

# Doing good is good business



A man in a dark suit and white shirt is walking in profile from left to right. The background is a blurred, motion-streaked scene of other people walking, suggesting a busy office or public space. The lighting is somewhat dim, with a soft glow around the man.

Unlike conventional corporate models, where business and moral decision making can be clearly differentiated, in the case of Rotary, *Doing Good* is our business – the two are intrinsically linked, not separate entities. With Corporate Social Responsibility moving from the realm of voluntary self-regulation at the level of individual organisations, to mandatory schemes at regional, national and even transnational levels, Rotary could not be better placed to lead the CSR charge through both example and collaboration.

### **What is Corporate Social Responsibility?**

The term corporate social responsibility (CSR) encompasses the idea that businesses have a responsibility to behave ethically, especially in the areas their businesses affect. This means not only regarding economic consequences, but also social and environmental implications.

Due to the dramatic increase of corporate economic might and political influence in recent decades, there is growing acceptance that businesses have a major part to play alongside governments and other groups in ensuring human rights and other moral standards.

Being a good corporate citizen includes behaving in an ethical manner towards those who come into direct contact with a business, such as employees and customers. It also extends to those with whom a business is in indirect contact, for example those working for overseas suppliers, and involves giving back to the community through providing funding or participating in charitable works.

Examples of corporate responsibility include:

- Responsible sourcing, such as using only fair-trade ingredients;
- Ensuring ethical working standards;
- Contributing to community projects;
- Employee volunteer programs;
- Environmental management, including waste reduction and sustainability practices.

Undertaking corporate responsibility initiatives benefits not only society, but also businesses themselves. Today, increasing numbers of consumers and investors don't just prefer, but expect responsible business practice. Companies that operate fairly within the community reap the rewards – those caught behaving badly face backlash, with customers choosing to shop elsewhere en masse.

Benefits of corporate responsibility for businesses include:

- Competitive advantage over other industry players;
- Building of a strong, positive brand;
- Increased sales and customer loyalty;
- Potential positive media attention
- Greater ability to attract quality staff;
- Better financial performance and organisational growth.

## The Business of Rotary

Collaboration – a word we hear a lot these days – was the first word that came to my mind recently while attending the Rotary District 9125 Conference in Nigeria. The conference was very much a business orientated conference; the presentations highlighted the value and importance of working with corporates, governments, the military and local businesses.

I was fortunate to be among these corporate, political and military leaders, all collaborating and working with Rotary to address the needs of the less fortunate people in Nigeria. And, indeed, polio eradication was a high priority.

I was impressed by what I saw, and it made me reflect on what the real business of Rotary is.

Rotary's responsibilities are to humanity, our current membership does not own Rotary, we are caretaking our organisation for the next generation of Rotarians. We must provide for the future, but be prepared for it to overtake us. With the fast and furious changes businesses are having on our world, with corporate responsibilities and governmental legislation constantly evolving, not to

mention the change in attitudes to volunteering, for us to continue to achieve our ideals and provide for the future we really need to consider the real business of Rotary. I believe we must put greater emphasis on collaborating and setting up strategic alliances locally to our clubs. Why? Because that was the origins of Rotary; the principals worked then and they will work now.

We must put our minds to this and set the example for the next generation, as it is not about sitting down and having nice conversations with nice objectives, it is a process that today our traditional structures of communication can't achieve.

A strategic alliance is an arrangement between two organisations that have decided to share resources to undertake a specific, mutually beneficial project. It is less involved and less binding than a partnership, but typically resources are pooled to create effective



value of highly diversified teams working together.

Rotarians have the drive and the passion, we have proved that, but we do not always have the expertise. Polio eradication is surely a great example of this; we are not doing it alone.

The Rotary Club of Abuja Metro, Nigeria, approached its local government and asked, "Where was the need?" The need was an area of approximately 100,000 people, who literally had nothing. The club has provided them a water well, a school and is now completing a hospital, and they are achieving this by collaborating and allying their club with their local government and local corporates. It is a long-term goal, annually, each incoming president commits to another phase of the project. And the local government is committed to maintaining and managing the projects on completion.

District 9125 increased its membership during 2017-18 by approximately 700 Rotarians, they have above average gender and generation diversity; Rotary in Abuja is an organisation of choice. Surely that is something to consider.

