

4 Public Relations

Public awareness of Rotary is essential. Making people aware of who your Rotary club is and what your club does has an impact on membership, contributions to your club and to The Rotary Foundation, and community participation in and support for your service projects.

Promoting Your Club

Effective public relations efforts at the club level promote retention and recruitment by enhancing the public image of your Rotary club. Your club membership development committee should collaborate with the club public relations committee on potential strategies to promote your club. Become familiar with the Effective Public Relations for Clubs and Districts section of the RI Web site, an excellent resource for PR ideas and suggestions. This site also contains many downloadable tools and reference materials that can be used by club committees.

When non-Rotarians visit your club, take the opportunity to introduce them to Rotary. An excellent communications tool for this purpose is a club brochure or fact sheet. This item can be distributed with other resources such as *This Is Rotary* (001-EN), the current issue of THE ROTARIAN or a regional Rotary magazine, or posted on the club Web site. Your club fact sheet or brochure should be updated on a regular basis. Consider appointing a new member to the team in charge of updating the material.

Arrange for Rotary displays in local libraries, banks, city halls, and other public places. Many organizations allow community groups to put up displays in their buildings. Order materials from RI and set up an educational display in heavily trafficked places.

Working with the Media

Use the media to promote club and district activities that address important community issues. Each time Rotary is mentioned in the news, hundreds, thousands, and sometimes millions of people are reached. More than just enhancing Rotary's image, public relations can help gain support for projects, attract members, and improve the quality of service that Rotarians provide. In order to take full advantage of the media, Rotary news must be presented properly. Consider the following tips for effectively promoting Rotary in the media:

Appoint club and district public relations chairs

Attracting media attention requires hard work and research. A significant advantage is gained by appointing club and district PR chairs who work in the communications field and understand the media in your area.

Approach the media strategically

Link your story to a larger trend or current news events. When presenting a story idea to the media, make sure it is brief and to the point. Think of how to best present Rotary in a 30-second sound bite. Tailor your idea to a specific journalist, publication or broadcast program, such as an international news program or a health segment on a local news channel.

Offer knowledgeable Rotary spokespeople

When suggesting a story to the media, make sure you can offer articulate local spokespeople who are actively involved in Rotary and able to inform others.

Identify newsworthy story angles

Every Rotary story must have significant news value. The best public relations for Rotary is effective service. How Rotary addresses real needs in the community is the kind of story that interests journalists. It helps to support your story idea with background materials, such as fact sheets or brochures, which are available from the international office in your area.

For more information about promoting local club activities, consult Rotary publications such as *Effective Public Relations: A Guide for Rotary Clubs* (257-EN).

Local Media

Speak to your local press club. Every major city has a local press organization. Learn about yours and find out whether a press club representative will come and speak at an upcoming meeting. Tell them you'd like to talk about Rotary's role in important community issues such as drug abuse prevention, tutoring, antiviolence initiatives, and preventive recreational programs designed to provide structured activities in which children can be productive and have fun.

Involve the local public relations and media professionals in your Rotary club. Consider the professions listed below. Are they represented in your current membership? Does your current classification survey encompass these professions?

- Newspaper Editor
- Magazine Editor
- Advertising Graphic Designer
- Television and /or Radio News Anchor
- Television and /or Radio News Producer



Appendix 13: Public Relations for Membership Development

Develop a Rotary Web site and encourage community organizations to link to it

The Internet is a powerful tool for sharing club and district activities. Develop your own club or district Web page to help attract and retain members, improve communications with clubs across the globe, and make club project information available to your local media. The number of people reached with Rotary's message can be substantially increased by encouraging community groups to send their visitors to your club's site for additional information on certain local issues and programs.

Solicit third-party endorsements of club or district projects

It's important for Rotarians to share the good work of Rotary. But having others talk about our good deeds is even more credible and more impressive. Organizations that your club or district has worked with are excellent sources for a third-party endorsement. Ask executive directors of organizations and community leaders to speak favorably of Rotary at events, in organizational publications, and through the media.

Ask the beneficiaries of Rotary service to speak on behalf of the club or district

No testimony is more powerful than that of a family or a person who has benefited from Rotary's work. For example, at a press conference to announce the opening of housing units that your Rotary club helped construct, have the head of household or a child speak instead of a Rotary official. Most television viewers and newspaper readers will be more moved by such personal testimony.

