

STRATEGIC PLAN

Image and Governance of Rotary International

After two years well-spent on the RI Board, I can share with you some thoughts about the two main prongs of the strategic plan.

- **The enhancement of Rotary's image:** One of the keys to our future success in attracting new generations and the only key to our recognition by the community.
- **The governance of Rotary** at all levels: Club, District, RI Board, President's Office, and RI Staff. This a vast project all Rotarians need to reflect on.

Before even serving, and looking beyond the life of the club, we need to realize that we are connected by a spirit, a culture, the vision of a future for mankind and society—**our philosophy**.

This word should not frighten you. In 1915, Paul Harris talked about “a philosophy of business and of life with happiness as its goal.”

We are:

- **Conscientious** in performing our professional duties.
- **Ambitious**—we always strive to share our ideal of fellowship and friendship with the world.
- **Utopian**—we still hope that the spiritual power of peace and love will prevail on earth.
- **Pragmatic**—we know how to answer the needs of our communities
- **Idealistic**—we help alleviate human suffering as we fight the indifference that keeps a third of the world population in poverty and lets 6,000 children die every day without anyone paying attention.

This happiness Paul Harris talked about is in fact the realization that we are a force in motion to bring a little hope and experience **the happiness that serving others brings**.

If we are proud to belong to the largest private service organization, we should not forget that we have also close ties—and for a good reason since we contributed to its creation—with another great intergovernmental organization. I am talking about **UNESCO**.

Rotary and UNESCO **share several goals:**

- We both focus our efforts on **education, illiteracy**, vital resources such as **water**, and even **ethics**.
- We both remain **apolitical**.
- We both have a **cultural aura**, with approaches adapted to each region through the development of models that reflect the diversity of our organizations.
- This is why we should further our **collaboration** even if we know that it will take time and happen gradually.

How can we enhance our image?

First and foremost, we should emphasize the richness of our **diversity** in our structured programs and others, through **Rotary's World Press** and **Web site**.

We should also **revitalize** our core values:

➤ **Starting with professional ethics**

Considering the failures, dishonesty, and corruption we observe as well as an international economic outlook fueled by a competitive spirit, our *Declaration for Rotarians in Businesses and Professions*—which is already 17 years old—could be complemented by a **Bill of Ethics**.

➤ **Our contribution to world peace** is not as substantial as it was 50 years ago even if the creation of seven Rotary Centers for International Studies in peace and conflict resolution and a Rotary Peace and Conflict Studies program in Bangkok is a great innovation.

- Our weakness is **international relations** and **direct relations** between Rotarians despite the huge **potential** we have. We cannot just keep patting each other on the back.
- If we do not have the magical power to create a new and better world, we can initiate a **snowball effect** to create awareness and take action.

➤ **Another area: Leadership**

If we are **leaders** in our professions, Rotary International is **not much recognized** by the civic society with the exception of our fight to eradicate **polio** although the media generally ignore our action to focus on WHO and UNICEF who get most of the credit for what has been accomplished in the past 20 years.

Youth can be the channel to re-activate this role but to do that we must strengthen our numerous programs: scholarships, Youth Exchange, RYLA, but also develop **a large international program** easily accessible to new generations.

In the past few years, Rotarians have been happy to see continuity in the presidential **priorities** centered on the United Nations Millennium goals:

- **Water** (potential conflicts, distribution, sanitation, soft water)
- **Health** (malaria, aids, cancer, blindness)
- **Hunger** (intensive agriculture, surplus distribution)
- **Illiteracy** (especially young girls education in developing countries)

Only **environment** protection is missing (preserve planet earth, sustainable development).

How can we become credible and efficient through our projects?

I believe that **Rotary clubs** are ready to get involved in projects every year through World Community Service with the support of presidential resource groups.

- But we could go further and create specialized **agencies** in each of these fields (education, water, hunger, health, and environment) under the control of Rotary International to carry out projects such as 3-H projects. Of course, clubs and districts would have to initiate these projects.
- These **agencies** could rely on active **Rotary associations** such as the Rotary Action Groups, Fellowships, Inter-Country Committees and others (doctors, dentists, engineers, etc.)
- We could call on **Volunteers** and the number of annual missions could quickly reach a thousand. A lot of Past District Governors would be more than happy to serve.
- Of course, these agencies would need a **budget** (management and stewardship) but we could surely make some **savings** to fund them.
- The key issue is related to **The Rotary Foundation** who will have to provide additional resources.

TRF is already working hard on its future vision which offers exciting perspectives. However, funding (we cannot rely exclusively on the Rotarians' financial support) can be easily found with the creation of **associate foundations—of course reporting to TRF**. We could take advantage of fiscal deductions and corporate sponsorship that are almost inexistent today.

This leads us directly to **governance** and the coordination of resources that are available or needed to achieve the goals set by the members of the association.

➤ **Let's focus on our number 1 governance issue:**

- The **gap**—to say the least—separating the concerns of grassroots Rotarians, those of governors in their district, and those of a RI Director.
- On the one hand, we have Rotarians (90%) who are just happy to experience Rotary within the boundaries of their club and **do not feel concerned** about the internationality of our organization.
- On the other hand, we have **District Governors, RI Directors**, and the **RI staff** who work hard to the benefit of the remaining 10% of our membership (officers and past officers).

We must do something so that our beautiful and well-established organization can deliver on its full potential.

We need to set in motion an **internal synergy** that will mark our second century of service.

Some food for thoughts:

- Give again the Rotarians an opportunity **to voice** their opinions at the **Council on Legislation** (not the other way around) and at **Zone Institutes** even if we have to change their formats and programs, and bear the increased cost that might result from these modifications.
- A new role for the **staff** whose cultural diversity should be put to better use.

With time, its role has **drifted** from its initial mission, supporting clubs and districts, to a force of initiative and control. This is typical of democracy with the opposition between elected officials and appointed officials.

The staff is **motivated and competent** but our duty is to make their task more **interesting** so that they might **transform the spirit of collective enthusiasm into action**.

- If you look at our organizational chart, a **physical and galvanizing connection** is missing between Rotarians and RI Headquarters.
- **RI Directors** should organically act as the **interface** between the staff and the Rotarians. They just need a supporting staff in Evanston. As a result, understanding and trust will be strengthened.

- Just one word about the **President of Rotary International**. Despite all the appointments he makes, he is somewhat isolated. He travels the world but there is a lack of communication. A **communication manager** should be added to his team.
- However, the new dynamic between the bottom and top of the hierarchy should come from a new outlook on **training** which needs to be based on our experience and successes.

We have three **main categories** of members: District Governors-Elect, Club Presidents-Elect, and new Rotarians. **All should be fully trained about Rotary.**

They are the most responsive members because they are the ones who have the most expectations about Rotary. They represent **our most dynamic pool** and since we know that over a ten-year period, our membership experiences a 60% turnover, **this will be the minimum time required to see the first results.**

But there are other **interesting** and **significant** issues related to governance:

- 25% of our clubs **are not functioning well** (low membership, attendance problem, lack of projects, internal feuds);
- The relationship between RI and TRF. **Is TRF under the authority of RI?**
- **Expectations** of Rotarians who hope for a **streamlining** of our processes at TRF and more generally.
- The board should deal with management and policy issues and **leave** all purely administrative duties to the General Secretary.
- What should be **the optimum term** for our various officers?
- Base our **budget** process on a rolling forecast
- Rethink the concept for our annual **conventions**.

To conclude, let's say that **good governance is a proactive strategy designed to enhance our image as Rotarians who serve the future of mankind and society.**

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