



MAKING THE DISTRICT TRAINING CYCLE WORK FOR YOU

By Maureen Vaught

The numbers don't lie. According to survey results, district trainers and governors believe the amount of training Rotary recommends is not too little and not too much, but just right.

A district training cycle survey conducted in August by RI's Leadership Education and Training Division revealed that 72 percent of respondents think the number of training meetings offered at the district level is adequate. And when asked which meeting should be discontinued, 73 percent answered: None; keep all training seminars.

"Based on anecdotal evidence alone, the consensus was that Rotary had an aggressive training schedule and that it was a tremendous burden on participants. We were pleasantly surprised by the results of this survey," says Michele Berg, manager of the division.

The survey was sent to district governors and district trainers worldwide to learn how districts conduct training and how they view the amount of training Rotary recommends. Survey respondents represented 218 districts in 45 countries.

Of special interest was how districts are making the training cycle work for them. Survey results indicate that some districts are combining training sessions, offering multiple meetings, and even conducting additional training events to reduce costs and accommodate time and distance constraints of participants.

Such flexibility is in keeping with the November 2006 Board decision encouraging Rotary districts to combine events or hold them sequentially to meet the needs of local Rotarians.

A survey respondent from South Africa offered this example, "Because of the size of our district, we offer Let's Talk Rotary sessions in various parts of the district. These sessions, which include Foundation and membership topics, are extremely popular because we're taking Rotary training to the clubs rather than expecting the clubs to come to the training."

District Training Survey Summary

In order to better understand how districts are conducting training for the required district training meetings, an online survey was sent in August 2007 to 800 current district governors and district trainers.

Respondent Demographics

314 Rotarians from 45 countries responded, 42% of whom were from the USA or Canada and 27% were from Europe. The respondents represent 218 districts (45% of the districts surveyed). 48% of respondents were 2007-08 district governors and 49% were district trainers.

Value of the Training

Respondents overwhelmingly support the six meetings in the RI Board recommended leadership development and training cycle. When asked which meetings were beneficial to their district, the responses were:

- 99% found the presidents-elect training seminar beneficial
- 95% found the district assembly beneficial
- 94% found the district Rotary Foundation seminar beneficial
- 86% found the district membership seminar beneficial
- 85% found the district team training seminar beneficial
- 62% found the district leadership seminar beneficial

When asked which of these meetings should no longer be required, 73% chose 'None - Keep all training seminars.' 17% responded that the district leadership seminar should no longer be required. All other meetings had less than 10% indicating the meeting should be no longer required.

Respondent feedback on this issue included the following comments:

"I definitely feel all this training should continue to be provided. We encourage participation in the leadership of Rotary and with the turnover in positions, the exchange of information and ideas is critical to successful operations." [USA]

"We need to raise Rotarians' awareness for community actions. Opportunities are lost due to a lack of knowledge. The more we educate our Rotarians, the more they will be able to offer society." [Brazil]

"With the exception of governors, a lack of training exists at the district level. Training is often confused with informing. I have increased the length of the President-elect training with a smaller team and I personally train the Assistant governors." [France]

Amount of District-Level Training

72% of respondents felt that the amount of training offered at the district level was adequate, with 26% feeling it was too little. Only 2% felt it was too much. When asked what they thought the perception among club-level Rotarians about the amount of training offered at the district level, 49% indicated that club-level Rotarians feel it is adequate and 25% indicated too much.

Over 80% of RI districts are convening the required meetings except for the district leadership seminar, which is conducted in 59% of the districts.

Overall, the meetings are held in the month of the year that recommended by RI, except for the district membership seminar, which is recommended for April or May. It is being convened by 32% of district in August (Membership Month) and 23% in September. Only 5% of districts are convening the meeting in April or May. Note: the RI Board changed the timeframe for this meeting moved from August to April or May in June 2005.

