

Club Public Relations Committee Manual

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This is the 2012 edition of the *Club Public Relations Committee Manual*. It is intended for use by 2013-14, 2014-15, and 2015-16 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. Please refer to those resources for exact guidelines. Changes to these documents, by the Council on Legislation or the RI Board, override policy as stated in this publication.

Photos: Alyce Henson and Monika Lozinska-Lee

Introduction

The *Club Public Relations Committee Manual* was developed to help Rotary club public relations committees establish goals and understand their responsibilities related to increasing club effectiveness. Because committee responsibilities vary according to area laws, cultural practices, and established club procedures, you should adapt the suggestions in this publication to fit your club's needs.

This publication includes three chapters. The first describes the major responsibilities of your committee. The second describes responsibilities specific to you as the chair of the committee. The third contains resources that may be useful for you and committee members. Following the third chapter are discussion questions to be completed before the district assembly and worksheets that will be used there, so be sure to bring this manual with you.

Each committee has a manual that provides an overview of the committee and its responsibilities (club administration, membership, public relations, service projects, and The Rotary Foundation). Additional copies of this manual can be downloaded at no charge at www.rotary.org. This manual is part of the *Club Officers' Kit* (225). However, each manual can be purchased separately at shop.rotary.org.

Share chapter 1 with committee members so they are fully aware of the committee's responsibilities.

As you prepare to help lead your club, remember that it is a member of Rotary International. Through this membership, it is linked to more than 34,000 Rotary clubs worldwide and granted access to the organization's services and resources, including publications in nine languages, information at www.rotary.org, grants from The Rotary Foundation, and staff support at world headquarters and the international offices.

Comments?

Direct questions or comments about this manual or any of RI's training resources to:

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Committee Role and Responsibilities



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

The role of the club public relations committee is to develop and execute a plan to tell the public about Rotary and promote the club's service projects and activities. Having strong public relations ensures that communities around the world know 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.

The responsibilities of the club public relations committee, summarized below, are explained more fully in this chapter:

- Develop committee goals to achieve the club's public relations goals for the coming year.
- Become familiar with RI public relations resources.
- Create awareness of club activities and projects among club members, media, and the community.
- Understand the components of public relations that will help you promote Rotary to the community.
- Know Rotary's key messages and be able to use them when speaking in public.
- Work with the club membership committee to support their recruitment efforts.

The club public relations committee's work will address the Club Avenue of Service.

Subcommittees can be created to manage the committee's various responsibilities, especially if you have a large club.

As you read more about these responsibilities, think about your committee goals, what your action plan will be, and what resources you will need for your year.

In the event that there is adverse publicity about Rotary or your club, your committee should meet to discuss how to confront the issue. Counter misperceptions with well-directed public relations efforts. For more information, consult the *Media Crisis Handbook* (515) or contact RI Media staff to alert them to the potential crisis.

Promoting Your Rotary Club

The primary responsibility of the public relations committee is to create awareness in your community of your club's service projects and activities, and in doing so, to promote the values and work of the organization. The community learns about Rotary through the media and what others say about the organization, so informing your club members and the media about your club's undertakings is crucial to building strong public relations.

There are many ways to promote your club and the organization, including:

- Sponsoring special events, such as marathons, recycling efforts, and fundraisers
- Creating exhibits and displays throughout the community
- Advertising club projects and events in newspapers and magazines, on billboards and buses, and in air and rail transportation centers
- Encouraging Rotarians to wear their Rotary lapel pins
- Posting Rotary information on an online forum, community calendar, social networking sites, and your club's or another organization's website

Your committee should brainstorm other ideas before your year begins, and create a plan for implementing them. In order to promote Rotary effectively, you will need to understand the components of public relations, and be able to use key Rotary messages.

Components of Public Relations

Effective public relations requires time, effort, and planning. Before the beginning of the Rotary year, your committee should develop an action plan that identifies the projects and activities that will be promoted.

Audience. Ensuring a positive image of Rotary in the community requires tailoring public relations for different audiences, depending on the projects and activities your club wants to undertake. Reaching the right audience is crucial to the success of these projects. These audiences may include:

- People directly affected by Rotary service projects
- Students and educators
- Local government officials
- Specialized media that cover specific topics like education, literacy, water, or health
- Other nongovernmental and nonprofit organizations
- Business and civic leaders
- Community organizations
- Television, radio, print, and online journalists, bloggers and reporters

Preview and
download
media-ready
materials at
www.rotary.org/mediacenter.

Media. Given the tremendous competition for media time and space, it is important for your club to be creative and consider all types of media to communicate what your club is and what it does.

