

**ROTARY INTERNATIONAL  
NON-ROTARIAN FOCUS GROUPS  
COMPREHENSIVE REPORT  
2008-09 and 2009-10**

**Research Purpose and Objectives**

To support the RI Strategic Plan's priorities and goals related to membership, focus groups of non-Rotarians were conducted on two specific demographic groups:

- professional women 30+ years of age, and
- professional men 30 – 45 years of age.

In that Rotary International struggles with both of these demographic groups in terms of membership, the intent of this project was to gather information to better target these groups with membership development efforts.

Groups were conducted in the following cities: Buenos Aires, Argentina; Johannesburg, South Africa; Sydney, Australia; Tokyo, Japan; and in the United States: Appleton, WI; Atlanta, GA; Chicago, IL; Farmington, CT; Jackson, MS; and Los Angeles, CA. These cities were selected as RI has been experiencing declining membership trends in these regions. In the US both larger and smaller cities were tested to determine if there was a difference in awareness and perception between the two (2) city segments. The selection, recruitment and group discussion phases were conducted by external non-Rotarian vendors. Forty (40) groups were conducted in total, varying from 3 to 6 at each location.

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The following were the specific objectives of the research project.

- Interest in volunteering.
- Definition of volunteering: What they consider to be volunteering.
- The activities they would choose to do as a volunteer.
- Why is getting involved appealing to them.
- What specific volunteer organizations come to mind.
- What groups would they choose to join.
- What do they expect from volunteering.
- What personal benefits do they expect from volunteering.
- The amount of time they would consider expending with volunteer activities.
- The awareness of Rotary International or a local Rotary club.
- The perception of Rotary International or a local Rotary club.
- Would they be interested in joining a group such as a local Rotary club.
- Why would they or why would they not be interested in joining a local Rotary club.
- How much time would they be willing to spend in being involved in a group such as a local Rotary club.

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Though there were a few discrepancies among the regions, overall results were quite similar.

## General Findings

Note that the purpose of this project was to identify challenges and obstacles RI has with these two demographic groups. As competition for people's time and interest continues to rise, it is an important and essential exercise to test how the general public views and perceives an organization. Though there are comments and observations that may be considered harsh and reflect a bit negatively towards RI, such comments should be viewed objectively and considered an opportunity to implement change and demonstrate improvement.

### Responses to Time and Volunteer Commitment

Most respondents indicated that their time was already stretched beyond acceptable limits and they do not have a lot of time to 'spare'. As expected, one's life stage (single, couples with children at home, couples with grown children or no children) impacted one's ability and interest in pursuing volunteer efforts. Though the work environment has become somewhat more flexible, the pressures have increased, with work incorporating or consuming a greater deal of an individual's time.

In many cases individuals are inclined to volunteer, however they are very intent on maintaining enough 'personal' time, and they do not consider humanitarian efforts or volunteering as something for which they would give up their 'personal' time. It was perceived that volunteer activities should fit into one's regular schedule or routine. There was also an attitude that volunteering should 'feel good' and not be considered or communicated as 'mandatory'. In several markets, among younger professionals, there was some resistance to a climate of feeling "forced" or 'expected' to volunteer. In all regions, community based issues and needs carried the strongest interest for volunteering vs international opportunities. A consistent comment, *'we have enough problems and needs in our country and immediate communities that need to be taken care of.'* In defining volunteer involvement respondents noted a wide spectrum of activities; animal welfare, assisting the elderly either in an organized manner or via a friendship or personal association, helping friends, tutoring youth, locally based projects, religious based organizations, youth sports activities, school activities, homeless and hunger, medical assistance, etc.

Specific to Australia there was a stronger desire expressed in striving for or striking a balance in one's personal life between professional responsibilities, family responsibilities, personal time and volunteer time. Also specific to Australia, the issue of volunteer based organizations taking a volunteer's time for granted, requiring too much of a commitment or misusing a volunteer's time was mentioned.

In Japan, there was reluctance to pay money, fees or dues for volunteer opportunities with a preference for giving time, direct action and contact. The concept of paying annual dues to volunteer was negatively perceived.

It appears that volunteering tends to be more readily ingrained and embedded in the social structure in regions where needs and problems are more significant or the need spectrum is more diverse: as is the case in Argentina and South Africa.

