district assembly. The *Planning Guide for Effective Rotary Clubs* can be used throughout the year to help measure progress toward established goals. It should be reviewed periodically and updated as needed.

Establishing effective goals. To ensure that the goals established accurately reflect committee capabilities and club interests, committee goals should be

- **Shared.** Those who participate in setting a goal and developing strategies to achieve that goal are committed to implementing it. Consult with club leaders, club members, and district leaders in setting a goal.
- **Measurable.** A goal should provide a tangible point to pursue.
- **Challenging.** A goal should be ambitious enough to go beyond what the club has accomplished in the past.
- **Achievable.** Rotarians should be able to accomplish the goal with the resources available. Compare goals to previous goals achieved by the committee and the club.
- **Time specific.** A goal should have a deadline or timeline.

Developing an action plan. Work with club leaders and committee members to develop an action plan that outlines the steps needed to achieve each goal. The following steps can help you develop an action plan:

- Establish a time frame for each step.
- Determine who is responsible for implementing each step.
- Establish the criteria for measuring progress and success for each step.
- Consider the resources and tools available from your club, district, and RI to support the goal.
- Secure human, informational, and financial resources before taking action.
- Evaluate the success of previous goals and your current plan, making modifications as necessary.

Ensure steady progress is being made toward achievement of goals as envisioned.

Motivating committee members to follow the action plan. Because Rotarians are volunteers, what motivates them in their profession may not motivate them in Rotary. Consider the motivational needs of each committee member. Common motivators include:

- Belief that the goal will benefit the community and their club, district, and Rotary
- Opportunities for fellowship
- Opportunities for networking
- Belief that the goal is achievable and they will be successful
- Assignments that are challenging or use their expertise
- Recognition of efforts and time spent working toward committee goals

Using these motivating factors can help maintain member commitment to Rotary and encourages continued participation in club activities.

Budget

Before 1 July, work with your committee and the incoming club treasurer to determine what funds your committee will need to achieve its goals. Also include any planned fundraising activities. Ensure your committee's financial needs are included in the club budget.

Provide oversight of committee funds, transactions, and reports, and be aware of the financial condition of your committee's budget at all times. By meeting regularly with your club's treasurer, you can take early corrective measures if issues arise.

Communication

Before the start of the year, develop a communication plan with other club leaders that outlines with whom, when, and how you'll communicate, including communications with:

- **Committee members.** Committees should meet regularly to review and identify available resources, discuss ongoing projects and new initiatives, and develop strategies to achieve committee and club goals.
- **Your club.** Report your committee's activities, including action plans and progress toward goals, to your club's president, board, and all club members.
- **Other committees.** Often, the work of one committee affects the work of another. For example, the public relations committee's work to raise community awareness of Rotary may influence the membership committee's recruitment efforts. Effective communication will help committees work together to coordinate projects and initiatives.
- **Your district.** If your committee needs guidance or information, contact your district counterpart or your assistant governor.

Additional Resources

In addition to your committee's resources, the following resources can help you fulfill your responsibilities and answer committee members' questions:

Informational Resources

Order publications from the *RI Catalog* (019-EN), or download them at www.rotary.org.

- District directory — Listing of district leaders and activities (if your district produces a directory).
- *Manual of Procedure* (035-EN) — RI and Rotary Foundation policies and procedures established by legislative action, the RI Board of Directors, and the Trustees of The Rotary Foundation, issued every three years following the Council on Legislation. Contains the RI constitutional documents.
- Recommended Rotary Club Bylaws — A legal document that expands on club operations guidelines in the club constitution.
- Rotary Code of Policies and Rotary Foundation Code of Policies — Policies and procedures established by the RI Board of Directors and the Trustees of The Rotary Foundation in support of the RI Constitution and Bylaws, revised following each Board or Trustees meeting.
- Standard Rotary Club Constitution — A constitutional document that is a framework for Rotary club operations.

www.rotary.org

The RI Web site provides online resources and up-to-date information on all aspects of Rotary. You can download free publications, shop the online catalog, and locate the meeting time and place of any Rotary club.

Click on:

- Club-District Support (www.rotary.org/support) — Resources for club and district officers, including the most up-to-date versions of the Recommended Rotary Club Bylaws and Standard Rotary Club Constitution.

Financial Resources

- Funds from individual donors or local businesses
- Grants from other foundations
- Rotary Foundation grants for club and district humanitarian projects

Human Resources

Unless otherwise noted, contact information is available from your district.

