

The Rotary Club Trust Bridge™

The Rotary Club *Trust Bridge*™ is a program started by the Global Milwaukee Committee of the Rotary Club of Milwaukee (WI) to help our members make business connections by establishing 'Rotarian-to-Rotarian bridges' between domestic and international clubs. We believe that the values that form the foundation of Rotary International can also be the foundation for productive global business relationships. The most important aspect of this program is the connection of trustworthy people who could be potential partners. The program has a basic 4-step process:

1. Request for Introduction to Rotary Club President

The first step in the Rotary Club *Trust Bridge*™ is that of a Rotarian submitting a request to the President of their local Rotary Club. The member's company objective in presenting this request is to provide the Rotary President with sufficient information about the business, list the countries and cities of interest, and articulate its partnership needs. This final point is crucial. While the vision of the Rotary Club *Trust Bridge*™ is to maximize the value of the Rotary vetting process which has established a global network of trustworthy businessmen and women, selecting a suitable business partner is entirely the company's responsibility. In thinking about the criteria or characteristics of the ideal partnership, consider your ideal company's target markets; its other distribution partners or consulting relationships; whether or not it represents or sells any complementary products; and its familiarity and connections with targeted sectors in your country (s) or city (s) of interest. Provide sufficient detail to enable the foreign Club President(s) receiving the request to understand how their Rotary Club can fulfill the need.

The request can be submitted either as a form or as a formal letter. Examples of both are provided.

2. Rotary President to the foreign Rotary President – Letter of Inquiry

The second step of the Rotary Club *Trust Bridge*™ is taken by the local Rotary Club President upon receiving a request from a member. The President sends an inquiry to Rotary Clubs in specified countries, articulating the partnership needs of the requesting member. This letter should be sent in both English and the local language(s) of the receiving country. The letter should include how to respond to the inquiry, as well as how the recipient can obtain more information (company website, etc.). Example provided.

3. Closing the Loop

The third step is taken by the receiving (foreign) Rotary Club President who begins by acknowledging the request via e-mail. The response could indicate that the foreign Rotary Club is unable to help. If the foreign Rotary Club has potential partner candidates or interested companies, the foreign Rotary President will respond with information on such potential partners, indicating whether or not they are Rotarians, and explaining how well the interested companies are known. The requesting member receives the list of responses and can start an early vetting process by asking additional questions about the prospective partner(s) willing to help. Keep the communications conversational. The priority of the Rotary Club *Trust Bridge*[™] is the relationship between Rotary Clubs and their members and potential members, hence, dialogue should be comfortable and friendly—a conversation, rather than business request.

4. Company Follow-up

The final step is up to the member / company. It is the member's responsibility to vet all responding Rotary recommendations, just as they would vet domestic, non-Rotarian business partners. While Rotary references have the advantage of coming through trusted members of the Rotarian community, companies should still meet with and interview all candidates to ensure the best fit.

Instructions for Rotary Clubs

How to Start Your Own Rotary Club Trust Bridge™

The objective of the Rotary Club Trust Bridge™ is to identify candidates for business partners in targeted segments and countries. If you have a company that would like Rotarian contacts abroad, here is how to initiate the process.

1. Identify target markets. This step should be taken care of by the company itself. The Rotarian contacts the Rotary Club President (or Executive Director or Secretary) with a request for connections into the cities / countries he / she has targeted. (See example: Member- / Company-to-Rotary Request.)
2. Use Rotary International's online "[club finder](#)" to develop a list of clubs within the target markets. (Using this tool to start allows you to specify a distance from your target city so that you can find clubs that may be geographically close but do not have the city in their name.)
3. Compile contact information for those clubs (Presidents, Past District Governors and Secretaries) by looking up the appropriate information using the "Official Directory" – available online with My Rotary log in, or by using the disc that RI provides to each Club secretary or president. Email addresses can be just as useful in lieu of physical addresses.
4. Send a letter of inquiry individually to each President in targeted regions with the secretary on copy. Request help in identifying appropriate contacts in local Rotary Clubs. (See Example: Rotary-to-Rotary_ Letter of Inquiry. A sample formatted letter from President John in English & Spanish)
5. Acknowledge all responses to your inquiries, whether or not the responder can help you. Close the communication loop.
6. Pass on all candidates to requesting Rotarian's company.

Request for Introduction – Member Company to Rotary President

The first step in the Rotary Club *Trust Bridge*™ is that of the Club member submitting a request to the President of their local Club. The company’s objective in presenting this request is to provide the Rotary President with sufficient information about the business, list the countries and cities of interest and articulate its partnership needs. This final point is crucial. While the vision of the Rotary Club *Trust Bridge*™ is to maximize the value of the Rotary vetting process which has established a global network of trustworthy businessmen and women, selecting a suitable business partner is entirely the company’s responsibility. In thinking about the criteria or characteristics of the ideal partnership, consider your ideal company’s target markets; its other distribution partners or consulting relationships; whether or not it represents or sells any complementary products; and its familiarity and connections with targeted sectors in your country (s) or city (s) of interest.

The request can be submitted either as a form or as a formal letter. Examples of both are provided.

Sample Request Form

Name/Title	Company		
Address			
Phone		Email	
Website			
Explain more about your company (size, type, products/services, etc.)			
Countries and Cities of Interest			
1.			
2.			
3.			
What target markets and sectors are you looking to connect with in your chosen cities/countries?			
Tell us about your ideal partner:			
What kind of company/distributor do you need?			

