

Rotary International's E-Club Pilot Project & Council of Legislation

In 2001 the Rotary International Council on Legislation adopted resolution 01-226 to provide for cyber clubs. In June 2001, Decision 348, the RI Board agreed to support a pilot project establishing cyber Rotary clubs. The **Key Elements** for this project were: To extend Rotary to business, professional, and community leaders who are unable to meet traditional attendance requirements because of extensive travel, or conflicting occupational demands, or physical immobility, or resident beyond reasonable distance from an existing Rotary club. Web communities in this project would foster friendship and good will among its members and pilot clubs would determine the viability and effectiveness of a cyber Rotary club framework.

The Terms of Participation Agreement included that:

- An e-club has its own e-club constitution and bylaws, which includes the Object of Rotary.
- An e-club must provide an online meeting makeup for Rotarians worldwide.
- An e-club must pay RI dues. We also pay Host D5510 dues (we do not have an e-club district as we are in a pilot project).
- An e-club must maintain a web page.
- An e-club must meet on a regular basis using available electronic communication technology.
- An e-club must share electronic member orientation and training materials with RI.
- An e-club must participate the full time of the Pilot Project.

Among the legislation passed at the 2004 Council on Legislation in June 2004 was item No. 04-18, "to allow attendance credit for a 30-minute interactive club Web site activity."

The E-Club Pilot Project was then closed to any new chartering. Most of the current e-clubs chartered in 2004-2005. Currently, there are 14 e-clubs from the original cyber project and Rotary E-Club of District 5450 (eClubone) from the New Models pilot project making a total of 15 e-clubs in the

Rotary world. Eight e-clubs are conducted in English, one e-club in its primary language and also in English, and 6 e-clubs in their primary language.

Meeting Makeup formats. Meeting makeup programs vary from easy access to a program, to moving through a donation process to get to the program, to viewing links as a program, to those who have an actual meeting online that is also their club bulletin. Some programs are focused on Rotary information and some are varied. All meeting makeups are interactive.

Membership base. One e-club is geographically based, modeled on the Rotary Zone concept focusing on team and club membership. A few have worldwide membership, and some appear to be a regional or district membership base. One e-club requires that a membership application must go through the current DG. Other e-clubs have the application on their web site and their board determines eligibility. One e-club requires personal interviews for new members who are new to Rotary that can be done by another Rotarian from a Terra club. One e-club requires recommendations from the district governor. E-clubs generally have a younger membership base and one has two new members who were in Interact, and Rotoract.

Dues. There is a great variation of the dues structure based on paying club, district, and RI dues. One e-club has solved the dues payment issue by using Pay Pal and working in US dollars. Another e-club, with a worldwide membership, also uses the US dollars base.

Fellowship. A few e-clubs have face-to-face fellowship at a designated time. Some clubs meet geographically in cyber space as well. One e-club is conferencing often and another is working on it. Two clubs that I personally know of are developing geographical participation in virtual and personal fellowship. Most e-clubs have a members Forum for conducting business and for fellowship. There is always personal emailing among members.

Service. An e-club can do service any where in the world. The only restriction is stated in their unique e-club constitution and bylaws. An e-club or member can work with a Terra club, a district, or their own club. As

you well know, some of our members are doing just that. We have one member who has developed a Rotary history web site and provides service in giving us training in each online meeting. One member works with a west coast district in distributing computers and he also develops his own service projects with Rotary sponsorship. E-Clubs do support The Rotary Foundation in financial efforts, in Matching Grants, sponsoring Ambassadorial Scholars, Youth Exchange, RYLA events and their own unique individual and club projects.

What works and what doesn't. There is always web site development issues which depends on the current technology, financial funding to create and maintain it, and members who are comfortable with using the format.

I truly believe in having a worldwide network of e-clubs because of the variance of club goals, cultures and languages. Some Rotarians do business in English regardless of where they geographically reside or what their nation or culture is. The bonding is Rotary and with e-clubs it is the technology that gives us a new platform and venue. Those Rotarians who are comfortable with the technology will probably gravitate toward e-clubs if they cannot find a Terra club that meets their needs.

RI Board: The RI Board of Directors (Board) is reviewing the progress of clubs participating in the pilot project to determine if these pilot clubs are meeting the criteria of an "Effective Rotary Club", as follows:

An effective Rotary club will:

- Sustain and/or grow membership base;
- Implement successful service projects that address the needs of the club's community, as well as communities in other countries;
- Support The Rotary Foundation through program participation and financial support;
- Develop leaders capable of serving beyond the club level.

The Board receives annual reporting about the progress of the participating clubs. At that time they review each club's web site for adherence to established guidelines and general content. They are also interested in how each club allows for visiting Rotarians to make-up on their site.

Council on Legislation: This pilot project will run until June 2010 through action of the Board and the 2004 Council on Legislation (COL). The hope is that by that time, e-clubs will be tested sufficiently and that legislation will be proposed to allow e-clubs to become a permanent part of Rotary International.