### Individual Responses: 'What do you think of when you think of volunteering?'

The definition of volunteering was universal, helping those less fortunate, or donating time for a good cause.

- 'Working for free'
- 'Expectation of empowerment'
- 'Passion'
- 'Teamwork'
- 'Giving of your own time'
- 'Helping people in the community'
- 'A shared experience'

'Fulfillment'  
'Fun'  
'Gain in skills'  
'This is something for older people who have the time'  
'There must be an interest and it must be convenient'

*"Volunteering is something that people just should do. I think you've got to put back in what you get out."*

*"Volunteering can't be like a job, I already have a job and I don't need two jobs. It has to be something that I do of my own accord and something that I can relate to."*

*"A selfless sharing of gifts, without the expectation of payment."*

*"Giving a piece of yourself."*

The motivation to volunteer is somewhat universal as defined by these statements:

#### **Gratitude**

*"You feel more compassion; more connected; more human."*

#### **Share compassion**

*"We didn't have much. I had to live in a shelter for awhile. I promised when I could that I would give back."*

#### **Being an example, "Walk the talk"**

*"I want to do Big Brothers...I grew up without a father."*

#### **Making a difference**

*"I want to be part of the solution, or I have no right to complain."*

#### **Experiencing a sense of accomplishment in seeing results (especially for men)**

*"I'm a member of the Optimist Club - we provide youth and playground equipment, it's very satisfying. You can see the end result."*

#### **Huge organizational structures**

An issue that came up in all regions was the mistrust or skepticism towards large organizational structures. Respondents noted that over the last few years large, volunteer-based organizations have received bad publicity with respect to financial and project mismanagement. They also noted that there is a tendency to view smaller organizations as more effective in getting things accomplished at the local level. And, once again, local activities and efforts were of prime importance. It was noted that an organization's mission statement and financial transactions should be readily available and transparent to the public.

*"I stay away from the bigger organizations. United Way doesn't pull at my heart strings like a food drive for a shelter. I may look for an organization that's struggling. The big organizations have overhead, bonuses, waste."*

#### **Function of Networking**

There was some variance or discrepancy in how networking was perceived among these regions. Within Argentina, networking is primarily viewed as an activity within specific disciplines or professions (medical, legal architects, public notaries, etc.) and is used to share information and research. Networking was not mentioned as occurring between professions. Australians also tended to view

networking as a work function, with interactions occurring within a professional environment; conferences, trade shows, seminars, etc. For Australians networking is not considered a leisure time activity. In fact, some responses indicated that networking was considered a 'turn off' and assumed more of a selfish activity. In South Africa networking was mentioned and is readily accepted, taking place within normal, daily activities. Most stated they networked on a professional level. Respondents considered networking within the following contexts: schools, churches, conferences, sports activities, one-on-one relationship, etc. And, in South Africa, Rotary International was mentioned within the context of networking. In Japan, men noted that professional networking was often part of their life: a means of getting connected, sharing views and sharing business. Women in Japan indicated they liked getting input and feedback through networking but felt pressured, or forced, to network. In the US, professional networking was seen as a necessary (but not always enjoyable) part of business, individuals recognized that relationships gave them advantages, and professional networking was like buying "insurance" in case a need came up for resources, information, job placement or job transition/promotion.

Overall, professionals felt anxious about attending networking events or meetings where they did not know anyone, or were not sure if they would be welcome or included.

The notion that an association provides an opportunity to make friends was a much more inviting and agreeable position.

### **Awareness of Volunteer Based Organizations**

Over the years a significant number of competitors and volunteer-based organizations have evolved, both locally and internationally. When asked about groups providing humanitarian and volunteer options the organizations mentioned were:

- Doctors Without Borders
- Salvation Army
- Red Cross
- Amnesty International
- Unicef
- Habitat for Humanity
- Oxfam
- GreenPeace
- World Vision
- Make A Wish
- St. Vincent's De Paul (Australia)
- Church
- Big Brother/Big Sister
- United Way
- Smile Train
- Special Olympics
- March of Dimes
- Jaycees

Many local concerns were also noted and included the following focus: animal welfare, school feeding schemes, soup kitchens, housing projects, parent-teach associations, education and literacy, public health and HIV/AIDS, and street children.