Publicize member participation in club and district activities in business and trade periodicals

Rotary members spend a lot of time volunteering in their communities. Have their work recognized among their professional peers by sending a press release to various industry publications. For example, for a member who is a banking professional, you might publicize the member's work on an antiviolence initiative in a local, regional, or national banking journal.

Produce a video of club and district activity

A compelling video depicting hands-on activities is a good way to tell the Rotary story. Many Rotary club members have the necessary equipment and knowledge to produce a video, and editing can often be donated. The video could be used as part of a display or sent to organizations and interested members of the media. A shorter version could be submitted for consideration as a public service announcement. The tape could also be used for district conferences and other Rotary events.

Promote Rotary's work with and for young people

The media is often interested in programs relating to young people and have a particular interest in projects carried out by young people, such as Rotaract and Interact activities and the Ambassadorial Scholarship program. Promoting the work of young people to the media is also a good way of updating Rotary's image.

Seek opportunities for Rotarians to speak at community events and in schools

Visibility is an important prerequisite to membership recruitment. Be aggressive in identifying opportunities for Rotarians to speak at community events. Rotary club members are capable of providing valuable commentary on any number of community issues. Be proactive! Don't wait to be invited. Organizers will be glad that you called.



Appendix 14: How to Use Public Service Announcements

Public awareness of Rotary supports and enhances membership growth and development. This public service announcement is just one example of a tool that can be used at the club and district level to promote public awareness of Rotary.

How to Use this Public Service Announcement

Print public service announcements (PSAs) like this one are available on compact disc for use in newspapers and other print media. These materials can be ordered through the Online Publications Catalog (www.rotary.org); from the Publications Order Services Section by e-mail: pbos@rotaryintl.org, telephone: (847) 866-4600, or fax: (847) 866-3276; or from RI international offices.

Each PSA is provided in both color and black-and-white versions, in vertical and horizontal orientations. This tool enables the user to create publicity pieces in any size and is compatible with both Macintosh and IBM computers. Each PSA can be personalized with local club or district information.

A few suggested uses are:

- Magazines/newspapers
- Community directories
- Program booklets
- District newsletters/directories
- Public displays/posters/banners
- Web sites
- Billboards
- Air/rail terminals

Rotary International Print Public Service Announcements (345-EN)

Three PSAs that focus on promoting membership in Rotary (EN, PO, SP)

The Rotary Foundation Print Public Service Announcements (335-EN)

Six PSAs that highlight various activities of The Rotary Foundation (EN, FR, JA, KO, PO, SP)

Rotary: Connecting Lives, Affecting Lives (015-EN)

Images of Rotarians engaged in polio immunizations, an Australian Rotarian effort to help families displaced by fires, and a Canadian Rotarian mobile clinic serving the homeless. Useful for publications, stationary, and billboards

Online Public Relations Resources

The RI Web site offers electronic versions of all public relations tools. In the Effective Public Relations section of the Web site (www.rotary.org), you will find “how-to” instructions to assist clubs and districts in their promotion of Rotary activities, projects, and programs. The site also offers guidance on writing press releases, placing advertisements and PSAs, and developing effective media relations. You can also register your e-mail address to receive PR Tips, a twice-monthly e-mail newsletter filled with ideas and opportunities to publicize your club projects. To register, click on Register near the Tip! box in the Effective Public Relations section of the RI Web site. Please see the PR Toolbox, which contains sample news releases and many other helpful items for download.

5 Communications

District Communications

A wide range of district-level resources are available to assist membership development efforts. Consider the following suggestions for working with your district towards your membership goals:

- Communicate what your club is currently doing regarding past goals and how the club is functioning overall.
- Communicate your club goals as well as your plan for achieving them to the district level leadership. Depending on how your district governor's communications strategy, information may go to your assistant governor or the district membership development committee.
- Use the district's Web page to communicate your club's success stories and as a source of new ideas. If the district doesn't have membership-related content on its Web site, work with the district to develop relevant content and discussion forums.
- Use the membership development resources on the RI Web site. In addition to downloadable materials, the club membership discussion forum invites Rotarians to ask each other questions and share success stories.
- Ask your assistant governor to submit your club's strategies, tools and monthly progress toward your membership goals to the district governor for inclusion in the governor's monthly letter.

Club Communications

Communication enhances members' commitment and connection to your club. It is important to keep your fellow club members informed of the club's plan for membership development and your progress towards the club's membership goals. Consider using the following tools for club-level communication:

- Club newsletter
- Club Web site
- Announcements at club functions
- E-mail communications