- Assistant governor — Rotarian appointed to assist the governor with the administration of designated clubs. Your assistant governor will visit your club quarterly (or more often) and is available to answer questions or provide advice.
- Other club committee chairs in your district — Club leaders who can serve as a resource to help support your club's projects and initiatives.
- District governor — RI officer responsible for advising your club on strategies to make your club more effective. (Find contact information in the *Official Directory*.)
- Past club committee chairs and leaders — Knowledgeable Rotarians who can advise you as you plan your year and can be assigned to lead committee activities.
- RI and Rotary Foundation resource groups/task forces — Groups of Rotarians appointed by the RI president to assist Rotary clubs and districts with the presidential emphases. (Find contact information in the *Official Directory*.)

PLANNING GUIDE FOR EFFECTIVE ROTARY CLUBS



Rotary International

The *Planning Guide for Effective Rotary Clubs* is a tool to help clubs assess their current state and establish goals for the coming year. It is based on the Club Leadership Plan. The strategies listed in this section are common ways clubs might choose to pursue Public Relations goals. Clubs are encouraged to develop alternative strategies to achieve their Public Relations goals when appropriate.

Download a Microsoft Word version at www.rotary.org.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Current State

List club activities covered by the media and the type of media (radio, newspaper, television, etc.):

Future State

Our club has established the following public relations goals for the upcoming Rotary year:

How does the club plan to achieve its public relations goals? *(check all that apply)*

- ☐ Ensure that the public relations committee is trained in how to conduct media campaigns
- ☐ Conduct public relations efforts for all service projects
- ☐ Conduct a public awareness program targeted at the business and professional community about what Rotary is and what it does
- ☐ Arrange for a public service announcement to be broadcast on a local television channel
- ☐ Other (please describe):

Action steps:

Key Rotary Messages

You may address and speak with non-Rotary audiences, including the media, at project events and other occasions. Develop concise statements to explain Rotary and your club to the media.

You must be prepared to answer each of the following questions in no more than 25 words:

- What is Rotary?
- Who are Rotarians?
- What does Rotary do?

Effective answers to these questions should be positive, factual, specific, and brief. Important points to convey when answering Rotary questions include:

Rotary is one of the largest international humanitarian service organizations in the world.

- There are 1.2 million Rotary members worldwide who are business and professional leaders committed to working together to improve communities.

Rotary and Peace

Rotary promotes peace and international understanding through its educational and humanitarian programs.

- Rotary sponsors the largest privately funded international scholarships program in the world. Since the program's inception, about 34,000 students from 100 countries have become Rotary's cultural ambassadors.
- Rotary has teamed with six universities around the world to offer a master's degree program in peace and conflict resolution.
- Rotary clubs around the world initiate thousands of international humanitarian projects every year.

PolioPlus

Rotary's top philanthropic goal is to end polio worldwide.

- For as little as 60 cents worth of oral polio vaccine, a child can be protected against this crippling disease for life.

Tremendous progress has been made toward ending polio worldwide.

- In the 1980s, 1,000 children were infected by polio, a crippling and sometimes deadly disease, every day. In the two decades since Rotary and its global partners launched the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, polio cases have been slashed by 99 percent. Fewer than 1,900 cases were reported in 2005, but the disease still threatens children in Africa and Asia.

Rotary clubs around the world have contributed to the goal of eradicating polio.

- Rotary members have donated their time and money to help immunize more than two billion children in 122 countries.
- Rotary is the largest private supporter of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, providing more than US\$650 million and thousands of volunteers to the effort.

Components of Public Relations

Effective public relations requires time, effort, and planning. When your club's public relations committee develops an action plan before the beginning of the Rotary year, it should address the audience, strategies and tools, and which projects and activities will be promoted.

Audience

Ensuring a positive image of Rotary in the community requires public relations directed at different audiences. These audiences may include:

- Media (newspaper, radio, television)
- Local government officials
- Business community
- Civic leaders
- Community organizations
- People directly affected by Rotary service projects
- Students and educators
- Specialized media that cover a specific topic such as education or health

Depending on what projects and activities your club wants to do, tailor your public relations efforts to the intended audience.

