

From 《The Rotary Code of Ethics》 1915 to 《Rotarian Code of Conduct》 2019

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The earliest Rotarians really had no choice but to make business ethics a priority. They joined the Rotary clubs for two reasons: to make friends and to make business contacts. If their business practices left anything to be desired, they were not likely to keep many of those friends for long. Today's Rotarians maintain those principles, but with higher goals in mind.

In its early years, Rotary served as a respite for its members from the rampant corruption and fraud of the day. After a few years of conducting business with their fellow club members, Rotarians understood that one of the organization's great strengths was the unusually high ethical standards of its members. Many believed that those standards should be embedded in Rotary's identity.

Let us rewind the scene back to the year 1900 in Chicago, U.S.A. For many years, the quotation from Ralph Waldo Emerson hung on the wall of the office of Paul Harris: "He who has a thousand friends has not a friend to spare." It was in quest of friends – friendship – that Paul, at the turn of the twentieth century, began to think in terms of bringing business and professional men together for fellowship and for mutual benefit.

The seed of this idea came to rudimentary fruition on 23 February 1905, when Paul and three friends gathered for what was to be the first meeting of the first Rotary Club. Over the years that seedling of friendship has been nurtured, developed, and propagated, and has multiplied and radiated to, as today, more than 200 countries and geographical territories of the world. The idea that started in the mind and heart of one man has matured into a prestigious worldwide organization of more 33,000 Rotary clubs with more than 1.2 million members.

In discussing forces at work in business at the time Rotary came into existence, Chesley R. Perry, first secretary of Rotary International, said: "*Giants of business were fighting over trade territories; competition was ruthless, and not only big business but all sorts of businesses, large and small, were then under the suspicion of being conducted on the basis of get all you can get and get it first. Into such a world Rotary was born ...*"

The four participants in the February 1905 meeting and those who soon joined them were for the most part young men (Paul Harris was 37) who were striving to establish themselves in business or profession. Paul called them "*men of ordinary walks of life; ... natural products of the times and subject to its usual frailties ... all were friendly and congenial ... each represented a recognized honorable vocation different from that of the idea that friendship and business could go hand in hand in strengthening both – and, not incidentally, to the individual business or professional benefit of those who participated.*"

Thus, the first Rotary club was formed to provide an opportunity for fellowship and friendliness coupled with a basis for exchange of business between and among its members.

A Code of Ethics for Business Men of All Lines

The concept of Rotary as a mutual benefit arrangement may have contributed heavily to its early popularity and growth not only in Chicago, United States, but in its extension to other cities. However, in the unfolding of the story of Rotary, the idea of service to oneself and one's fellow club members in a business sense gave way to the higher ideal of service and helpfulness to others in all aspects of life – and eventually service to all mankind.

The basis of one person from each separate and distinct business or profession was appealing; it afforded an atmosphere where discussion could be free from fear of competitors, where information could be obtained about other businesses and professions, and where the spirit of helpfulness in a business way was focused on each member as a representative of his vocation.

Promotion of high ethical standards in business and professions was assuming an important place in the principles and program of Rotary. In 1910, the newly formed National Association of Rotary Clubs created a Business Methods Committee, and in 1912, International Rotary President Glenn Mead proposed that the committee carve out a code of business ethics for “the advancement of business morality.” Three years later, “A Code of Ethics for Businessmen of All Lines” was adopted at the 1915 (San Francisco, California) Convention. Its 11 points were preceded by this preamble:

“My business standards shall have in them a note of sympathy for our common humanity. My business dealings, ambitions and relations shall always cause me to take into consideration my highest duties as a member of society. In every position in business life, in every responsibility that comes before me, my chief thoughts shall be to fill that responsibility and discharge that duty so that, when I have ended each of them, I shall have lifted the level of human ideals and achievements a little higher than I found it.”

In 1921 Rotary inaugurated a campaign for the standardization of business practices in each trade and professional association. Rotary assisted in the writing of codes of ethics, which prescribe proper rules of conduct. Over 150 codes had been written. World peace must necessarily have a stable foundation and there is no stronger foundation than standardized business methods and fair environment.

The Code's impact was significant, even beyond Rotary itself, as evidenced by the findings of a University of Chicago study. “At least 145 national industrial codes of correct practice which have been adopted since 1922 (were) directly a result of the influence of Rotarians,” researchers wrote in *《Rotary》*, a work published in 1934.