**PDG Keith Roffey**  
**D9675 Council on Legislation**  
**Representative 2017-20**



## Driving the Rotary brand

What is the first thing an immediate past governor has to do in District 9520? Buy a new car!

While this might provoke a wry smile about the personal cost of Rotary, it is a fact of life in a district that spans four states and is an additional personal expense every governor must plan for.

Three clubs are a six-hour drive each and another seven are around five hours away from Adelaide. A governor can expect to do a lot of driving in a year supporting Rotary service through 50 clubs, let alone in the two years leading up to their term. Most do 30,000 to 40,000 kilometres a year.

A white knight has now driven up, with a solution that is providing multiple benefits all round.

Paradise Motors is a Mazda master dealership in Adelaide, with strong links to Rotary through both father and son principals being members of the

Rotary Club of Campbelltown, SA. Jeff Neale, the current managing director, suggested three years ago that he loan a Rotary-branded Mazda BT-50 ute to then district governor Dick Wilson for an End Polio ute fundraising relay that started in Broken Hill, NSW, visited 50 clubs and their communities, and ended in Adelaide, SA. The campaign was so successful that it was arranged for Dick to continue to drive the BT-50 ute for the rest of his year and more.

Last year, district governor Bob Cooper replicated the Polio relay with another dual-branded Mazda BT-50 ute from Paradise Motors Mazda, this time on a formal "dry" lease paid for by the company on the basis that the governor exposed the vehicle as much as possible throughout the district as he made his club visits.

The polio relay itself raised over \$90,000. The ute was even loaned to clubs and other Rotarians for public

image purposes and towed with ease floats in seven community-based Christmas pageants. Again, both the company and Rotary were impressed with the public exposure it was able to present.

"As a member of Rotary, I have had the opportunity to experience and participate in the amazing work Rotary does locally and internationally. We are proud Paradise Motors Mazda's sponsorship is an opportunity to give back and support Rotary's work in the community even further," Jeff said. "It's the sort of partnership many businesses could do using their own internal resources, not only helping Rotary projects, but also their own public image and bottom line."

This year, district governor Kim Harvey has opted for a bit more luxury and will spend her year driving a Paradise Motors Mazda CX5 SUV wagon.



## LeapFrog Learning erasing literacy barriers

Jim Marggraff, of the Rotary Club of Lamorinda Sunrise, US, spoke at the Rotary International Toronto Convention of his corporate responsibility work helping improve literacy skills in Afghanistan.

Jim is the inventor of the LeapFrog LeapPad, a learning tool launched in 1999. It read aloud words and made other sound effects when a LeapPad book was placed on a specially designed pad. It became one of the bestselling children's items, helping to develop the literacy skills of over 100 million children worldwide within five years of launch.

In 2004, Jim and his team were contacted by the United States Department of Health and Human



Services to develop a custom LeapPad as a low-cost platform to help non-literate women in Afghanistan. At the time, 80 per cent of women were unable to read due to restrictions by the Taliban and faced violence if they sought to educate themselves.

Jim began a journey of researching oral cultures. It was necessary to create a new model for non-literate people to literate children.

"We began by researching oral and literate cultures, beginning with the findings of Dr Walter Ong in his book *Orality and Literacy*," Jim said. "Ong postulated literacy and writing restructure human consciousness. Learning to read and write fundamentally changes the way we think. I wondered what it would feel like to have never seen writing or text, such as was the case for many Afghan women.

"How could we teach these women with our LeapPad? How would they respond when they touched a pen to a

"For an oral learner, there is nothing like a written word. Spoken words are transient. By the time a word has been spoken, it has already passed out of existence. The idea of looking up the word in a dictionary has no meaning to an oral learner. Further, an oral communicator doesn't think or speak in terms of ideas, concepts and abstractions. Rather, thought is in terms of experiences."



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"This concept itself is difficult for us as literates to understand. Our brains have been rewired with literacy to achieve a higher degree of thought and consciousness. For example, a literate thinker might say, 'Honesty is the best policy'. Both are abstract terms. Where an oral thinker would say, 'The honest man always prospers'. 'Honest man' and 'always prospers' depict concrete situations that can be envisioned by a listener versus the abstract concepts of honesty and prosperity.

To teach Afghan women, the LeapFrog team structured the program as interactive stories, guiding the women to touch a person, then another person, then another. Lessons including teaching mothers to use boiling water to sterilise, to eat carrots to reduce night blindness, and to accept vaccinations.