In smaller US markets respondents seemed to mention "church" more frequently as a place they volunteered than in large markets, suggesting that churches may play a bigger, more visible, or more influential role in community care and impact than in larger cities.

Also in smaller US cities there seemed to be more top-of-mind awareness of and familiarity with Rotary than in larger cities. The awareness and familiarity seemed to come from greater visibility of the local clubs, and/or more direct contact with a Rotarian as there was usually one or two in each group who knew a Rotarian (father, brother, friend, boss). There seemed to be more local exposure - some knew people who had spoken at meetings, or had been asked to speak at a meeting, or had attended one or more meetings as a guest/visitor.

However, overall, Rotary International or local Rotary clubs were not readily mentioned in any of these regions.

### Perception of Rotary

Though the majority of the focus group participants were unaware of what Rotary gets involved with or what Rotary stands for there were a few individuals within each region who were fairly knowledgeable of Rotary's accomplishments within specific programs; Youth Exchange, Scholarships, etc. Comments also mentioned that Rotary has 'a tremendous network with the ability to get things done and accomplished.' When specifically asked about Rotary International some respondents did recall hearing about Rotary International, Rotary fundraising events or local Rotary club, with a general positive impression that Rotary did good work.

When asked about Rotary clubs the following activities were mentioned:

- fundraising to purchase hospital equipment
- community activities with youth
- shelter boxes with Burma
- provides scholarships
- supports exchange programs
- well set up
- compete with Lions

However, in general, there was a significant lack of awareness as to what Rotary International or local Rotary clubs accomplish. Some indicated, *'they have that wheel.'*

*"With Rotary, they do a bit of this, a bit of that, you don't really know what drives them."*

*"It's a male bonding thing where businesses are advanced...but personally I don't connect with them..."*

*"The Presidents of companies get together and share business views with each other and their experiences within their own companies."*

*"Shriner's, Mason's, all those little community clubs are similar. Usually male, the same kind of people who would be on the local chamber of commerce."*

*"Power. They have a whole lot of power they can wield. They get a lot done. My pastor is a member."*

When asked about their perception of Rotary, the following words were used to characterize Rotary and Rotarians:

- business men
- elite
- secretive
- older
- wealthy

- largely based on former rules
- not 'sexy'
- not 'trendy'
- inflexible
- not sure that women are allowed into local clubs
- associated with Free Masons

Overall, there is a significant lack of knowledge of what Rotary actually does, what Rotary accomplishes within the community or internationally, or how one would become involved in or engaged with Rotary's efforts. As Rotary has found in previous focus group efforts, there continues to be a connection with the Free Masons.

**It cannot be emphasized strongly enough that the one significant point to be addressed is there continues to be a strong perception in all regions that women are not allowed or welcome into Rotary.**

It should be noted that a number in each group in the US - even in the smaller markets - still had no image of Rotary at all ("I've heard the name but don't know what they do")... or had an image that was consistent with imagery in larger cities (old white men, exclusive, closed/uninviting, didn't think they needed volunteers...) And, direct experience with Rotary or a Rotarian in the smaller cities did not seem to enhance Rotary's image, and in some cases, actually reinforced outdated imagery (rich old white men, elite, uninviting). Some who personally knew a Rotarian still had a feeling that Rotary was somewhat of a secret society; their fathers, brothers, or in-laws, pastor, or vet never talked about it or communicated what they did.

People have a difficult time securing information about Rotary or a local Rotary club. In several instances, individuals mentioned they were interested in the organization and had attempted to contact a club but there was no follow-up on the club's behalf, the club informed them that their classification was filled, or they had attempted to locate a website but could not find one.

*"When I contacted Rotary here in Johannesburg because I would like to be involved they said they were fine, they've got lawyers and accountants and this, this, this. So I said 'okay', I guess they don't need my help. So I moved to Rosettenville and I'm with....ministries."*

Specific to South Africa there was an association of Rotary International and gambling due to a recent gambling scheme within the country.

The perception of elitist and wealthy is considered somewhat differently by region. Though this perception may have a positive impact in certain regions of the world, this has a negative impact in other regions of the world. This issue needs to be carefully considered and addressed at a regional level.

