

Questions and Written Answers

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- Our world continues to face incredible challenges, including, but not limited to, the COVID pandemic, climate-driven disasters, and war and conflict in many regions and countries. Why is it important for Rotary to play a leadership role in engaging our “People of Action” during these unprecedented times?

Turbulent times can reorder society in dramatic ways. It is easy for individuals, including Rotarians, to feel despair. As Rotary leaders, we can turn these threats into opportunities and ease the despair by stepping forward to offer a vision, narrative, and plan for overcoming these challenges. Measures taken by Rotary leadership to survive and end critical challenges often make our organization stronger and more resilient for future events. This kind of essential leadership also creates new levels of cooperation, even among rivals, when Rotarians pull together as “People of Action” to serve and solve a crisis. And finally, any global challenges that crush existing orders and long-held norms, pave the way for new systems and structures to emerge. Ultimately, strong Rotary leadership during times of crises to mobilize and motivate our Rotary members moves our organization forward in the four priorities of our action plan.

- What does regionalization mean to you in the context of Rotary International’s goals and objectives?

Rotary achieves its goals by utilizing a network of business, professional and community leaders. But because Rotary operates in more than 200 countries and regions, it is vital to recognize that the organization has the potential to become more efficient and effective by understanding and reacting to how regional differences affect the way Rotarians work together to address: providing service, promoting integrity, and advancing world understanding, goodwill, and peace. Regionalization is not a simple, single phenomenon. It can involve ethnic cultures, religions, geography, languages, trade, emigration, and so much more. RI’s current model of paired zones and structures have shown that in some cases, there could be more demonstrated cooperation and more operational effectiveness IF regionalization were implemented. As is the case with most impactful change, the implementation of a comprehensive Rotary regionalization strategy will partially rely on the continuity and strong collaboration of the Presidents-line.

- How can we expand our reach and increase participant engagement across the family of Rotary by cultivating members of diverse populations?

Perspective is the way individuals see the world and comes from a personal point of view shaped by life experiences, values, assumptions, and many other things. When people with different perspectives become part of the magic of Rotary, either as members or as other kinds of participants, we improve the Rotary club experience for existing members and also improve our attraction to non-members. Perspective is like a beach ball—every strip is a different perspective, but only when all the strips are combined can you enjoy the beach ball in its intended state. Encouraging diversity of perspective is a key leadership skill for Rotary at all levels, and sharing Rotary’s power makes our family of Rotary grow by reaching out in new ways and enhancing engagement with Rotary experiences. At a time when the world is craving connection, Rotary can be the place where diverse people connect to serve.

- What steps can Rotary take to elevate our global profile, enhance our public image, and in turn increase and measure our impact?

Measuring and increasing Rotary’s impact means identifying what success looks like, developing a plan to get there, collecting data to note outcomes, and communicating those findings. In addition to strategies already in play, Rotary should use wider communication to elevate its profile and enhance its image. Sharing discoveries and marketing impact to the world, not only to members and donors, showcases good work being done. Qualitative and quantitative results help Rotary prove its relevance. Rotary becomes an authority figure in those areas and allows all people, not just Rotary’s family, to become aware of this knowledge. Of course, Rotary uses its own channels, but using blogs, media sites, magazines and other sources OUTSIDE of Rotary also helps expand our reach. Great public image doesn’t build itself. Rotary must “network” with the world through “public-facing” live events, as well as webinars, online forums, and virtual conferences.

- Rotary’s reach and impact is enhanced by our increasing development of partnerships. Why is this important to our future?

Well-aligned partnerships increase an organization’s knowledge level, expertise, and resources to reach a greater audience. Rotary’s reach and impact grew as a result of partnering with organizations for our Polio Eradication program, and others such as Toastmasters International, ShelterBox, Habitat for Humanity, Ashoka, and US AID. Our brand is stronger, our credibility and image are enhanced; our membership base has increased; and we have a long-term stability with access to more innovation and funds as a result of these great partnerships. As we look to a thriving future, strong partnerships will help us remain relevant and achieve our objectives. Helen Keller said, “Alone we can do so little; Together, we can do so much.” Great things are seldom done by one individual. It usually takes a “partner” or a “team.” Continuing to develop strong partnerships will make Rotary better and enhance our organization’s strength and impact.