What kind of products should they sell/deal in?
What knowledge/expertise do they need to have?
Do they need prior experience with your products? (i.e. Are you looking for a company that carries a similar line of products?)
What other local connections should they have? (e.g. Have they already identified markets within the country that would be interested in your product?)
Should they carry complementary products? If yes, which ones?
How long should they have been in business? How much business experience do you prefer?
Should they have prior experience dealing with US companies?
Any other specifications not covered above:

Sample Letter of Request

Dear President John,

My name is Scott F., CEO of SAMPLE Products in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and long-time member of Rotary Club Milwaukee. Phoenix Products is a leading manufacturer of lighting fixtures for heavy equipment, corrosive conditions, hazardous locations and other demanding applications.

As part of our company's global expansion, I would like to elicit the help of the Rotary Club Trust Bridge to help us identify candidates for distribution partners in the cities of México City, Veracruz, Colima and Lazaro Cardenas. In particular, we are looking for Rotarian members who have experience selling lighting products and systems in the commercial and industrial markets, and specifically to port authorities and container/bulk terminal operators. My request is for any guidance you can provide to locate Rotary Club contacts in these cities (for example, Club President or Secretaries). We will then contact them for their suggestions on local members with whom we can start discussions on possible business relationships.

Ideally, I would prefer to connect with Rotarians in these cities who have experience with electrical products, and who have existing connections with port authorities and container/bulk terminal operators, along with engineering firms who specialize in working with the complex systems at shipping ports. A Rotarian with prior experience working with US companies would be an advantage, since there will be a clearer understanding of how US manufacturers work and our expectations from potential business partners. Your suggestions on effective ways for us to identify potential Rotarian partners would be greatly appreciated. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Scott F., CEO

SAMPLE Products

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Email: xxxxxx@xxxx.com

Phone: (xxx) xxx – xxxx

Website: www.sample.com

Rotary President to Rotary President – Letter of Inquiry

The 'outbound' step of the Rotary Club Trust Bridge is taken by the local Rotary Club President upon receiving a request from a Rotarian member. The President sends an inquiry to Rotary Clubs in specified countries, articulating the partnership needs of the requesting member / company. This letter should be sent in both English and the local language(s) of the receiving country. The letter should include how to respond to the inquiry and how to contact the company as well as how the recipient can obtain more information (company website, etc.). E-mail is the preferred method of communication.

Sample Letter of Inquiry

To Selected Rotary Club Presidents - México

(ENGLISH)

Dear ---- ,

My name is John B, president of the Rotary Club of Milwaukee in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA. Our Club is over 100 years old, with almost 400 members, and includes many business and community leaders from the Milwaukee metropolitan area.

We have recently started a new program called the Rotary Club Trust Bridge™, to help our members make business connections by establishing 'Rotarian-to-Rotarian bridges' between our Club and those in many other countries. We believe that the values that form the foundation of Rotary International can also be the foundation for productive global business relationships.

Our first project involves helping a current member who is trying to identify possible distribution partners in the cities of México City, Veracruz, Colima and Lazaro Cardenas. In particular, he is looking for Rotarian members who have experience selling lighting products and systems in the commercial and industrial markets, and specifically to port authorities and container/bulk terminal operators. My request is for any guidance you can provide to locate Rotary Club contacts in these cities (for example, Club President or Secretaries). Our club member will then contact them for their suggestions on local members with whom he can start discussions on possible business relationships.

Ideally, our Club member would like to identify Rotarians in these cities who have experience with electrical products, and who have existing connections with port authorities and container/bulk terminal operators, along with engineering firms who specialize in working with the complex systems at shipping ports. Your suggestions on effective ways for our member to identify potential Rotarian partners would be greatly appreciated. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

John B, President

Rotary Club of Milwaukee

Milwaukee, Wisconsin USA

e-mail: XXXXXXXXXXX@XXX.org

(Español)

Estimado ---- ,

Mi nombre es John B, presidente del Club Rotario de Milwaukee en Milwaukee, Wisconsin, EE.UU. Nuestro Club fue fundado hace más de 100 años, y cuenta con casi 400 miembros, muchos de ellos líderes empresariales y comunitarios de la zona metropolitana de Milwaukee.

Recientemente hemos comenzado un nuevo programa llamado Rotary Club Trust Bridge™ con el objetivo de ayudar a nuestros miembros a crear vínculos comerciales mediante el establecimiento de "Puentes Rotarios-a Rotarios" entre miembros de nuestro Club y los de clubes de muchos otros países. Creemos que los valores que constituyen el fundamento del Club Rotario International pueden ser la base para relaciones comerciales globales productivas.

Nuestro primer proyecto consiste en ayudar a un miembro que está tratando de identificar posibles socios de distribución en las ciudades del Distrito Federal, Veracruz, Colima, y Lazaro Cardenas con la meta de encontrar miembros rotarios que tengan experiencia en la venta de productos y sistemas de iluminación en mercados comerciales e industriales, y especialmente con autoridades portuarias y operadores portuarios de terminales de contenedores y/o a granel. Agradezco su orientación para establecer contactos con los clubes rotarios en estas ciudades (por ejemplo, con el Presidente del club o el Secretario). El miembro de nuestro Club se pondrá en contacto con ellos para discutir sus sugerencias acerca de miembros locales con los cuales se puede iniciar discusiones sobre las posibles relaciones de negocios.

Idealmente, el miembro de nuestro Club quiere identificar los rotarios en estas ciudades que tengan experiencia con productos eléctricos y que ya tengan conexiones con las autoridades portuarias y contenedores / operadores de la terminal a granel, al igual que a empresas de ingeniería especializadas en trabajar con los complejos sistemas en los puertos. Sus sugerencias sobre la manera más efectiva para que nuestro club identifique a los potenciales socios rotarios serían muy apreciadas.

Espero su respuesta.

Atentamente,

John B, Presidente

Club Rotario de Milwaukee

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, EE.UU.

e-mail: XXXXXXXXXXX@XXX.org