Results from these focus groups have supported information received through an RI Presidential initiative from several years ago, approaching the Chief Executive Officers of the top two hundred (200) companies within North America. Though historically there may have been a time when the leaders of the major corporations were involved in their local Rotary club, this is no longer the case in many regions of the Rotary world. The work lives of these organizational leaders have changed considerably within the last twenty (20) years. These institutions have become much more global in nature and with this evolution these individuals, as well as executive and senior management staff, are highly mobile. In addition to a high level of travel, transferring from one part of the world to another is standard practice. It should also be noted that the majority of large corporations or organizations support a variety of humanitarian efforts, as well as possibly supporting their own foundations.

## **Civic Organizations**

Civic organizations tend to be how local Rotary clubs are categorized or identified. This was quite evident in the United States, particularly in the smaller cities. Rotary clubs seemed to have more spontaneous mentions, suggesting perhaps more top-of-mind awareness, visibility, and/or breakthrough of Rotary in smaller US cities.

### **Primary civic organization mentioned in the US**

Rotary Clubs  
Jaycees  
Chamber of Commerce  
Shriner's  
Churches  
Lion's Clubs

## **RI Statements**

Also tested within these groups were RI's presentation of its Mission Statement, an explanation of its Membership Requirements, and Benefits of Membership. The following feedback was received.

### **Mission of Rotary International**

*The mission of Rotary International, a worldwide association of Rotary clubs, is to provide service to others, to promote high ethical standards, and to advance world understanding, goodwill, and peace through its fellowship of business, professional, and community leaders, known as Rotarians.*

Though the mission statement was perceived to be noble and honorable, it was also perceived to be somewhat generic, non-descriptive and lofty. There were concerns expressed around the terms 'community leader', 'ethical', and 'service to others'. The statement, '*business, professional and community leaders*', was interpreted as exclusionary and implying positions that are beyond the average business manager or professional – assuming more of an elitist position. In Argentina, particularly among women, there was an appreciation for and an acknowledgement that professionals are those who can accomplish and get things done. There was a mixed reaction to and hesitancy with the term 'ethical.'

General comments included:

- Sounds Christian-based
- Too vague
- They need a new mission statement
- It sounds elitist
- Does not sound like it is for charitable purposes
- Reflects more of a business profile than a volunteer-based profile

It raised the question for many participants around what is meant by service to others, high ethical standards, understanding of what, goodwill to whom and peace for whom?

While the promotion of high ethical standards sounded positive it initiated the question of whose ethics are being promoted?

*“Just because you’ve got money it doesn’t make you ethical.”*

*“It bothers me when they talk about ethics, because ethics is personal.”*

*“What are the ethical standards?”*

*“There is no one set of ethics, if there were, it would be an imposition.”*

*“If I were a CEO reading this, it would sound nice. Being a regular person though, this doesn’t make me feel good, it makes me feel like I do not belong.”*

Though concerns were expressed with the statement *‘business, professional and community leaders’*, once again, there was an understanding and an appreciation for targeting professionals as people who have the ability, knowledge and skills to get projects organized, accomplished and expedited.

It should be noted that many of Rotary’s messages are targeted to and for Rotarians. However, these messages must also be relevant and ‘speak to’ the non-Rotarian, prospective member sector. This is a primary means of communicating what Rotary International ‘stands for’ and what it hopes to accomplish through its local Rotary clubs. And, as noted within these participant discussions, an organization’s mission statement is something that is often times looked at and considered when a person is making a decision to further explore or get involved in an organization.

In the smaller US markets (especially females and parents) participants voiced concern about the numerous examples of poor ethics in the public arena and were supportive of an organization that wanted to provide better role models for children (on an individual and corporate basis).

With the compilation of this final report, at its November 2009 meeting, the RI Board of Directors had adopted a revised RI Mission Statement to confront some of these concerns.

### **Benefits of Membership**

*The benefits of being a Rotarian include serving the community, networking and friendship, international involvement, and promoting ethics and leadership skills.*

The benefit statement was also interpreted as being somewhat generic with the following questions and concerns being expressed.

How do Rotarians serve the community?