"We also decided to address the very difficult topic of spacing of pregnancies to improve maternal health and reduce infant mortality. To

do so, we compared spacing childbirths to planting carrots and showed that if you planted carrots too closely together, the children would be weak and small. Instead, spacing the carrots, or separating the pregnancies over time, which the women did understand, would result in healthier and fewer babies."

Ultimately, 20,000 of these Afghan LeapPads were shipped to health clinics in Afghanistan, where women could use them safely without fear of violence.

"Each LeapPad cost a mere \$7.00. That was 14 years ago. Smartphones and tablets didn't even exist then. Nor did virtual reality or

artificial intelligence. When I think of technologies of today and the data we have on literacy and effective teaching, my excitement is... ineffable – that's a word that means 'beyond words'."

Capping Jim's presentation at the convention, he made a call to action, drawing from his success in co-founding/founding six start-ups around three areas, tapping into Rotary members' executive skills to amplify their corporate responsibility activities:

- One – define the right PTS (Problem to Solve) for your projects;
- Two – obtain all accessible data for your problems and projects;
- Three – pre-define success with a description and metrics for your projects and measure your outcomes.

The audience response was extremely positive, with a super energetic standing ovation.



## Rotaract: Goodness never fails

Rotaractors ran an outstanding session on how to link corporate responsibility with Rotary projects in their presentation 'Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) – Create a Link between sponsors and social projects'.

Presenters Matthieu Bondu, of the Rotaract Club Warszawa Sródmiescie and Rotary Club of Warszawa City, Poland, and Justin Hadjilambri, past president of Rotaract Europe, member of the Rotaract Club of Nicosia and Rotary Club of Nicosia, Cyprus, outlined what corporate social responsibility is and how clubs can effectively engage with companies eager to expand into the space.

They illustrated what corporate responsibility projects look like through powerful examples from throughout the world:

- In Colombia, telecom company Tigo Une turned 13,000 cast iron payphones into micro-savings systems for the nation's poorest, who are locked out of the financial services system due to their meagre earnings. Now they can use a public phone to deposit coins into their own micro-savings accounts. Funds can be accessed to pay utility bills, buy public transit tickets and even garner microloans to buy necessities like refrigerators.
- AP Property Development worked on the Unusual Football Field campaign, in the heavily populated Bangkok district of Khlong Toei. The agency took empty spaces, no matter what shape or size, and



turned them into soccer fields.

- Access to clean clothes is something many of us take for granted, but for thousands of schoolchildren, dirty clothes are a source of shame so powerful it can keep them out of school. Whirlpool worked with Care Counts to provide free washers and dryers in school grounds, with tracking of how this affected attendance rates.

Despite the increasing drive for companies to engage with corporate responsibility activities, many projects are not as impactful as desired, due to lack of non-profit, social project experience or a dedicated CSR team. Rotaractors and Rotarians are perfect to fill this gap, with their background

in the service space. Adding their know-how to corporations' resources is a recipe for success.

Matthieu and Justin kept everyone on their toes by asking the audience to break into groups, each tasked with a specific social problem. They then had to make a list of who may wish to partner in helping solve the problem, and present to the room as if they were pitching to the decision makers of their target businesses.

Justin and Matthieu quoted American philosopher Henry David Thoreau, who perhaps said it best as to why all businesses should think about becoming involved in service projects: "Goodness is the only investment that never fails."



Do you have  
a corporate  
responsibility story you  
would like to share?

Please email to  
[editorial@rotarydownunder.com.au](mailto:editorial@rotarydownunder.com.au)

### Building strong connections

In July, the Rotary Club of Whangarei, NZ, spent an afternoon replacing the railings at the local Bird Recovery Centre. Volunteers at the centre are responsible for rescuing injured birds throughout Northland. The birds are given veterinary treatment where necessary, then kept at the centre until well enough to be released back into the wild. Among the many species treated have been kiwi and albatross. The centre also runs an education service to schools throughout New Zealand.

Northpine Timber was approached for a quote for the cost of timber. With a strong desire to give back to the community, they offered to supply the materials free of charge. Their donation was so generous that Rotary was able to leave extra timber at the Recovery Centre for future repairs.

Thanks to the generosity of Northpine and an afternoon's labour by Rotarians, the exterior of the centre is now safer and more visually appealing.

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