Attached here below is the full text of *《The Rotary Code of Ethics for Business Men of All Lines – 1915》* :

The Rotary Code of Ethics

For Business Men of All Lines

Adopted by the Sixth Annual Convention of the International Association of Rotary Clubs at San Francisco, July 19-23, 1915

My business standards shall have in them a note of sympathy for our common humanity. My business dealings, ambitions and relations shall always cause me to take into consideration my highest duties as a member of society. In every position in business life, in every responsibility that comes before me, my chief thought shall be to fill that responsibility and discharge that duty so when I have ended each of them, I shall have lifted the level of human ideals and achievements a little higher than I found them. In view of this your committee holds that fundamental in a code of trade ethics for International Rotary are the following principles:

- First:** To consider my vocation worthy, and as affording me distinct opportunity to serve society.
- Second:** To improve myself, increase my efficiency and enlarge my service, and by so doing attest my faith in the fundamental principle of Rotary, that he profits most who serves best.
- Third:** To realize that I am a business man and ambitious to succeed; but that I am first an ethical man, and wish no success that is not founded on the highest justice and morality.
- Fourth:** To hold that the exchange of my goods, my service and my ideas for profit is legitimate and ethical, provided that all parties in the exchange are benefited thereby.
- Fifth:** To use my best endeavors to elevate the standards of the vocation in which I am engaged, and so to conduct my affairs that others in my vocation may find it wise, profitable and conducive to happiness to emulate my example.
- Sixth:** To conduct my business in such a manner that I may give a perfect service equal to or even better than my competitor, and when in doubt to give added service beyond the strict measure of debt or obligation.
- Seventh:** To understand that one of the greatest assets of a professional or of a business man is his friends and that any advantage gained by reason of friendship is eminently ethical and proper.
- Eighth:** To hold that true friends demand nothing of one another and that any abuse of the confidences of friendship for profit is foreign to the spirit of Rotary, and in violation of its Code of Ethics.
- Ninth:** To consider no personal success legitimate or ethical which is secured by taking unfair advantage of certain opportunities in the social order that are absolutely denied others, nor will I take advantage of opportunities to achieve material success that others will not take because of the questionable morality involved.
- Tenth:** To be not more obligated to a Brother Rotarian than I am to every other man in human society; because the genius of Rotary is not in its competition, but in its cooperation; for provincialism can never have a place in an institution like Rotary, and Rotarians assert that Human Rights are not confined to Rotary Clubs, but are as deep and as broad as the race itself; and for these high purposes does Rotary exist to educate all men and all institutions.
- Eleventh:** Finally, believing in the universality of the Golden Rule, **All Things Whatsoever Ye Would that Men Should Do Unto You, Do Ye Even So Unto Them**, we contend that Society best holds together when equal opportunity is accorded all men in the natural resources of this planet.

Summary

THE MOTIVE OF THE CODE. It is not the Greek motive of Ethics, which is based upon perfecting the person and perpetuating the State simply to preserve the Ego, but this code is predicated on love. That is, the Rotarian does not do right simply because it preserves himself, but because he had rather be destroyed than to destroy another. Thus this code of ethics is founded on love.

THE VALUE OF THE CODE. This Code does not take sides in the present dispute in society between the Conservative and the Liberal. It argues nothing merely because it is conservative or liberal. This Code seeks one thing—the value—the utility of the Ethics it propounds. The utility of the Code and not its liberalism nor its conservatism has been the ideal of the men who wrote it. By this is must stand, for by this it cannot fall.

The Rotary Code of Ethics in China

Soon after the inception of The Rotary Club of Shanghai in 1919, Republic of China (中華民國上海扶輪社), the original all American members' Club had a strong passion and desire to spread the ideal of Rotary to the local Chinese communities. In the Year 1921-1922, 《The Rotary Code of Ethics》 was translated into classical Chinese literature (not modern spoken language) with the full text here below:

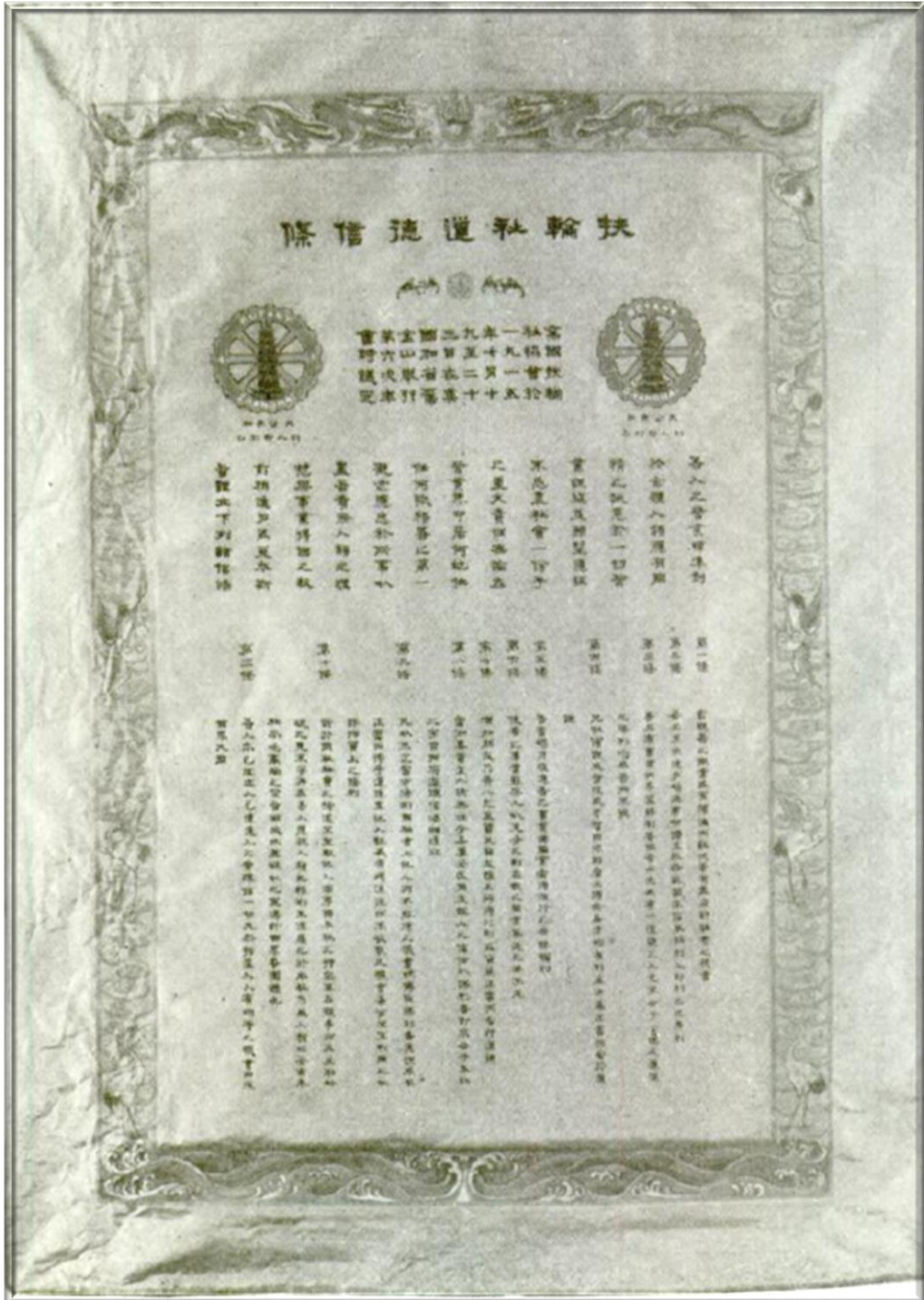
扶輪社道德信條

萬國扶輪社協會於一九一五年七月十九至二十三日在美國加州舊金山舉行第六次年會時議定

余之營業上標準當對於全體人類有表示同情之誠意余之營業上交際及願望與關繫當使余不忘盡社會一分子應有最重大之責任無論營業界中居何地位無論何種責任加諸余肩余之主要宅心當為極力履行職務擔負責任庶幾人類之理想與事業得借余力而稍呈進步焉職是之故余既為萬國扶輪社社員自當本斯職務之宗旨堅守下列諸信條