Networking and friendship is something that can be achieved easily outside of a Rotary Club, so it is unclear how this is a benefit of being a Rotarian.

How are ethics and leadership skills promoted, and what ethics and leadership skills are being promoted?

The benefits do not outweigh the perception of an elitist group. Benefits are neither attractive nor inviting.

*“You don’t need to join Rotary to help your community.”*

## Membership Requirements

*Rotary clubs meet weekly and members of local Rotary clubs are expected to attend at least 50% of the meetings. If a member is traveling to another part of the world they are allowed to attend the meetings of other clubs to make up for their absence. Also, club members are expected to participate in either local, and if interested, international volunteer projects.*

Without exception the time requirement was considered to be the most critical. Whereas the perception of Rotary continues to face a significant challenge with respect to women being allowed to join clubs, time was a significant hurdle around requirements, with attendance expectations being considered too rigid and demanding. Most respondents believed that their time was stretched beyond acceptable levels already. After some discussion there was a basic understanding that the time requirement ensured and encouraged dedication and commitment, and was needed to get projects organized and accomplished. However, the majority of respondents were suspicious and hesitant they could make this type of commitment. There was also a perception that meeting requirements removed the feeling of volunteerism and reinforced the concept of a religion, specifically in Japan. There was also a perception that the meetings were too intense and focused, volunteering should be a fun and lighthearted activity.

*“No that scares me off, that’s like a second job.”*

*“Too structured for me; I don’t want the commitment that I have to attend fifty percent of meetings. That would stop me.”*

*“It’s a big commitment, I shy away when I hear those words.”*

*“I couldn’t keep up. I don’t have that much time.”*

*“I’ll be forced to participate- it doesn’t seem like volunteer work. Volunteer work should start from the mind and heart. It seems more like a religion- pay dues and that type of thing. It is often the case with religious cults.”*

Most participants did not feel they could meet this requirement or that it was a reasonable expectation in a contemporary world. That is, why members would be required to meet face-to-face weekly in a world of conference calls and internet-based meeting technology.

*“Rotary needs to move into the twentieth century a bit and accept that when you recruit volunteers you ask them to commit but you can’t lock people in.”*

There was also a belief that paying dues and expecting donations was beyond volunteering though some recognized the need for donations to successfully accomplish projects.

Though testing the presentation and perception of RI’s mission statement, membership requirements and membership benefits was not the intent with this research project, several interesting questions or concerns surfaced and were unveiled with this process. There was a consistent concern that the copy in these communication pieces used language that was somewhat elitist, exclusive, cult-like, and/or self-important, with communications being received negatively, in large part, due to phrasing.

These observations provide some useful feedback and information for RI to continue to explore. Are RI’s messages or explanations too lengthy, too wordy, too cumbersome, too lofty and too generic? Are RI’s messages outdated? Should RI consider revising and updating such statements so that they are better targeted and more easily understood by the general, non-Rotarian public? Messages and

communications for the general public need to be concise, direct and specific. Lengthy, cumbersome messages are confusing and they may have a tendency to reinforce an image of secretive, elitist and mysterious.

Statements must be relevant, clear and purposeful to the reader.

### **RI Communication Resources**

Several commonly used RI communication resources were also tested.

**'What is Rotary'** blue wallet card. Participants noted that this piece provided more identification with a local Rotary club along with concrete examples of what Rotary was doing.

*"This is actually a volunteer organization, this makes it clear, I wasn't sure from the mission statement but now I am interested."*

*"Surprisingly, they are doing many good things for people!"*

However, there continued to be concern that the organization was relevant to wealthy, upper class individuals; was still too separated from their current life to participate; and the focus was primarily international. And, there was a perception that RI was similar to a religious organization soliciting money from members and preaching their own beliefs. This was particularly the case in Japan.

*"It's not for me, this is for upper-class, high-level people."*

**Key Messages of Rotary International.** Respondents stated that the key messages provided more information about RI; a closer look at the RI organization; and felt that they hit closer to the heart. However, there was still uncertainty that they could be a valuable part of the organization.

*"What I read here is really good – it is telling the facts about what they have actually achieved. It should be appreciated."*

However, many felt there was still too much focus on polio and international issues to be personally relevant and inspiring, and they preferred to hear and learn about local projects and accomplishments to be motivated to get connected or get involved. This finding was consistent in all markets.

