



Annual Newsletter -- 2014

History of Rotary Means Business

The recent history of Rotary networking groups that ultimately came to be known as Rotary Means Business begins with the Rotary Club of San Francisco (Rotary Club #2) which began Rotary Business Partners in 1997. Its goal was to “help business in Rotary and add value to your membership.” The group went through various periods of activity and inactivity, and a few name changes, emerging in 2004 as Rotary Means Business.

This caught the attention of the District 5150 Governor, who encouraged suburban clubs in the District to form their own Rotary Means Business group. In 2005, both the Peninsula (south suburbs) and Marin (north suburbs) Rotary Means Business groups were formed.

Throughout the rest of the decade, the Rotary Means Business concept expanded worldwide, with groups being spontaneously formed in many US states, and even extending to Australia.

The history of the local Rotary Means Business group that grew to become the founding chapter of the Rotary Means Business Fellowship began in the summer of 2009, when a member of the Rotary Club of Santa Rosa brought the idea to his club, after attending a RMB meeting in Marin.

Following the format of the other groups in the San Francisco Bay Area, the Santa Rosa RMB group met monthly at a local Rotarian-owned restaurant, did some networking, and often featured an extended presentation from one or two of the attendees. After the first few months, the Santa Rosa club invited members of other clubs in District 5130.

The new RMB group continued into 2010, meeting monthly at the same restaurant and continuing the same meeting format. During that time, attendance slowly declined. Average attendance at the first few meetings had been between 30 and 40 Rotarians. By the time the group approached its first anniversary, the average attendance was down to 10 Rotarians.

In spring of 2010, the Santa Rosa area RMB was questioning its long-range viability. Then the District Governor, Maureen Merrill, made a suggestion: Why not rotate the RMB meetings among the businesses of the members? She reminded the group that this was how Rotary started, and she thought folks might find it interesting to visit the businesses of fellow Rotarians.

The RMB members present liked the District Governor’s idea, and a local Rotarian-owned office furniture store agreed to host the first revamped RMB meeting. The new, rotating meetings were dubbed “Firesides.” Attendance immediately doubled, and some meetings hosted even more Rotarians. Site visits at a door factory and an air museum each hosted more than 50 Rotarians.

Mark Burchill, then chair of the Santa Rosa area RMB, realized that the idea of Rotary Means Business truly had potential, and at more than just a local level. He began presenting to other Rotary Clubs in Northern California, encouraging them to form their own RMB groups. However, the idea of Rotary Means Business was not universally embraced. During his presentations to Rotary meetings, the questions and comments often expressed displeasure at bringing business back into Rotary. There were even questions as to whether Rotary International would approve of the concept.



Annual Newsletter -- 2014

Still, Mark felt that there was a true need, and a true opportunity to bring the concept of Rotary Means Business to the entire Rotary world. The first step was to create a website, and give Rotary Means Business a global presence. One member of the Santa Rosa area RMB, Wayne Rowlands, offered to develop a website, which was launched in 2011.

In addition, a Steering Committee was formed to explore the possibility of requesting approval for the RMB concept from Rotary International. After some research, it was determined that the best avenue for RI approval was to apply for Rotary Means Business to become an official Rotary International Fellowship. To that end, the steering committee developed an extensive set of By-laws that would meet the standards as set out in the Rotary Fellowship Handbook.

With most of the necessary documentation completed, the steering committee sought guidance from some past District Governors as to how to approach Rotary International. More than one PDG advised them to defer approaching Rotary International, as the general feeling was that RI was not quite ready to welcome a business-oriented Fellowship. Any group whose Fellowship application is declined must wait two years before re-applying, so the thought was to wait a bit longer, and hope that the application might be looked on more favorably in the near future.

During this period, hundreds of Rotarians from all over the world had signed up to the www.RotaryMeansBusiness.org website. Rotarians in India had offered to create smartphone apps for iPhone and Android. So Rotary Means Business was growing to a worldwide presence, even without full approval of RI.

With RMB growing organically, it was only a matter of time before RMB would gather the attention of RI. In March of 2013, Rotary Means Business received a communication from RI indicating that our use of the words "Rotary Means Business" violated Rotary's Code of Policies. Rather than ending Rotary Means Business, this communication began the final leg of RMB's journey from local networking group to a Rotary International Fellowship.

