




EVENT PLANNING GUIDE



Hosting or participating in an event is a great way to raise the profile of Rotary and your club in your community. Community events offer an opportunity to establish relationships, raise awareness, inspire action, and highlight the progress Rotary has made in your area. It can initiate conversations among local leaders and influencers and inspire them get involved with Rotary.

This guide, which includes ideas to get you started, a planning checklist, and a list of resources, will help you use events effectively.




1

IS HOLDING AN EVENT THE RIGHT STRATEGY?

- + Do you want to raise awareness about Rotary in your community?
- + Does your club need help recruiting new members?
- + Could you use help fundraising?
- + Do you want to position your club members as resources and experts in the community?

If you've answered yes to any of those questions, holding an event is the perfect strategy.



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DETERMINE THE TYPE OF EVENT THAT'S BEST

KEY

-  EASY
-  MEDIUM
-  COMPLEX

IDEAS TO BUILD AWARENESS OF ROTARY



Become an exhibitor at a local event: Reserve space for a booth or table at a farmers' market, block party, convention, etc. Plan to line up several volunteers to staff the booth and hand out materials about Rotary.



Sponsor a major event in town: Perhaps your annual Fourth of July fireworks display can become the Rotary Club of [Your Town] Fireworks. Or create an annual run/walk and make it the Rotary Club of [Your Town] Run/Walk.



Establish a one-day Rotary festival: Feature music and local artists, food from local restaurants, and booths representing local businesses. Give the festival a name — Main Street Rotary Club of [Your Town] Fest, for example — and be sure to have club members on hand throughout the day to chat with attendees about what Rotary does and how your club works in the community. Collect emails and phone numbers of attendees to use for recruitment. If your club can establish the festival as an annual event, it will become a reliable resource for generating interest and new members.



IDEAS TO PROMOTE MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT

Hold a membership day: Have each member invite someone who has shown an interest in Rotary. Make sure your program has both a social and an educational component. For example, schedule a meet-and-greet hour with refreshments and then have a notable speaker discuss a topic of interest to the club or community. Be sure to welcome your guests with an introduction to your club and to several members. Follow up with steps that guests can take to get more involved or to join.



Host a presentation in the community: Attend a meeting or event of another association or organization and give a presentation about Rotary and your club. Be sure to bring brochures and membership and club materials for distributing to attendees. And invite interested community members to your next meeting.



Co-host an event with another organization: Cross-promotion is an effective way to grow membership. Host an event with a like-minded organization that gives members of both an opportunity to network and to learn how they can get involved. As an incentive, offer a reduced first-year membership fee for the partner's members if they join your club.



IDEAS TO PROMOTE FUNDRAISING

Host an artisan market: Invite local artists to come and sell their work, paying a fee for space and granting your club a small percentage of sales. Use your resources and connections to ensure that your event meets a high standard. Invite local chefs, brewery experts, or bartenders to serve small samples of their food and beverages to draw people in.

Hold a thank-a-thon: Gather club members for a session writing thank-you notes to those who have generously donated to your club in the past few years. (Donations should not be limited to funds but can include space, supplies, food, etc.). In addition to expressing your appreciation, the gesture will keep your club top of mind and pave the way for soliciting donations in the future.

Pair a fundraising event with a silent auction: Sell tickets to a full-service event that includes food and beverages, dancing, and a compelling speaker with a connection to Rotary's causes. Proceeds can go to The Rotary Foundation or to a club project. And adding a silent auction will boost your fundraising. Gather items from corporations and community partners, as well as offering professional services from your members.



IDEAS TO PROMOTE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Invite speakers to your club: Host representatives of local companies, professionals, and community activists and leaders. Having them share their knowledge and expertise with your members will raise your club's profile among other community influencers and could lead to significant long-term partnerships. Also, notable speakers could help attract new members.



Plan a project related to one of Rotary's areas of focus: For example, sponsor a food, clothing, or book drive; host a health and wellness fair; or fix up a local community center or park. Service is the core of Rotary, so a service project highlights one of our values and also demonstrates the good work that we do.



