

# Planning for the Future

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The 2010-11 governors come to this International Assembly to celebrate the achievements of Rotary's brilliant history, which is the foundation upon which you will build your own leadership, enabling Rotary to continue as an extraordinary service organization.

Each of you represents, at the same time, the reality of the present and the hope of the future.

During your year as governors, you will wear your burgundy blazers everywhere you go throughout your districts. When this short year is over, you will have done your best. That will be the most empowering moment of your year, the moment when you say, "I did everything in my power to strengthen the clubs in my district. This is my Rotary legacy."

Countless challenges and tasks await you. President Ray explained them in his opening address as he mentioned many steps that need to be taken, stressing that what he desires most from clubs and districts are order and work and that he expects visionary leadership from his governors.

Considering order and work in the context of visionary leadership, I would like to pose a few questions: What will be the legacy of the clubs you serve? As district governors, what do you hope the clubs are remembered as having accomplished? Given this great opportunity, what will be your commitment to those Rotary clubs and Rotary?

I'm sure all of you have dreams and many well-laid plans, the result of long hours of research, analysis, and preparation, coupled with a burning desire to serve Rotary. In this regard, I would like to share some thoughts with you. What is Rotary's best, most positive feature at this time? What does Rotary need most?

What we need most is more forward-thinking, strategic direction for the future of our clubs and districts, a strategy that is well thought out, communicated, and implemented. It must be consistent and comprehensive and executed with intelligence and foresight. It must be organized, precise, and clear, and, most important, must focus on the clubs as the most critical part of the process. That is what Rotary needs. This great visionary step that you take during your terms will be your lasting personal contribution to fulfilling a critically important need in our organization. You can make a significant contribution in the short term that has long-term implications.

What does planning for the future mean? It means getting organized and having a road map, a blueprint, a flight plan, a preferred path leading to a desired destination. When you know which path to take, you always arrive more easily. The same thing applies to Rotary.

Both Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation have made tremendous strides in the development of two strategic plans that are different yet similar in their objectives. Each has clearly defined visions and missions, and they are operating successfully. Their goals are similar but not the same.

Your Rotary senior leaders have endorsed the importance of planning for the future. The RI Board of Directors continually evaluates Rotary's position in the market, the perception of Rotary around the world, and the thoughts and ideas of its members at all levels of the organization. In the past 12 months, RI surveyed more than 14,000 Rotarians worldwide, conducted focus groups in many areas of the world, and collected feedback from other Rotary leaders and Rotarians. The Board met in November to consider this feedback and has updated the RI Strategic Plan based on this research.

The result — an updated strategic plan for Rotary International — is the overarching plan and envisions Rotary as the service organization of choice by the general public, prospective members, potential partners, and many others. The Board endorsed three priorities and agreed that Rotary's future relies on

- Supporting and strengthening clubs
- Focusing and increasing humanitarian service
- Enhancing public image and awareness

While the Board has endorsed the updated plan, it still has to map out the details for implementation in 2010. You can learn more about the revised plan in a short pamphlet that will be available after this session at the Membership Services booth outside the plenary hall. You can expect to hear more details in the months to come.

The Future Vision Plan of The Rotary Foundation is currently being implemented. It is a model of programmatic, operational, and administrative strategies intended to improve our Foundation's performance and prepare it for future challenges.

Both plans are valuable resources and tools that enable club and district leaders to understand Rotary's global mission, vision, priorities, and goals while helping clubs and districts build their own plans for a future with action and vision.

The District Leadership Plan and the Club Leadership Plan were created to support annual and long-range planning. Both are useful tools for building solid foundations at the district and club levels. I urge you to promote them.

I assume that you are probably wondering why our districts and clubs need a strategic plan, especially one that takes into consideration the global strategic plans of RI and The Rotary Foundation. Rotary is an organization with annual changes in leadership that result in "a tremendous rotation and renewal." Even though this change is healthy, it also creates a lack of continuity in thoughts and actions. Short leadership cycles present us with challenges of achieving continuity and permanence.

Medium- and long-term planning will help our clubs and districts to stop viewing their activities as weekly, monthly, and yearly events and to develop goals that extend over three to five years to transform their efforts. Today, more than ever, organizations depend on flexible, well-structured plans with clear objectives to help them face current problems and involve current and future generations of leaders in finding solutions. That is what Rotary needs!

And what is the purpose of this planning at the district and club levels? To create goals that include continuity in leadership and consistency in activities and programs.

In the districts, for example, you can set goals to increase membership, develop programs, work with Rotary's youth clubs, support and participate in The Rotary Foundation, train new leaders, and improve public relations. The District Leadership Plan is the best tool available for putting these goals in motion, but it is imperative that current and incoming governors and nominees help to create and carry out the plan. Once again, visionary leaders are needed to achieve continuity in our work.

In the clubs, on the other hand, a greater sense of belonging can be achieved among the members if they participate in interesting activities that are planned and promoted in their own communities. Rotary clubs are transformed when they become sure of their direction and clearly define their goals.

Many clubs and districts that have made great strides in planning for the future have achieved a "different dimension," but we still need to advance more quickly. When we have more clubs and districts with well-structured plans, Rotary will become more accomplished and unified as an organization because it will be resting on much firmer ground.

Who is responsible for carrying out strategic planning in the districts and clubs? Each of you as district governors can become an "agent of change" by helping your districts in creating a successful plan. You are the visionary leaders that Rotary needs. Remember that great changes are made by those individuals or groups who are most adaptable and willing to take risks.

This is an exciting time, my friends. You can go down in history for being the visionary leaders who, looking to the future and with the support of over 100 years of history, created a long-term vision with functional strategic plans. You can and must improve on what already exists or create what is lacking.

In 1961, President John Kennedy announced his vision of traveling to the Moon and pledged to do so within 10 years. On 20 July 1969, the *Apollo 11* lunar landing was televised, which made his vision a reality. It demanded resources, planning, strategies, hard work, and determination.

President Ray is not asking you for the moon. But to achieve Rotary's vision of having bigger, better, and bolder Rotary clubs, he is asking you to use the same tools: resources, work, intelligence, strategies, and determination to organize your district's clubs and to exercise visionary leadership. He is asking you to think big and take some risks, because if we don't, our clubs may not reach their potential.

Think big, my dear governors-elect, because the world needs Rotary, and Rotary needs great clubs with great visions, great achievements, and great Rotarians, like each of you, to work each day to build a memorable legacy for Rotary and all humanity.

Good luck and Godspeed.