

ROTARY MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Promote via the media club and district activities which 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. The following are some tips on how to effectively promote Rotary in the media

Appoint club and district PR chairpersons

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

Know 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. Health segments require stories with a health angle; international news programs require an international angle.

Offer knowledgeable Rotary spokespeople

When suggesting a story to the media, make sure you can offer articulate local spokespeople. A spokesperson should be someone who is actively involved and can 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 newsworthy 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 service center in your area.

For more information about promoting local club activities, consult Rotary publications including, "Effective Public Relations: A Guide for Rotary Clubs."

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

In this technological age, it's important to keep pace with the times. The Internet is a powerful tool for sharing club and district activities. Consider developing your own club or district web page. Rotary sites help attract and retain members, improve club communications 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 Rotary projects

It's important for Rotarians to share the good work of Rotary. But it is more credible, more believable and more impressive to have others talk about our good deeds. An organization with which Rotary has partnered is an excellent source for a third party endorsement. Ask executive directors of organizations and community leaders to talk up 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 comment is more powerful than one made by a person or a family that has benefited from Rotary's work. For example, at a press conference to announce housing units built or supported by Rotary, have the head of household or a child speak instead of a Rotary official. People watching the report on television or reading about it in the newspaper will be much more moved by their 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, publicize a member's work on an anti-violence initiative in a local, regional or national banking journal.

Arrange for Rotary displays in local libraries, banks, city halls, etc.

Many organizations will permit community groups to put up displays in their buildings. Order materials from the RI catalog and set up an educational display in heavily trafficked places.

Produce a video of club and district activity

Many Rotary clubs have members who have the equipment and knowledge necessary to produce a video, and editing can often be donated. A compelling video depicting hands-on activities is a good way of telling the Rotary story. The video could be used as part of a display and it could be sent to interested members of the media and organizations. 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. They are particularly interested in projects being 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 the image of Rotary.

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 members of Rotary to speak at community events. Rotarians 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!

Speak to the local press club

Every major city has a local press organization. Learn about yours and call them to see if it might be possible to speak at an upcoming meeting. Tell them you'd like to talk about Rotary's role in important community issues.