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In general, meeting duration meets or falls below the RI guideline. A majority of districts follow the RI guideline for duration for the following meetings:

- PETS
- District assembly
- District membership seminar
- District Rotary Foundation seminar

A majority of districts fall below the RI guideline for duration for the following meetings:

- District team training seminar
- District leadership seminar

36% of districts are exceeding the RI recommended duration for PETS by convening events that last 2 days or more.

While some districts combine meetings, it is still the minority of districts. No meeting had more than 34% of districts combining them. Respondents reported on at least 50 different ways to combine district training meetings (this included meetings outside of the main six). The most common meetings to combine are:

- District membership seminar and district Rotary Foundation seminar
- PETS and district assembly
- District team training seminar and district leadership seminar

A third of districts indicated that they convene PETS, district membership seminar, and district Rotary Foundation seminar more than once. In general this is done due to the distance participants must travel.

Below are some examples of how districts modify the training cycle to meet their needs:

"Membership & Foundation separate sessions (3 hours total) at Assembly. Our District is geographically long and would necessitate TWO separate sessions in addition to the TWO separate Assemblies to cover both North and south of our District. This increases demand on time for District chairs, etc. Combining Membership & Foundation as separate sessions during the TWO separate Assemblies has worked with good follow up by District Committees." [USA]

"The district training was held over 3-4 evenings, in total about 10 hours of training. Some of the seminars were dinners, rather than ½ days." [Australia]

"The District Leadership seminar was held just in advance of PETS. So the Leadership Team were involved in both events, but the PEs were only involved in PETS." [Canada]

"The District Membership Seminar and the Rotary Foundation Seminar were held at the interdistrict level. This interdistrict seminar was divided into two sessions: morning for membership and afternoon for TRF." [Brazil]

"Because of the great geographic distances in the District the District assembly, Membership and Foundation seminars are conducted in real time on-line." [5520 USA]

"Because of geographical challenges, we MUST combine when possible to try to get better participation. I feel all offer a lot to participants. I do feel we need to begin to take

advantage of technology as it would help in many cases though also offers us challenges.”
[USA]

Additional Training

56% of districts indicated that they conduct additional district training meetings. These include but are not limited to:

- Secretary training
- Leadership development (such as RLI, PRLS, STRS, Rotary Academy, District Leadership Academy, etc.)
- Pre-PETS
- Assistant governor training
- Youth protection training
- Public relations or image training

- Grant writing training
- General education
- New member orientation
- Technology training
- RYLA

Below are examples of additional training being conducted by districts:

“We provide training where and when the need is identified and within our resources.”
[RIBI]

“Training being fundamental for all Rotarians, a Training “cell”, made up of well-acquainted Rotarians willing to share their knowledge using audio-visual media, has been created. In order to convey the message, it is necessary to reiterate it each year repeatedly. Good training starts at club level.” [Belgium]

“Because of the size of our district we have run “Lets talk Rotary” sessions in various parts of the district and included on the agenda were Foundation and Membership topics. These were held on a Facilitation basis so that full interaction was enjoyed. They are proving extremely popular as we are taking Rotary Training to the clubs and not expecting the clubs to come to the Rotary training.” [South Africa]

“Smaller area seminars are better attended, easier to promoter, more interactive, and have a greater benefit.” [New Zealand]

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District Governor-nominee Training

78% of respondents indicated that there should be a formal training meeting for district governors-nominee. When asked who should conduct such training, the responses were:

- 48% for a multidistrict administrative group
- 29% for Rotary International
- 16% for the district
- 7% had no opinion

Respondent feedback on this issue included the following comments:

"We should especially focus on DG-nominees as we lose out on the opportunity to have multi-district relations due to a lack of awareness. Training DG-nominees is, in my opinion, of utmost importance, as many of them, while experienced in Rotary, continue to think [in terms] of their own clubs." [Brazil]

"We should use the entire period between the election and taking office (24 minimum months for governors and club presidents) and space out their training and training material accordingly." [India]

Conclusion

Overall, the recommended Leadership Development and Training Cycle appears to offer adequate guidance and meets the needs of the majority of respondents. Districts are taking advantage of the flexibility within the cycle and altering the timing and duration of the meetings.