Host a panel event: Panel discussions offer an opportunity to showcase Rotary as a thought leader and key influencer. Invite thought leaders to participate in a discussion about locally important issues. Speakers could include representatives from local organizations, academic or professional experts, politicians and civic leaders, and Rotarians. Other tips for success: Be sure to include an interactive segment, and invite exhibitors related to the issue to have a booth or table at your event so that community members have a place to get more information, to network, and to socialize.



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ASSESS YOUR RESOURCES

Once you've chosen the type of event you want to host, begin to assess the resources available to carry it out. You'll need to consider available time, money, materials, and people. Here's an example of a timeline and checklist for planning an event featuring a panel discussion.

TIME FRAME	TASKS
<input data-bbox="165 600 233 667" type="checkbox"/> 24-18 weeks before	<input data-bbox="649 625 669 651" type="checkbox"/> Create event plan (topic, audience, speakers, sponsors, promotional plan, venue) <input data-bbox="649 716 669 741" type="checkbox"/> Book the venue <input data-bbox="649 772 669 798" type="checkbox"/> Build team and assign roles
<input data-bbox="165 821 233 888" type="checkbox"/> 18-12 weeks before	<input data-bbox="649 846 669 871" type="checkbox"/> Speaker outreach <input data-bbox="649 903 669 928" type="checkbox"/> Sponsor outreach <input data-bbox="649 959 669 984" type="checkbox"/> Bid out vendors (graphics, printer, audiovisual, catering, music, photographer, etc.) <input data-bbox="649 1058 669 1083" type="checkbox"/> Create a distribution list for promotional materials <input data-bbox="649 1115 669 1140" type="checkbox"/> Take an inventory of existing marketing materials and determine what new ones need to be created <input data-bbox="649 1213 669 1239" type="checkbox"/> Design promotional items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="706 1264 963 1289">- Event sign-up page <li data-bbox="706 1320 878 1346">- Event poster <li data-bbox="706 1377 776 1402">- Flier <li data-bbox="706 1434 992 1459">- Social media graphics <li data-bbox="706 1491 919 1516">- Email campaign <li data-bbox="706 1547 808 1572">- Videos <li data-bbox="706 1604 1057 1629">- Other advertising materials <li data-bbox="706 1661 1455 1728">- Materials for a Rotary booth at the event (pop-up banners, branded tablecloth, collateral materials) <li data-bbox="706 1759 1419 1827">- Signage for the event space (banners, photos to exhibit, backdrop, etc.)

TIME FRAME	TASKS
<input data-bbox="167 170 233 239" type="checkbox"/> 12-8 weeks before	<input type="checkbox"/> Send out invitations <input type="checkbox"/> Deliver invitations and promotional materials to speakers and partners to distribute to their networks <input type="checkbox"/> Post your event listing on other external sites <input type="checkbox"/> Deliver promotional materials and talking points to other key influencers in your network
<input data-bbox="167 478 233 548" type="checkbox"/> 8-6 weeks before	<input type="checkbox"/> Email reminder <input type="checkbox"/> Start phone campaign to key audience targets <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to distribute promotional materials
<input data-bbox="167 667 233 737" type="checkbox"/> 6-4 weeks before	<input type="checkbox"/> Email reminder <input type="checkbox"/> Work with speakers to get their materials or presentations <input type="checkbox"/> Develop the host organization presentation <input type="checkbox"/> Continue promoting event
<input data-bbox="167 909 233 978" type="checkbox"/> 2 weeks before	<input type="checkbox"/> Email reminder <input type="checkbox"/> Write run-of-show document that lists schedule and assignments <input type="checkbox"/> Develop event-day checklist <input type="checkbox"/> Create shot list for photographer <input type="checkbox"/> Confirm all speakers, vendors, and logistics <input type="checkbox"/> Contact media for event via email
<input data-bbox="167 1276 233 1346" type="checkbox"/> 1 week before	<input type="checkbox"/> Email reminder <input type="checkbox"/> Rehearse program with speakers <input type="checkbox"/> Determine last-minute vendor needs <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare goodie bags, handouts, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Contact media about event over the phone
<input data-bbox="167 1581 233 1650" type="checkbox"/> 2 days before	<input type="checkbox"/> Send final email reminder and continue to pitch media
Event day	<input type="checkbox"/> Set up signage, tables, program materials, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Perform audiovisual checks <input type="checkbox"/> Greet vendors and speakers <input type="checkbox"/> Assign someone to greet media representatives and escort them around to meet key speakers and partners <input type="checkbox"/> Identify key people for photographer <input type="checkbox"/> Collect attendees' contact info for follow-up

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YOU'VE HELD A SUCCESSFUL EVENT!

