

7 features of a highly effective service project

Posted on [October 5, 2016](#)



Rotary members in Virginia, USA, deliver mobility equipment for a local hospital.

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We cannot expect to grow membership without engaging our members in service. RI President John Germ has stated this unequivocally and our club is taking that to heart.

Selecting the right project, therefore, is critical to the health of your club. Here's a few basic principles we've found to be true about service projects:

- Sweat equity is the single most vital aspect of our mission and one of our greatest strengths.
- Club leaders are responsible for both success and failure.
- Engaged Rotarians take responsibility for their own learning.
- Technology is important.
- Members should expect to serve.
- We need to recognize the volunteer resource represented by retirees, the self-employed, and non-working parents with time to spare.
- One-off walk-away projects do little to cultivate longer term engagement with Rotary.
- Hands-on projects provide opportunities for members to develop their leadership skills.
- Fund raisers are an important part of what we do, but there is much more to being engaged in Rotary.
- Rotary is more than being a member of a single club.
- Our [Rotary Foundation](#) is one of the finest vehicles for giving in the world.
- Club 501(C)(3)s are important to capture individual tax free donations in the USA. Setting one up is not expensive, and within the ability of club leaders.
- Rotaract, Interact, RYLA, and Rotary Leadership Institutes are important to our

present and future.

- Most of us learn by doing.
- We need to watch out for the threat of status quo and board inertia.
- We need to say “yes” to good projects promoted by one or more of our members.
- Our ability to serve is proportional to the number of available volunteer hours.

With this in mind, we suggest any great project should have these seven attributes:

1. Involve several of the six [Areas of Focus](#). Our most recent project dealing with eye care for underprivileged children relates to basic education and literacy; maternal and child health, and disease prevention.
2. Be interesting to as many professions as possible. For example, our latest project is of particular interest to medical professionals, educators, and community and political leaders
3. Benefit as many people in the community as possible. The bigger the better, as larger efforts will attract more media interest. By collaborating, you can engage small clubs in bigger issues.
4. Be affordable and grant eligible and pursue international partners. Collaborating with other clubs on [district](#) or [global](#) grants opens up opportunities for members to step into leadership roles and experience Rotary on an international scale.
5. Involve multiple age groups, including [Interact](#), [Rotaract](#), [RYLA](#) participants, and all generations from Baby Boomers on.
6. Address a major community issue and include a public image component that will stimulate local media interest and build relationships with media outlets.
7. Involve a long range vision for sustainability and focus on long-term relationships. A series of related projects is a great way to develop ongoing relationships and retain membership interest. Small projects grow into larger efforts this way

We believe doing all these things develops a “Service Centered Leadership” culture which results in a sustained and sustainable membership growth environment.