- 第一條 當視余所操職業為極有價值能使余有特殊之機會以盡力於社會者
- 第二條 余必力求進步增進事功擴充服務範圍長此以往庶能根據本社之宗旨印證個人之信心即所謂利人即利己者是
- 第三條 余為商人固然時望成功然最要者余當先為一居仁由義之人苟不合於最高之公正與道德標準雖成功所在余竊無取
- 第四條 凡與人往來交易務使兩造互得利益若貿易若服務若求利必本斯旨乃為正當而合於道德
- 第五條 當以最良方法竭智盡力促進吾人職業之標準舉凡個中治事行動余當引起同業人樂為模仿覺其明巧有益招致幸福
- 第六條 當盡力使余所操職業能為完全服務其服務應與同業人相等或較勝之設遇疑難則當逾越個中責任程限復事額外服務
- 第七條 須知得友乃商人及他職業人之至貴資產凡自真純友誼上所得之利益皆為正當而合於道德
- 第八條 當知誠實交友之際決無互相希冀非分之理凡濫用友誼上之信用而資以牟利者即為違反本會之精神破壞此修身之規律
- 第九條 凡人利用社會上不正當而妨害他人之機會藉以博取非理之利益即或一己成功皆視為不正當而悖於道德凡有機會在道德為可疑在他人所不取者亦不當乘時竊用冀以求取物質上之成功
- 第十條 對於同社社員之待遇不當較對於其他社會上之個人特為優厚因扶輪社之真精神不在競爭而在協助社中豈可有畛域主義之存在蓋扶輪社社員主張凡人類權利並不專限於該社其範圍實與人類全體同一深廣扶輪社之組織即本此種高尚之宗旨期以教導一切個人及其他公共機關
- 第十一條 本會篤信敬人者人恒敬之愛人者人恒愛之一語實為通行世界之金科玉律故本社社員極端主張欲求社會團結力之穩固必使人類全體能於此地球之一切天然物產上享有平等之機會

The above Chinese version of 《The Rotary Code of Ethics》 was then made on silken scroll with a colorful design of dragons, storks, and clouds. Copies were distributed to Chinese Rotarians of all clubs, who had them framed and hung beside the English version. A copy was sent to Chicago Rotary Club as a gift item by Shanghai Rotary Club. Start your reading here at the top right-hand corner and follow the vertical columns:



The «Declaration of Rotarians in Businesses and Professions» 1989

«*The Rotary Code of Ethics*» was redrafted under the challenge of Rotary International President “Chuck” Charles C. Keller in 1987-88 to become the «*Declaration of Rotarians in Businesses and Professions*». This Declaration defined as a set of values that were appropriate for the personal conduct of Rotarians in businesses or professions. It was adopted by the 1989 Council on Legislation, and was effected on 1 July 1989 when women were accepted as Rotarians, while the previous Code applicable to Business “Men” was no longer appropriate:



Declaration of Rotarians in Businesses and Professions

As a Rotarian engaged in a business or profession, I am expected to:

- 1) Consider my vocation to be another opportunity to serve;
- 2) Be faithful to the letter and to the spirit of the ethical codes of my vocation, to the laws of my country, and to the moral standards of my community;
- 3) Do all in my power to dignify my vocation and to promote the highest ethical standards in my chosen vocation;
- 4) Be fair to my employer, employees, associates, competitors, customers, the public, and all those with whom I have a business or professional relationship;
- 5) Recognize the honor and respect due to all occupations which are useful to society;
- 6) Offer my vocational talents: to provide opportunities for young people, to work for the relief of the special needs of others, and to improve the quality of life in my community;
- 7) Adhere to honesty in my advertising and in all representations to the public concerning my business or profession;
- 8) Neither seek from nor grant to a fellow Rotarian a privilege or advantage not normally accorded others in a business or professional relationship.

The «Rotary Code of Conduct» 2011

Rotary does however change with the times, and at the end of 2011 the Rotary International Board of Directors determined to rename the declaration the «*Rotary Code of Conduct*» with revised wordings. This was to recognize that Rotary Club memberships now include community leaders, retired persons, and others not currently in businesses or professions. Here below is the full text:

ROTARY CODE OF CONDUCT



As a Rotarian, I will

1. Exemplify the core value of integrity in all behaviors and activities
2. Use my vocational experience and talents to serve in Rotary
3. Conduct all of my personal, business, and professional affairs ethically, encouraging and fostering high ethical standards as an example to others
4. Be fair in all dealings with others and treat them with the respect due to them as fellow human beings
5. Promote recognition and respect for all occupations which are useful to society
6. Offer my vocational talents: to provide opportunities for young people, to work for the relief of the special needs of others, and to improve the quality of life in my community
7. Honor the trust that Rotary and fellow Rotarians provide and not do anything that will bring disfavor or reflect adversely on Rotary or fellow Rotarians
8. Not seek from a fellow Rotarian a privilege or advantage not normally accorded others in a business or professional relationship



The 《Rotarian Code of Conduct》 2014

In October 2014, Rotary International Board of Directors made a new decision to adopt the following streamlined Code of Conduct for the use of Rotarians:

ROTARIAN CODE OF CONDUCT

As a Rotarian, I will:

