

Innovate Rotary!

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Create thriving, growing, high-impact Rotary clubs.

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Thought-provoking questions to begin the New Year

As the New Year begins, here is a list of thoughts running through my head that relate to our clubs, our districts and Rotary overall. I believe that to remain strong, we Rotarians must take a close look at our assumptions about what we do, how we do it and the impact of our work. There is more competition for time and energy of qualified people. We will succeed if we set ourselves apart, by creating new ways to engage members while serving where we can have visible impact.

Keep an eye on future posts, as I am likely to revisit these topics.

Here goes:

1. Money. In 2007, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation donated a challenge grant of \$100 million to help eliminate polio. How can you use challenge grants to stimulate more Rotarians to donate to The Rotary Foundation?
2. Impact. The World Bank published a report entitled, "Where is the Wealth of Nations?" In that report, it noted that education and rule of law are the two most dominant factors in improving "intangible capital" in less developed countries. (And, oh by the way, intangibles have a huge impact on economic development) How do we increase primary education and reduce corruption in countries where we serve? Are we throwing time and resources away if we direct resources to countries that rank low in education and rule of law?
3. Accountability and Transparency: Charities and non profits are coming under increasing scrutiny for how their funds are used. What does this mean for a Rotary club? How transparent do we need to be about the use and impact of our budgets? If we were to rate the success of our projects by impact, how would that affect our funding decisions? How might it improve our ability to raise funds and attract qualified members?
4. Membership. There is a lot of talk about attracting the "next generation of members." And much of the talk is that "it's difficult." Yet, in 100 years of Rotary, we have had to make generational transitions before. How did we do it? How might we apply those lessons today? Where do we need to be more consistent and where do we need to be more flexible?
5. Busy. There is plenty of evidence that there are more and more demands on our time and energy. Technology is a big driver - especially in communications. But how can technology be a bigger enabler for Rotary and member service? How can we use technology to help balance our needs for collaboration, results, consistent processes and flexible innovation? What can RI and Districts do to make it easier to serve?
6. Communication is a big job for clubs, but also a big opportunity. What are the most successful clubs doing in the area of communication?
7. Tactical vs. Strategic: Where should we focus our efforts - on strategic vision or on tactical tips and techniques. What is the right mix?
8. Finally, effectiveness. How do you define whether a club is effective or not? Current conventional wisdom is that effective clubs do 4 things well - from a club perspective, 2 internal and 2 external: Internal: sustain and grow members and implement effective projects. External: support the Rotary Foundation and develop leaders for service beyond the club level. Do these four pillars really drive effectiveness? Where do these four pillars come from? How do you gauge your club's effectiveness?

Here is your chance to help me set priorities. Which topic should I explore first? What's the biggest issue your club is wrestling with? Is there a big issue on your mind that is not on this list? Please comment or send me an email message.

Thanks for reading Innovate Rotary! during 2007 and for your comments, both posted on the blog and emailed to me privately. And thanks for forwarding this to other members and leaders. Let's keep building the conversation!

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