The term “media” can include television stations; newspapers; international wire services; the Internet, including blogs and social media; as well as the publications of other organizations and institutions. Additional types of media include:

- Local magazines and radio stations
- Billboards and other public-space media such as signs in bus and train stations
- Trade publications
- Public access cable stations
- Corporate and community organization newsletters

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

When sending a news release, consider the following tips:

- Send your email news release in the body of the message rather than as an attachment. Spam filters often flag emails with attachments, so your message might not be delivered.

- Rather than just typing “News Release” in the subject line, include what the news release is about.
- Take the time to find the appropriate contact person; email your release directly to an individual reporter rather than to a media outlet’s general email address.

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 about Rotary’s activities. On www.rotary.org, search “PR fact sheet,” and download copies to submit with your news stories.

Membership and Public Image

Public image and membership growth are interconnected. A high-quality, consistent public image campaign will prompt individuals to seek out local clubs and be more inclined to accept invitations to join. The public relations committee should remember this in its efforts to promote Rotary.

A successful promotional campaign uses as many outlets as possible. Your fellow club members can help you make Rotary and your club known.

Promote a positive image. Work with your club’s membership committee to consider what attracts new members to Rotary, and then determine which media are most likely to reach them. Discuss how to work together on recruiting efforts.

To help recruit new members, the club public relations committee should consider

- Promoting Rotary’s work with and for young people
- Highlighting the service, networking, and fellowship opportunities of membership
- Publicizing club activities in business and trade periodicals
- Dedicating a section of the club’s website to non-Rotarians, and encouraging community organizations to link to it

Strong public relations will not only aid in attracting new members but will help retain current members as well.

Enhance club activities for media appeal. Think about the type of activities and events that would interest your community. Work with your club administration committee to make club programs newsworthy, and with your service projects committee to conduct projects that will appeal to the media and your audiences, such as:

- Service projects that meet a community need or coincide with 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
- Notable or prominent speakers at club meetings
- Presentations by RI or Rotary Foundation program participants about their experiences in another culture
- Interact and Rotaract activities
- Anniversaries of local clubs or programs
- Activities with a strong visual element
- Innovative or unique projects and activities

Enlist members' help. Your membership base is a valuable resource for your committee. Involve members in your public relations efforts by having them spread the word about your club's activities and projects and about the organization. Ensure that all members of your club are knowledgeable about Rotary and its programs and encourage them to promote Rotary's mission and core values in their personal, business, and professional contacts.

Key Rotary Messages

One of the best ways to promote Rotary is by speaking about your club and the organization. You may speak to non-Rotary audiences at project events and other occasions. Be sure to develop concise statements to explain Rotary and your club to the media.

Be prepared to answer each of the following questions in no more than one minute:

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

To observe fellow Rotarians answering Rotary-related questions in one minute, view "Rotary Minute" videos available at www.rotary.org.

Your answers should be positive, factual, specific, and brief. Avoid using Rotary language that non-Rotarians may not understand. For circumstances that call for a more formal or longer address, consider the following tips:

- Think about who your message is for and modify your presentation to appeal to them.
- Prepare an outline of topics you want to include.
- Practice your address and time it.

The following key Rotary messages can be incorporated into your public relations materials and public speeches:

Rotary is an international humanitarian service organization.

- Rotary members are business and professional leaders who volunteer their expertise, compassion, and power to improve communities at home and abroad in nearly every country in the world.

- Rotary is a worldwide network of more than 34,000 clubs made up of individuals who channel their passions into social causes that change lives and improve communities.
- Our track record of success is demonstrated by the millions of people who have achieved and sustained a better quality of life through Rotary.

Rotary's top goal is to eradicate polio worldwide.

- Rotary, in collaboration with the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and national governments, is close to eliminating the second human disease in history (after smallpox), having achieved a 99 percent reduction in polio cases worldwide since 1985.
- Rotary members have contributed more than US\$1 billion and countless volunteer hours to help immunize more than 2 billion children in 122 countries.
- Rotary raised more than \$200 million to match \$355 million in challenge grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Rotary is on the forefront of tackling major humanitarian issues around the world.

- Maternal and child health, clean water and sanitation, literacy and education, and disease prevention and treatment are among Rotary's areas of focus.
- Rotary's goal-oriented, business-model approach has attracted other organizations to partner with us to address these shared humanitarian priorities.

Rotary invests in people to generate sustainable economic growth.

- Rotary supports grassroots entrepreneurs and helps prepare young people and women for meaningful work.
- Rotary helps communities increase their capacity to support sustainable economic development.

Rotary builds peace and international understanding through education.

- The Rotary Peace Centers program offers graduate degrees and professional development certificates in peace studies to more than 110 applicants each year at seven campus-based centers worldwide.
- Today, more than 600 former Rotary peace fellows work in key decision-making positions in governments and organizations around the world.
- Rotary's Youth Exchange program fosters international goodwill by enabling 8,500 high school students to live and study abroad each year in over 100 countries.



