

Leadership and communication

SIPE – a.r. 2012 – 2013 * DG Gaetano Lo Cicero**

In the strategic plan Leadership is included among the fundamental values together with: Service, Friendship, Diversity and Integrity.

We give a great importance to leadership because we think it can be a decisive factor for a better future of our association.

When you speak about leadership, you cannot leave the idea of communication out of consideration.

Leadership itself is communication. All over the world a lot of sociologists, psychologists and scholars have written numerous pages on this fascinating and deep connection so the image of the leader as an excellent communicator to a group looks evident.

Through a natural process of communication a good leader transfers his own values to the others. He explains why moving to a certain direction and doing some actions is useful. Of course it is clear that the contents of any activity are the basic ground of communication and its authoritativeness.

It gives rise to attention, interest and participation: all that has a relevant impact on the public opinion.

A Rotary which is able to communicate is a Rotary which lives and builds in its territory.

Communication has gained a greater and greater importance in any sector, including Rotary.

In fact, recently some experts have been charged to have a better attention to communication with the final aim to get a positive image of our association because in over 100 years (107 this year) the image received by people does not correspond to the real one: Rotary is well known for its convivial meetings and learned and interesting lectures held by brilliant and famous speakers.

But people do not know anything about the activities connected to service.

They do not know anything about the volunteers who go to war areas and bring vaccines against poliomyelitis, putting their lives at risk.

We know very little about the incisive projects carried out in the poorest communities of foreign countries (now also in our communities) by using the funds of the Rotary foundation (microcredit, aqueducts, schools, medical equipments, schooldesks).

Besides, it is important to underline that a lot of projects are carried out without the help of the Rotary Foundation.

It is noteworthy the great care to the young generations (scholarships, RYLA, Rotaract and Interact). A lot of resources are addressed to them in order to let them acquire and, on their turn, their friends learn about the Rotarian values and the demanding Rotarian job in favour of society.

That is why we need a good communication to win these gaps in our district and in particular in our clubs.

We need a good knowledge of Rotary (it is important to attend and participate in district meetings) in order to improve its image.

It is also important the role of the club president, a leader who communicates with his friends for twelve months and creates enthusiasm and participation: He has the duty to help each member contribute in building a positive image of Rotary, a credible one based on over a century of service in favour of mankind by giving publicity and promoting its fundamental values.

Unfortunately, so far communication is not at its best: information does not reach everyone, even if it is transmitted with a certain attention. We do not know the numerous activities of the clubs. There are problems.

A lot of Rotarians have not got an e-mail address, some do not like reading the messages addressed to them, some throw them into the wastepaper basket.

It is necessary to let curiosity, interest and will grow in the addressee.

There is only one justification if there is a lack of interest. There is a very complicated scenario in the information world. Every day we receive a great deal of info and news which make our life difficult.

According with the opinion of a lot of specialists it is necessary to find a system, to introduce a filter in order to select the news and verify its truth.

Also in our association there is a lot of information in our newsletters and reviews.

We often give them scanty attention. We think we lose our time in reading all that information which is sometimes poor, old or useless.

Even our badge helps us communicate. It is a symbol of proud membership: we must be far from any kind of selfcelebration, but we must be aware of the great opportunity Rotary gives us in order to help the others.

After all, why do we need to transmit a positive idea of Rotary?

Because it improves our proud membership; it creates the conditions for a more efficient service; it increases the quality of the membership; it helps the Foundation action to be more efficient; it gets our world to become better.

And now something about Leadership in Rotary.

The leader is a person of high moral integrity, a person with a mission and a vision; he is an assertive and sure person who generally shows a participative approach (democratic style).

He is able to gain the engagement of his own team and manage the conflicts and the changes in the continuity avoiding limitations and troubles and helping to make the actions more efficient.

The importance of Leadership in the Rotarian culture depends on two elements typical of the life and efficacy of Rotary clubs:

- the principle of the yearly rotation in the offices;
- the criterion of selection of the club members.

And as to club running, leadership also means encouraging the continuity not by people but by the projects.

Leadership is interrelating to the district, the other clubs, associations and public bodies.

Leadership does not mean getting a year's holiday after a period of service as a president, rather it means becoming an important support for clubs.

Among the numerous duties of a leader there is one which is of peculiar importance: he must improve his capabilities and knowledge and educate the new and old club members: he must provide the motivations necessary to serve in the clubs and outside them by stimulating the capacity to be a leader.

If the clubs are efficient, Rotary International will take advantage of it.

And this meeting, like the others the clubs and the district organize, must be a stimulus to improve the leadership in the district in order to let people know Rotary for its care in serving above self and promote mutual understanding, cooperation and peace in the world.

Salvatore Sarpietro

(Presidente della Commissione per la Leadership)