

In Focus

Why We Are In Rotary

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Indeed, why are we in Rotary? Yes, why Rotary – when there are so many VWOs around, charitable organisations, and other similar movements? Why choose Rotary?

In the first place, no matter which voluntary organisation you are in, you are there because of an innate desire to be able to help- others, or to give back to society in return for the good life it has helped you to have, and to lend a helping hand to those in need. We are in Rotary for all these reasons too. But – in addition – we are there for other reasons too.

A cardinal reason is our vocation. In anyone’s life, his or her vocation plays a big part. A very big part. How well we do in life often hinges on this aspect of life. Unless, that is, you are born with a silver spoon in your mouth. Well, how many of us are in that fortunate position?

Rotarians, young and old, would all be familiar with our flagship guiding light – “The Object of Rotary”. The four avenues of service enunciated therein have been, and are, instrumental in moulding Rotary into the massive movement that it is today. They have motivated Rotarians to do things for others in a manner that few would imagine possible. This iconic guiding star that has shone brightly all over the world for some 110 years now, is the magnetic force that pulls together so many people from so many walks of life and from such diverse origins, to form a global movement with a membership of over 1,224,260 Rotarians in some 35,185 Rotary clubs. All doing good, selfless, work. All do-gooders.

“The Object” basically sets out the original four avenues of service that Rotary performs – Community, Vocational, International, and Youth. These four avenues encompass and reflect what we do in Rotary comprehensively. It is, however, the Second Avenue of Service that is of particular significance why we are in Rotary. We are in Rotary – invited – largely because of our vocation. True, not the full or only reason. But a good part of it.

Because of the significance of “Vocation” in a Rotarian’s membership, Rotary International has for a long time now specially designated a particular month to be observed as **“Vocational Service Month”**.

“VS Month” used to be celebrated in October; now it is observed in January. Vocational Service’s importance is reflected in Avenue 2 in “The Object”, signifying its pivotal position in a Rotarian’s life. We are all indeed classified according to our vocations as we enter Rotary. “The Object of Rotary”, as we know too, encourages and fosters “the Ideal of Service”, forming our guiding principle. In this journey, Avenue 2 reinforces it by its call to promote “high ethical standards” in all businesses and professions, as well as to recognise “the worthiness of all useful occupations”. And the dignity of all such occupations.



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So during “Vocational Service Month” every existing Rotary club in every corner of the globe, would specially highlight and lay special emphasis on the importance of this fundamental aspect of Rotary. Vocational programmes and projects are put into greater focus and attention. Clubs invite specialist Speakers to showcase and give greater insights into what contributes to good and correct attributes and practices in our vocational life. Such insights reinforce our individual experiences, and often show us fresh approaches to improvements.

A useful offshoot from the many meaningful activities carried out during “Vocational Service Month” is what is commonly termed as “social service enterprise”. Often, businesses embark on this project as a form of “pay-back to society” acknowledgement. In doing this, they also “do good in the world” while at the same time continue to do good in their business.

Such an effort is contagious. Indeed, the number of “Social Service Enterprise”, in various forms, has gone up considerably in Singapore over the years. Our Club has helped to “start-up” a few. A further offshoot is the provision of jobs for many a needy person. A notable feature about these enterprises is that profits made are ploughed back into fundings for social programmes. All this resonates very well with Rotary. It is altruism that even the “hardest-headed businessman has a touch of the idealist” in him. That our vocation is a vital key to our Rotary membership is unquestionable. It is also a key that opens many other doors leading to highways of service which ultimately converge into one destination – to better the lives of those untold numbers of less fortunate people, out there. This is virtue. Even if someone said that “virtue is an angel, but she is blind...and has to ask knowledge to show the pathway ahead...”

District 3310 has a Vocational Service Committee, chaired by PDG Datuk Hj Zainie Abdul Aucasa from the Kota Kinabalu R C, whose main thrust is what is set out in Avenue 2 of “The Object” – i.e. recognising worthy endeavours, elevating standards of practices, and promoting ethics in business and personal practices.

Whichever way Vocational Service is expressed or interpreted, it is “the banner by which Rotarians recognise the worthiness of all useful occupations, at the same time demonstrating a commitment to “high ethical standards in all businesses and professions.” This is the core value.

The Object of Rotary

The Object of Rotary is to encourage and foster the ideal of service as a basis of worthy enterprise and, in particular, to encourage and foster:

- First** : The development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service.
- Second** : High ethical standards in business and professions, the recognition of the worthiness of all useful occupations and the dignifying of each Rotarian’s occupation as an opportunity to serve society.
- Third** : The application of the ideal of service in each Rotarian’s personal, business, and community life.
- Fourth** : The advancement of international understanding, goodwill, and peace through a world fellowship of business and professional persons united in the ideal of service.

