

What will Rotary look like 10 years from now?

By Arnold R. Grahl

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Incoming district governors would like to see club membership grow significantly in the next 10 years, perhaps to two million, and have that membership be younger and more diverse.

The more than 530 district governors-elect are also unanimous in their hope that Rotary will help eradicate polio by 2019.

Those were just a few of the ideas that surfaced during a training exercise held during the 2009 [International Assembly](#) in San Diego, California, USA, in January.

The incoming district governors were given the opportunity to write down what they thought Rotary would look like 10 years from now.

The group discussion was one of several exercises that were based on the [RI Strategic Plan 2007-10](#) and designed to help the future leaders identify the causes of conflict and the benefits of building consensus.

In each of the 28 discussion rooms, participants were divided into groups of four district governors-elect, who listed their ideas on easel pads.

Some ideas topped each group's list. For instance, virtually everyone included having Rotary help end polio by 2019. Some of the participants suggested that Rotarians will be celebrating the fifth anniversary of polio eradication by then.



Incoming Governor Barry Kalar of District 5180 (California, USA) makes a point during a discussion group at the 2009 International Assembly. *Rotary Images/Monika Lozinska-Lee*

Increasing membership also made it to the top of almost every list. Some wanted to see 1.5 million club members 10 years from now, while others projected an increase to 2 million. Currently, there are approximately 1.2 million Rotarians worldwide.

About six groups wanted to see women make up half the membership in the future, and a few others said women should account for 30 percent. Several groups wrote that they hoped to see the first woman serve as RI president by 2019; more than one wanted a second female president by then.

The incoming district governors also thought Rotary needed to attract younger members. Ideas for doing so included increasing flexibility in club or meeting structure, scheduling meetings apart from meals, and making membership more affordable.

The governors-elect remained firmly committed to the [mission of Rotary International](#). Many wanted a continued focus on the emphases of water, health and hunger, and literacy. One group suggested that "the high ethical standards of Rotary should permeate all aspects of society."

Participants also wanted to see the organization get more involved in world peace. At least a dozen groups wanted to see Rotary become better known for its work to improve the environment.

Other ideas from the discussion session included:

- Enhancing Rotary's global public image
- Having Rotary be known as the choice for business networking
- Embracing more New Generations clubs
- Allowing for family memberships
- Increasing collaboration with world governments on humanitarian goals
- Seeing Rotary win a Nobel Peace Prize