**Public Service Announcements (PSAs).** Several of the PSAs that have been created over the last several years were tested. The tag line "Humanity In Motion" was well received and accepted. However, there wasn't a strong consensus for one specific design, there was variation by region.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, the RI club structure and model continues to be a viable opportunity for involvement. However, there are some challenges the organization needs to address to remain relevant in light of current professional and personal responsibilities and expectations.

Overall findings present challenges to RI in the following categories:

- Public Awareness
- Public Image
- Volunteering & Networking

- Time Commitment
- RI Messages

### **Public Awareness & Public Image**

There is an incredible lack of information as to who Rotary is, what Rotary gets involved with, and what Rotary accomplishes – at both the community and international levels. Initially people are much more interested in what can be accomplished within their community. This fact has been supported by internal RI surveys that have been conducted of tenured as well as terminated members – people tend to join for what can be accomplished within their local communities. Interest in international involvement becomes important several years after initial membership.

The perception of Rotary by these two groups was somewhat outdated, focused on businessmen, secretive, elusive, wealthy, elitist, etc. These findings have not changed from focus groups conducted in previous years. This perception tends to be supported and sustained by the fact that people do not know what Rotary does or what Rotary has accomplished. The view that this is primarily a men's organization, with women not being involved or allowed to participate, is still strongly pervasive.

As much as the organization has been stressing to clubs and individual Rotarians the importance of recruitment - asking qualified prospective members to join – the fact that people are not aware of Rotary's many successes and accomplishments either at the community or international levels, as well as having a somewhat negative perception of Rotary, impacts a club's ability to recruit new members.

Aside from the perception of RI and having nothing to do with RI's actions, larger non-profit, volunteer-based organizations have mishandled funds and projects in some regions. Thus, larger organizations are viewed with skepticism and mistrust. Respondents indicated that financial transparency, in addition to a clear understanding of the organization's mission, structure and accomplishments, are paramount to their future interest and involvement.

### **Volunteering & Networking**

Overall individuals are inclined to volunteer, but there is significant competition and numerous options to which people can get connected and involved. Either through personal associations, local concerns or larger organizations such as Rotary International – in most regions, individuals believe in and support the act of volunteering. However, individuals want a very clear understanding about the organization's (or club's) mission (what they stand for), their projects and accomplishments (what they do), the commitment they are seeking from volunteers, and flexibility. There were differences among the regions tested surrounding networking – some viewed it as a professional function within the work environment or profession, some viewed it as a function that occurs in everyday activities, some viewed it as essential to continued professional success. This research does not indicate that networking is a primary impetus or need for belonging to an organization. However, providing an opportunity for friendship, and becoming involved with other professionals within one's community, does have a positive connotation.

### **Time Commitment**

Time pressures and commitments are critical to all of these groups. It cannot be stressed enough that as soon as individuals heard there was a mandatory time commitment of *once a week, or even twice a month* – the automatic response was they could not fit such a commitment into their lives. Comments indicated that people are more inclined to seek a balanced life with respect to professional responsibilities, family responsibilities, and adequate time for friends and personal enjoyment. They are not inclined to forgo personal time for volunteer activities. They are looking for options and flexibility as to how a volunteer opportunity would best fit into their personal lives.

### **RI Messages**

RI's overall messages were perceived to be somewhat outdated, lengthy, generic, and lofty. They were not readily viewed by respondents as inclusive, and did not necessarily encourage an individual to seek

more information and pursue involvement. Messages need to be clear, concise, and provide specific details.

Statements claiming the organization promotes ethical behavior was viewed somewhat skeptically in most regions;

*“While the promotion of high ethical standards sounds good it does beg the question of whose ethics are being promoted?”*

The use of the word ‘leader’ promoted some strong discussion. It appeared there was uncertainty and hesitation as to the definition of the word ‘leader’ (mayor of a town, head of a legislative body, lead counsel, etc.). Though working in professional and executive capacities, when individuals heard the word ‘leader’ it was at times perceived as somewhat exclusionary and elitist.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are offered in response to challenges identified in these focus group findings.