1. Act with integrity and high ethical standards in my personal and professional life
2. Deal fairly with others and treat them and their occupations with respect
3. Use my professional skills through Rotary to mentor young people, help those with special needs, and improve people's quality of life in my community and in the world
4. Avoid behavior that reflects adversely on Rotary or other Rotarians



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扶輪行為原則

做為一個扶輪社員，我將

- 在我個人與專業的生活中，以廉潔正直與高道德標準身體力行。
- 以公正的態度與他人來往互動，並且以敬重的心態對待他們與他們的職業。
- 經由扶輪，以我的專業技能輔導年輕人，協助那些人之特殊的需求，同時在我們的社區與世界上，改善人們的生活品質。
- 避免那些對扶輪或其他扶輪社員會產生負面效應的行為。

The Philosophy of Rotary

To relate the Object of Rotary to corporate social responsibility practices, the Board 2011 of Rotary International adopted the following statement:

From its origins, Rotary has built a philosophy based upon integrity in businesses and professions. Rotary clubs and individual Rotarians are committed to Vocational Service and high ethical standards in all of their interactions. These are summed up in the Object of Rotary, our core values (Service, Fellowship, Diversity, Integrity, Leadership), The Four-Way Test, and the Rotary Code of Conduct, carried out through our worldwide network of Rotary clubs and Rotarians.

The roots of Rotary have stood the test of time. Regardless of the ways in which Vocational Service is expressed, it is the banner by which Rotarians “recognize the worthiness of all useful occupations” and demonstrate a commitment to “high ethical standards in all businesses and professions.” That’s why the second Avenue of Service is fundamental to each and every Rotary Club. This is also the major and significant characteristics of Rotary that differs from all other service, philanthropic, and humanitarian organizations around the world.

The 《Rotarian Code of Conduct》 revised in January 2019

The Board of Directors of Rotary International, at its January 2019 meeting, revised the 《Rotarian Code of Conduct》 by adding the 5th aspect to the Code:

- *Help maintain a harassment-free environment in Rotary meetings, events, and activities, report any suspected harassment, and help ensure non-retaliation to those individuals that report harassment.*

Rotary International expects all Rotarians to conduct themselves both professionally and personally in a manner that enhances the integrity, culture and standing of Rotary International’s guiding principle of “Service Above Self”.



Attached below, the following 3 pages, are the official posters of 《Rotarian Code of Conduct》 published by Rotary International in the 3 languages of English, Portuguese, and French:

ROTARIAN CODE OF CONDUCT

As a Rotarian, I will:

1. Act with integrity and high ethical standards in my personal and professional life
2. Deal fairly with others and treat them and their occupations with respect
3. Use my professional skills through Rotary to mentor young people, help those with special needs, and improve people's quality of life in my community and in the world
4. Avoid behavior that reflects adversely on Rotary or other Rotarians
5. Help maintain a harassment-free environment in Rotary meetings, events, and activities; report any suspected harassment; and help ensure non-retaliation to those individuals that report harassment



CÓDIGO ROTÁRIO DE CONDUTA

Como rotariano, comprometo-me a:

1. Agir com integridade e seguir altos padrões éticos em minha vida pessoal e profissional.
2. Ser justo com os outros, demonstrando respeito a eles e a suas profissões.
3. Usar minhas habilidades profissionais e empresariais para, através do Rotary, orientar os jovens, ajudar pessoas com necessidades especiais e melhorar a qualidade de vida em minha comunidade e no mundo.
4. Evitar comportamentos que prejudiquem a imagem do Rotary ou dos demais rotarianos.
5. Manter um ambiente livre de assédio em reuniões, eventos e atividades do Rotary, reportando qualquer suspeita de assédio e garantindo que as vítimas não sofram retaliação.



CODE DE DÉONTOLOGIE DU ROTARIEN

En tant que membre du Rotary, je m'engage à :

1. Agir avec intégrité et droiture dans ma vie privée et professionnelle.
2. Traiter toute personne et profession avec équité et respect.
3. Utiliser mes compétences et mon expérience professionnelle pour soutenir les jeunes, aider les plus démunis et améliorer le quotidien dans ma ville et à l'étranger.
4. Ne pas nuire à la réputation du Rotary et de ses membres.
5. Aider à maintenir un environnement exempt de harcèlement lors des réunions, manifestations et activités du Rotary, signaler toute suspicion de harcèlement et veiller à ce que les personnes qui signalent des cas de harcèlement ne soient pas victimes de représailles.