Media

Media is a broad term that can include television stations, newspapers, international wire services, the Internet, and the publications of other organizations and institutions. Additional types of media include:

- Online publications
- Trade publications
- Public access cable stations
- Radio public affairs shows and talk radio
- Corporate newsletters
- Nontraditional media such as billboards

There is a tremendous competition for media time and space, so it is important for your club to be creative and consider all types of media.

News Releases

A news release is the most widely used means of sending information to the media. It can alert media to an event and serve as the basis of a news story. A good news release answers the basic questions of who, what, when, where, why, and how. Ensure that the release is objective and concise (no more than one page).

Fact Sheets

A fact sheet provides basic information on Rotary, its history, objectives, and project emphases. Among Rotarians, fact sheets are used to educate new and prospective members; outside Rotary, they supply the media with background information, raise public awareness, and inform the general public of Rotary's activities. Find RI fact sheets at www.rotary.org.

Newsworthy Club Activities and Events

The following club activities and events may interest the media:

- Service projects that meet a community need or illustrate a larger news trend
- International service projects supported by your club or a local club volunteer
- Projects involving local youth or a prominent community member
- A notable or prominent speaker at a club meeting
- Presentation by an RI or Rotary Foundation program participant about their experiences in another culture
- Interact and Rotaract activities
- Anniversaries of local clubs or programs
- Stories with a strong visual element

Additional ways to make the community more aware of Rotary include:

- Sponsoring special events, such as marathons, recycling efforts, or fundraisers
- Creating exhibits and displays that can be posted throughout the community
- Advertising in newspapers or magazines, on billboards or buses, or in air or rail transportation centers
- Building a rapport with the public relations staff of other organizations
- Encouraging Rotarians to wear their Rotary lapel pins
- Posting Rotary information on an online forum, community calendar, or another organization's Web site

Dealing with Adverse Publicity

Counter misperceptions about your club and Rotary with well-directed public relations efforts. At the same time, ensure that your club is conducting service projects that benefit your local community and communities in other countries.

Your governor, assistant governor, or district public relations chair are available to advise and assist clubs in preventing or solving local public relations problems.

Developing Membership through Public Relations

Public relations is important to attract new members to Rotary and retain current members. Communicate with the membership committee to ensure public relations efforts are targeting the appropriate audience to generate interest among perspective members.

Suggestions for Retaining Current Club Members

- Seek opportunities for Rotarians to speak at community and school events.
- Ensure club members know when club activities and projects receive media coverage.

Suggestions for Recruiting New Members

- Promote Rotary's work with and for young people.
- Highlight the service, networking, and fellowship opportunities of membership.
- Publicize club activities in business and trade periodicals.
- Have a section on the club's Web site for non-Rotarians and encourage community organizations to link to it.

PR Strategies That Support Membership Development

- **Collaborate with nearby clubs.** The Rotary clubs of Rochester, New York, USA, and Toronto, Ontario, Canada, cosponsored a series of fundraisers to commemorate the inaugural voyage of the *Spirit of Ontario*, which was featured over 30 times in a local newspaper. Rotary International had a dramatic increase in Prospective Member Forms submitted from the Rochester and Toronto areas.
- **Promote Rotary International events.** Throughout 2004-05, clubs and districts worldwide coordinated publicity efforts to celebrate Rotary's centennial and the RI Convention in their communities and local media. During the 2005 RI Convention, RI received 78 percent more Prospective Member Forms than during the 2004 convention.
- **Appear on TV.** Past RI President Luis Giay was interviewed on the CNN En Español program "Tu Carrera." The interview highlighted Rotary's educational programs and was broadcast three times in January. During that Rotary year, 28 of the 73 people who submitted a Prospective Member Form from Bolivia, Colombia, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Venezuela mentioned seeing the interview.
- **Promote Rotary's diversity.** In July 2004, two articles in the *Times* (London) focused on clubs' efforts to change stereotypes by promoting its diverse membership, particularly younger professionals and women, convenient meeting times, and the new types of service projects. RI had an increase in Prospective Member Forms submitted from the UK during that month.
- **Execute a public image campaign.** In São Paulo, Brazil, 375 promotional billboards, which displayed the RI Web site address, were placed throughout Brazil. There was a 503 percent increase from the previous year in Prospective Member Forms while the billboards were up.



Maximize your club's potential.

**Use the *Planning Guide*
for *Effective Rotary Clubs*
to take control of its future.**

Find it in the *Club Public Relations Committee Manual* or at www.rotary.org.



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