- **Club PR.** Club placement of advertising, public service announcements and action oriented project articles at the local community level. Local clubs must be encouraged to place public service announcements, and well constructed articles identifying specific projects and notices in their local mediums. Clubs need to be encouraged to maintain current and relevant websites. Clubs are the primary link in getting their existence and message out to the community public.
- **Action & Accomplishments.** Announcements and advertising must demonstrate project actions and accomplishment as people are interested in how they can become actively involved in improving their community.
- **PR Tools.** Rotary to develop and provide ‘how to’, ‘tip sheets’, ‘templates’ and instructional tools for clubs and districts to use. These need to be readily communicated, accessed and made available for clubs and districts.
- **RI Messages.** Create messages that are concise, clear and specific as to Rotary’s mission, what Rotary and local Rotary clubs accomplish at the community level. As messages are often targeted to Rotarians, these messages must also be relevant and ‘speak to’ the non-Rotarian, prospective member group. Messages must be frequently tested to a variety of non-Rotarian demographic groups to ensure clarity and purpose.
- **Targeted, integrated, public relations and advertising.** Specifically focus advertising and public service announcements (PSAs) on women and younger people, using a variety of mediums. The perception that women are not allowed to join a local Rotary club must be overcome.
- **Pilot program for specific PR or outreach resources and templates.** Test several outreach and communication packages for effectiveness at the club level.
- **Constant communication.** There are a multitude of options for people to get involved with and volunteer their time so Rotary must continuously keep their message and name in front of the general public.
- **Friendship and Family.** Friendship and family should be more readily emphasized as a benefit of getting involved in a local Rotary club.

- Attendance Requirements. Encourage and ensure that club communication to prospective members promotes the 50% attendance policy rather than 100% attendance. Though an admirable accomplishment and achievement in the past, 100% attendance is not possible with current professional and personal commitments and responsibilities. Additionally, 50% attendance is stipulated within the RI Constitutional documents.
- New Mediums. Incorporate new technologies and mediums in delivering and promoting RI's message. Current use of *You Tube, FaceBook, LinkedIn, Orkut, Bebo, Hi5, etc.* needs to be expanded at the regional level. These sites will continue to gain in access and momentum. New technologies should also be employed for training, best practices, information gathering, and communication purposes.
- COL Legislation. Develop and submit legislation to the 2013 COL that could impact challenges expressed above; meeting frequency options, e-clubs, alternate memberships, etc.
- Membership Opportunities. Provide realistic and relevant opportunities for membership for the prospective member target market: younger professionals within the 'X' and 'Y' generations, baby boom generations, women professionals, etc. Specific challenges were noted with respect to time and commitment and these must be considered within the scope of membership.

Once again, the purpose of this project was to identify challenges and obstacles RI has with two demographic groups. As competing interests continue to rise, it is always a useful and beneficial exercise to test how the general public views and perceives an organization. Any harsh or negative observations and comments should be considered an opportunity to improve our communications, messages, techniques, and possibly policy.

Any of the final focus group reports for specific regions can be obtained from the Membership Development Division.

Some additional information that should be considered within the scope of this report's findings includes trends surrounding volunteer opportunities, humanitarian efforts of larger organizations and professional networking.

There are a multitude of options for individuals to get involved in community and international humanitarian service, volunteer efforts or personal and professional networking. In searching volunteer opportunities within the United States on the internet under '*Volunteer Match*', for Chicago, IL seven hundred eighty nine (789) options were generated, St. Louis, MO generated three hundred seventy four (374) options, San Diego, CA generated four hundred eighty eight (488) options, and Boston, MA generated nine hundred thirty three (933) options. Recent catastrophes in the world community illustrate the number of international options with which people can get involved.

Humanitarian service or philanthropy has become the norm, rather than the exception, for most multi-national, large corporations. Volunteering, support, and assistance are well accepted and expected from these organizations.

Most professions have several viable associations that offer continuing education and networking benefits. In addition, on-line social networking sites such as LinkedIn are becoming more popular as a means of keeping in touch with current and former professional colleagues.

In summary, more and more opportunities are becoming available for people to contribute time and money to their specific causes, and for people to get connected to individuals with similar professional and personal interests. Rotary International and the local Rotary clubs must keep in the forefront and note itself as a viable option for involvement and commitment.