Club Public Relations Committee Chair



To prepare for your term as committee chair, learn what will be expected of you and your committee by the club's board of directors and members, your district, and Rotary International. There are several things you should do before you take office to prepare for your role. In addition to attending training sessions at the district assembly, you should

- Meet with the outgoing committee chair
- Review your club's bylaws to become familiar with your club's procedures and regulations
- Review your club's strategic plan and develop annual goals to support it
- Select and prepare your committee members with the president-elect
- Create subcommittees as needed (media relations, advertising/marketing, and special events)
- Think about the kinds of activities your club can undertake to improve its public image and attract new members
- Develop a communication plan for the year
- Determine what additional responsibilities or duties your club has for your committee

Answer the discussion questions at the end of this manual to prepare for the district assembly.

Good preparation will lead to a productive year. Once you take office, you will have the following major responsibilities:

- Manage your committee's budget.
- Work with other committees in your club and your district committee on multiclub activities or initiatives
- Plan and conduct regular committee meetings and activities.
- Monitor progress toward your committee goals, and report committee activities and progress to the club president, board of directors, and the full club.

Your Committee

Work with the president-elect to select committee members to fill vacancies and conduct planning meetings before the start of the year. For continuity, committee members should be appointed for three years. When selecting new members, consider the following characteristics:

- Professional media experience
- Strong speaking, writing, or photography skills
- Familiarity with social networking sites
- Website development experience
- Prominent community work

Once your committee is formed, it is your responsibility to prepare members for the coming Rotary year. Determine how to use the skills and interests of your members and delegate the tasks accordingly. You can prepare committee members by

- Informing them of the committee's ongoing activities and plans related to the club's strategic plan
- Pairing new committee members with more experienced ones
- Encouraging communication with counterparts in other clubs using the district directory
- Sharing the resources available to your committee
- Giving members a list of district activities and meetings

Goal Setting

As the chair of your committee, you are responsible for ensuring that it sets and achieves its annual goals to support the club's strategic plan. You'll have an opportunity to work on goal setting with your president-elect and other incoming club leaders at the district assembly. RI is developing an online tool to help clubs submit their goals via Member Access.

Effective goals. Be sure that annual goals reflect committee capabilities and club interests. Goals should be shared, measurable, challenging, achievable, and time specific.

Various planning tools are available to clubs, including *Be a Vibrant Club: Your Club Leadership Plan* and the *Strategic Planning Guide*.

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:

- 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 available and needed from your club, district, and RI to support the goal.
- Secure human, informational, and financial resources before taking action.
- Decide how you will evaluate success in attaining your goals, and whether baseline data is needed.

Regularly assess your goals to ensure that steady progress is being made toward achieving them, and adjust if necessary.

Motivation. Part of your responsibility is keeping your committee members motivated. Common motivators include:

- Assurance that the goal will be beneficial
- Belief that the goal is achievable will be successful
- Opportunities for fellowship and networking
- Assignments that use each member's expertise
- Recognition of efforts and time spent working toward committee goals

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

Budget

Before 1 July, work with the outgoing committee chair and the club treasurer to determine what funds your committee will need and that these funds are included in the club's budget. Be sure to include any planned fundraising activities.

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 action if issues arise.

Communication

Think about how you will communicate with the following club leaders:

- **Committee members.** Committees should meet regularly 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.** The work of one committee affects the work of another. Your committee should work with the following club committees:
 - Service projects committee (to be aware of upcoming projects of interest to the media)
 - Membership committee (to tailor your efforts to target potential members in the community and foster pride among current members)
 - Rotary Foundation committee (to be aware of upcoming grants)
 - Club administration committee (to notify the media in advance of club program speakers and to design the club's website to appeal to the media and general public)
- **Your district.** If your committee needs guidance or information, contact your district counterpart or your assistant governor.
- **Your region.** Your Rotary public image coordinator is available to help your club with its public relations questions. Find the Rotary public image coordinator in your region at www.rotary.org.

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Resources



Many resources are available to help your committee fulfill its role. Download resources at www.rotary.org, or order them at shop.rotary.org, by email at shop.rotary@rotary.org, or from your international office.