CONGRATULATIONS!

To maximize your event's long-term impact and to lay the foundation for future successful events:



Send thank-you notes: Be sure to thank attendees, speakers, event partners, and volunteers.



Keep in touch: Ask participants for feedback about the event. And remember to send periodic updates to those who expressed interest in your club, in Rotary, or a project.



Pursue event coverage: Media can't always cover an event, so be sure to send follow-up materials about it. Include prepackaged photos and videos highlighting noteworthy speakers and attendees who are relevant to that media outlet. Don't forget that social media offer an effective way to amplify event coverage, so share a recap of the event itself and of any media coverage it received.



Tell us how it went: Email a recap of your event, along with any photos or videos, to pr@rotary.org, or share images on [#rotarystory](https://twitter.com/rotarystory). We can spread the word about your event and inspire Rotarians in other communities. Together, we can raise the awareness of Rotary.

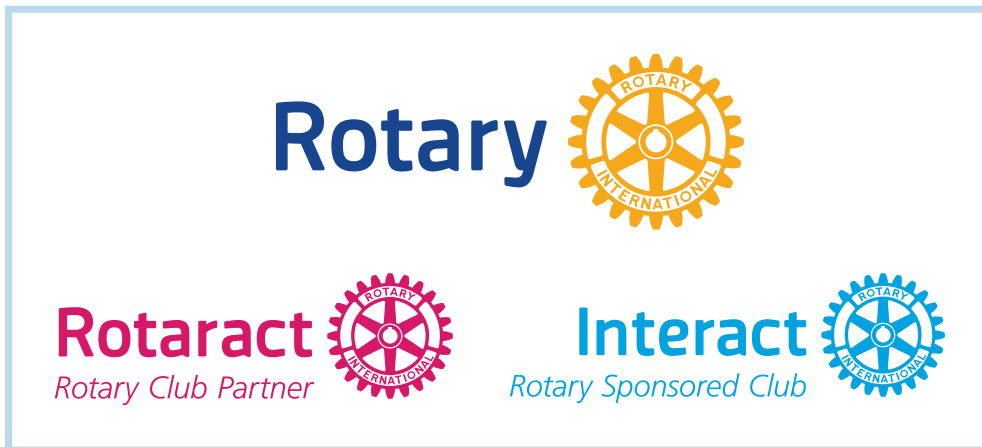


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EVENT RESOURCES ON THE BRAND CENTER

Rotary has a range of handy resources for your events, available on the **Brand Center**.

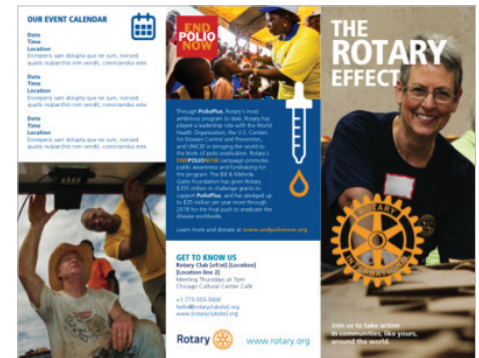
OFFICIAL LOGOS & CUSTOMIZABLE CLUB LOGOS



ROTARY & AREAS OF FOCUS ROLL-UP BANNERS



CLUB BROCHURE TEMPLATE



OTHER RESOURCES

- + Newsletter, presentation, and letterhead templates
- + Thank-you card
- + Event promotion examples listed in the brand guidelines (posters, cards, digital assets)

If you need help getting started, or get stuck planning, we're here to assist. Contact Elizabeth Minelli at elizabeth.minelli@rotary.org or +1-847-866-3237.