

## Good Governance and Leadership are critical to your Club's Health

If Rotary wants to attract and keep professionals in its fold, it needs to be enacting leading practice governance processes in all that it does. This applies to the Central Office, The District Governance team right down to those leading our Clubs.

### What is good governance?

The Good Governance Institute (GGI) defines good governance as fundamental to demonstrating and ensuring reliability and integrity to your community. At GGI, they are clear that governance is a facilitative force rather than a burdensome bureaucracy. Good Leadership is the critical variable for success.

The following article articulates some of the key leadership principles that apply in a Rotary Club setting. These have been learnt through my time as a CEO of a membership organisation, as a Rotary Club President and what I have learnt from the Australian Institute of Company Directors Graduate Course.

I maintain that good and **effective leadership** is the single most important factor in determining Club health.

The Club President plays a vital role in ensuring this occurs. I believe this is achieved by:

- Leading by example
- Determining the atmosphere through which structured decision making occurs
- Setting the tone for the meetings
- Showcasing the values by which the Club operates
- Ensuring good Governance policies exist and are demonstrated

If we are trying to attract and maintain current and past professionals in our membership, we need to accept that these people want to see quality leadership in play that ensures effective and efficient practices are in place that value their time.

They will not be attracted to:

- Inefficiencies
- Poor Leadership
- Acrimony or internal politics

We need to accept that success breeds success and that our Clubs need to be demonstrating this.

### So what is good Leadership and how can a Club President develop this?

A good leader will:

- Observe what people are saying doing and understand how they are feeling
- Remain aware of inclusion dynamics – who is in and who is out and why?
- Observe important signals – both within and outside the boardroom
- Have the necessary conversations to uncover and air emotional issues (this is often best done privately)
- Avoid 'Group Think' at Board meetings. This can have disastrous consequences!

- Directors should be encouraged to fully examine the pros and cons of each decision. Where differences remain, the President should be prepared to undertake further research and discussion before pushing a decision through.
- Ideally a Board should be able to reach consensus on all decisions through full and frank discussions. A really effective Board will rarely, if ever, have to undertake a vote to push through a resolution.
- Ensure excellent levels of communication, both within Board meetings and at Club meetings.
- Club Presidents should be reporting back to the Club after each Board meeting to highlight areas of discussion and any decisions that have been made.

### **Running a successful Club Meeting.**

If we are trying to encourage new membership, the Club President needs to ensure they create a positive and professional image. This can be achieved by:

- The President, working with the Sergeant, to prepare a detailed Run Sheet for each meeting.
- Personally greeting every member and visitor at each meeting. Whilst this may challenge some Presidents, this simple act ensures people feel welcome and valued.
- Thank those who have stepped up or served during the past week. Whilst many will not expect to be thanked, this process will ensure other Club members are aware of this service and example which is more likely to encourage repetition of the service and/or encourage others to do the same.
- Developing a 'Communication Summary' after each Board meeting. This should be presented at Club meetings and in the Bulletins following each meeting. A Board cannot and should not act in isolation. It needs to respect its members and take them on the journey.
- Ensure technology is prepared and tested before each meeting. Slides should be uploaded prior to the meeting and tested. There is nothing worse than a meeting coming to a halt because of these things failing.
- Club rituals need to be current and relevant. These will vary over time.
- Most of all, meetings should be fun! If we are not enjoying being part of Rotary, then we are in the wrong game.

### **Running a successful Board Meeting.**

The following are some key points to ensure Board meetings are run to leading practice:

- If we want to attract professional people and for them to take on leadership roles, we need to ensure meetings are run professionally
- Agenda and Board Papers are out 7 days in advance
- Start and finish times should be detailed and when possible adhered to – ideally max 2 hours
- Committee Chairs should each submit a report for inclusion in the Board Papers
- There is a culture of inclusiveness.
- Prepare a clear Agenda – Items in Board Papers taken as read. Meetings should not have people simply reading their report from the Board Papers
- Encourage questions on notice. This allows you to fully inform Directors before the meeting
- Decision making is aligned to your Mission. If you are ever faced with a divisive issue, simply ask, "Which decision best aligns with your Mission?"
- Avoid war stories and keep the agenda moving
- Minutes are written up and distributed within 7 days with Action Items highlighted.

There are a number of additional factors that need to be in place to ensure excellent leadership:

- Do not fall into the trap of doing it all yourself. Delegation will ensure a much stronger leadership group and ultimately lead to stronger outcomes for your Club
- Have a strong Committee/Board with defined roles. Ideally Job Descriptions should be developed to guide the processes and roles for each Director
- Ensure Directors present a report at each meeting
- Develop a detailed plan for the year. 'A goal without a plan is just a wish'
- Activity Plans, Communications Plans, Budgets are all essentials
- It is critical that you do not allow too many projects! This will stretch your resources and burn out your volunteers! Every idea and project must have someone to champion and lead
- Monitor your financial performance both individually and as a Club
- Report back to the Club on Board decisions. Ideally you should also develop a written Communication Summary
- Ensure your Board develops a Succession Plan. Without one, you risk your Club losing momentum

An effective Board will also have a Code of Conduct as part of its Governance practice to guide how Directors interact. Here are some recommended items that you may wish to consider:

- Every decision we make will impact positively on our Vision and Mission
- We will adopt the most effective and efficient means of operation
- Open and honest conversations will occur in Board Meetings
- We will draw a line in the sand – no backward conversations or decisions
- Once a decision is made, we will convey unity and full support of it to our members
- We will discuss the issue – not the personality – discussions will be 'above the line'
- Board papers will be distributed at least one week ahead of time. Board members are encouraged to ask 'Questions on notice' through the Secretary or President
- Board Members will come prepared, having read all documentation and level questions to the President prior to the meeting
- Board Members will use 'talk' along with email to get their opinions across
- Board Members will attend all Board meetings (except in exceptional circumstances)

**Summary:** As stated at the outset, Governance is key to the successful operation and future of our Clubs. This article sets out a wide range of recommended practices and guidelines to ensure we all operate at leading practice. I commend these to you all and would be happy to assist any Club or President in implementing them.

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