- [*Effective Public Relations: A Guide for Rotary Clubs*](#) (257) — Tools and tips for promoting club activities to attract positive attention from the community and potential members
- www.rotary.org — RI website, aimed at helping club leaders create a positive public image; includes sample press releases, tips on working with the media, and public service announcements
- Rotary Media Center (www.rotary.org/mediacenter) — Resource where you may view and download multimedia content, including broadcast-quality video, high-resolution print images, radio-ready announcements, and links to Rotary's social media accounts. Share it with other Rotarians and local media.
- [*Media Crisis Handbook*](#) (515) — Helps Rotary clubs and districts deal effectively and efficiently with the news media when unexpected events prompt inquiries from the press

- *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 24 languages serve Rotarians around the world
- [*This Is Rotary*](#) (001) — Colorful illustrated brochure providing a brief overview of Rotary for prospective Rotarians and the public
- [*RI Visual Identity Guide*](#) (547) — Guidelines for the design of publications at all levels of Rotary and the proper use of Rotary Marks.
- [*What's Rotary?*](#) (419) — Wallet-size card answering frequently asked questions about Rotary
- *Rotary PR Tips* — E-newsletter that features outreach ideas for clubs and districts to promote Rotary in their communities. Subscribe online at rotary.org/newsletters.

Human Resources

Find contact information in the *Official Directory*, at www.rotary.org, or from your district governor.

- 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.
- District governor — RI officer responsible for advising on strategies to make your club more effective
- District public relations committee — Rotarians appointed to support clubs in their public relations efforts
- Other club committee chairs in your district — Leaders who can serve as a resource to help support your club's projects and initiatives
- Past club committee chairs and leaders — Knowledgeable Rotarians who can advise you as you plan your year and who can be assigned to lead committee activities
- Rotary public image coordinators — Rotarians appointed by the RI president who provide guidance and resources to help Rotary clubs and districts promote projects, share success stories, and explain through the media what Rotary is and does
- Contact Center — A team available to answer questions; can be reached at contact.center@rotary.org or toll-free (within U.S. and Canada) at 866-9-ROTARY (866-976-8279). Rotarians outside North America should continue to contact their international office.

District Assembly Discussion Questions

When considering these questions, talk to outgoing and incoming club leaders to compare thoughts.

What are the responsibilities of the club public relations committee, and what are your responsibilities as chair?

How will your committee support the club's strategic plan?

What can you do to promote Rotary to prospective members, and who can you work with in the community to promote your club?

What new media will your club use to promote your club?

How can you help committee members do their job?

What are your committee's long-range and annual goals?

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Worksheet 2: Goals

Use this worksheet to draft a long-range goal and annual goals for three years to reach the long-range goal. Ensure that your goals are:

Shared. Those who participate in setting a goal and developing strategies to achieve that goal are committed to implementing it.

Measurable. A goal should provide a tangible point to pursue.

Challenging. A goal should be ambitious enough to go beyond what your club has accomplished in the past.

Achievable. Rotarians should be able to accomplish the goal with the resources available.

Time specific. A goal should have a deadline or timeline.

Long-range goal (goal for your club three years from now)

Year 1 annual goal

Year 2 annual goal

Year 3 annual goal

Worksheet 3: Action Plan

In the space below, write one annual goal from your goals worksheet. Then determine the action steps that need to be taken to meet this goal.

Annual goal

Action step	Who will be responsible?	How long will this step take?	How will progress be measured?	What resources are available?
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

Resources needed

Worksheet 4: Public Relations Committee Case Studies

Read the case study below and answer the questions. Create a plan using the case study action plan on page 22.

Case Study 1

You've just started your new term as the club public relations committee chair. Shortly after taking office, you contact the local news and invite them to the site where your club is building a school. The TV anchor interviews a member who gets some of the facts wrong.

What do you do?

Case Study 2

Your club president and membership committee chair agree that your club needs to have a stronger Internet presence. They suggest using more social media sites and developing networks with other club websites.

How can you use social media sites and other websites to strengthen your club's online presence?

Case Study 3

At a fundraising event for a local school, the organizers ask you to speak publicly about what your club is known for in the community.

What do you say?

Case Study 4

The community's perception of your club is that you only meet for lunch once a week. Your club is very involved in supporting the community.

How can you shift this perception of your club?

Case Study 5

Another Rotary club has sponsored a new Interact club. The Interactors are enthusiastic about several projects, particularly an international service project to support a new library. They contacted you to ask for your help in promoting their work. In addition to monetary donations, the Interactors would like community members to donate books.

How can you promote their efforts?

Who will you need to work with?

What media outlets will you contact?

What are some other ways of promoting the Interact club's project beyond reaching out to the media?

Case Study Action Plan

Action step	Who will be responsible?	How long will this step take?	How will progress be measured?	What resources are available?
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

What did you learn that you can apply to your club?

Resources needed

Worksheet 5: Problem-Solving Guide

Use the Planning Guide for Effective Rotary Clubs and the goals worksheet from session 2 to develop your problem-solving guide. Analyze your club's goals, and think about potential challenges to achieving them. Then, offer solutions to these challenges.

	Goal	Potential Challenge	What resources are available?
Administration			
Membership			
Public Relations			
Service Projects			
Rotary Foundation			
Other			

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