After a few weeks of very cordial conversation, Mr. Burchill proposed that RMB submit our application to become a Rotary International fellowship, and that they work together to find an acceptable name for the fellowship. The folks at RI agreed to defer any decisions or enforcement about the name until the Fellowship application worked through the system. They even put Mark in touch with mentors in the Fellowship department who could help him prepare an application that would have the best chance of being approved.

Over the next few weeks, proposed documents were prepared, submitted for comment to RI, and revised. Fortunately, the Steering Committee had prepared many of the documents in advance, so this period was about revision and improvement, not about inventing something new. In addition to the By-Laws, the Steering Committee was required to prepare a ProForma, illustrating how the Fellowship would be financially viable. They also submitted lists of member and officers, and, of course, the completed official application. Finally, about two months after the initial contact from RI, all necessary documentation to complete the application for the Rotary Means Business Fellowship had been submitted.



Annual Newsletter -- 2014

While the concept of Rotary Means Business seemed to be receiving positive feedback, there was still concern that the name did not align with Rotary's Code of Policies. So the Fellowship application offered a defense of retaining the name, based on the historical and world-wide ongoing use of the name. Our proposal suggested that, if Rotary International approved the name for the Fellowship, then RI would have control over the name. If the Fellowship had a different name, it might be more difficult for RI to reign in all the smaller independent groups using the name. Ultimately, RI agreed that it was better to keep control of the name "in-house."

All during the process of working with RI, the feedback from RI had been supportive and welcoming. RMB leadership never felt that anyone at RI had any resistance to the concept of Rotary Means Business.

In early November, we were informed that the Rotary International Board of Directors had approved Rotary Means Business as the newest Fellowship of Rotary International.

Now, as our first year of existence moves to our second year, the Fellowship is focusing on building the infrastructure, reaching out to local RMB chapters and individuals, and providing a value-added Fellowship that will enhance every Rotarian's membership in Rotary International.

Leadership

<u>Name</u>		<u>Office</u>	<u>D#</u>	<u>Term Ends</u>
Mark Burchill	<CA, USA>	Chair	D2	2016
Yale Abrams	<CA, USA>	Vice-Chair	D6	2016
Wayne Rowlands	<CA, USA>	Secretary	D4	2016
John McHugh	<CA, USA>	Treasurer	D1	2015
Sachin Gururaj	<India>	Director	D10	2016
Tony Benner	<Australia>	Director	D8	2016
Arthur Claxton	<Canada>	Director	D3	2015
Bill Fishman	<NY, USA>	Director	D5	2015
Kris Anderson	<CA, USA>	Director	D9	2015
			D7*	2015

*Directorship D7 is open due to resignation

Membership

Current membership in the Fellowship is 125 Rotarians from 22 countries.



Annual Newsletter -- 2014

RMB Name Usage

Rotary International owns the marks “Rotary” and “Rotary Means Business.” Rotary International has granted the Rotary Means Business Fellowship revocable permission to use the name “Rotary Means Business.” Local chapters who want to use the name Rotary Means Business must affiliate with the Rotary Means Business Fellowship in order to receive permission to use the Rotary Means Business name.

Affiliation includes the following:

- Prepare a set of governing documents that follow the Fellowship guidelines
- Note affiliation with the Fellowship on local chapter documents and websites
- \$30 annual chapter dues

Any local group not affiliated with the Fellowship may not use the name or logos of Rotary Means Business

Local Chapters

Current affiliated local chapters of the Rotary Means Business Fellowship include:

- Rotary Means Business NorCal (District 5130, California, the founding chapter)
- Rotary Means Business District 7230 (New York)
- Rotary Means Business Sydney (Australia)
- Rotary Means Business Big Island (Hawai’i)

Rotary Means Business Fellowship Contact Information

- Websites: www.RotaryMeansBusiness.org and www.RotaryMeansBusiness.com
- General info: info@rotarymeansbusiness.org
- Chair: chair@rotarymeansbusiness.org
- Webmaster: webmaster@rotarymeansbusiness.org
- Treasurer: treasurer@rotarymeansbusiness.org
- Mail: PO Box 95, Santa Rosa, CA 95402-0095