

# Kiwanis Insider



Rob Parker • Chief Executive Officer

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For the Leadership of Kiwanis International

Dear Kiwanis Leaders,

## Open to Change

*“Organizations that choose to bemoan societal changes are often left behind by new ventures that are proactive and responsive. While it is not easy to be nimble when you are 94 years old, Kiwanis can take steps to position itself for the future.”*

[\*Kiwanis Insider - January 26, 2009\*](#)

In the last issue of the Kiwanis Insider, we identified some of the changes in society our organization must respond to if we are to be attractive and magnetic to a next generation of Kiwanis members. The most significant of those issues relates to advances in technology that have revolutionized how people communicate. Our first International President, George F. Hixson (1916-1918), could not possibly have imagined a world where each of his Kiwanis members carried an electronic device that would allow them to talk to one another no matter where they were on the planet. I imagine George would have thought you had taken leave of your senses if you told him that one day the International President would be able to send a message to 250,000 Kiwanis members in 70 countries in fewer than five seconds and without a single piece of paper changing hands.

Early Kiwanis clubs were formed when cars were not reliable enough to drive long distances, when long-distance phone calls were an expensive luxury, and when travel from Europe or Asia to North America most likely involved a very long boat ride. In most families, men were the financial providers, women kept the home and raised the children, and everyone lived in the same community where they worked.

While the world has changed dramatically over the last 90 years, the structure of Kiwanis remains almost unchanged since the mid-1920s. Numerous attempts to suggest changes have been met with fierce opposition and spawned pages of rules primarily designed to protect the status quo. While everyone understands that not all change is for the better, our Kiwanis history reflects a much stronger commitment to rules and tradition than to flexibility and adaptation. This is what makes the approval of the “flexible membership initiatives” at the 2006 San Antonio convention so historic and important. Through this initiative, delegates gave the leaders of Kiwanis permission to pilot new programs and initiatives that conflict with our current bylaws and policies, but may help us grow. Several of the initiatives currently being piloted were among those that died on the floor of the House of Delegates in the past.

As a Kiwanis leader, I want to thank you for your willingness to try new ideas to help Kiwanis grow. I also want to ask for your help in advocating for even more change so we can reach the next generation of Kiwanis members. It will not be possible without you.

## Kiwanis Next (part 2)

Last month, I shared some thoughts on some of the changes in the world that will affect how we organize Kiwanis for future generations. Four of these issues relate to advances in technology and communication:

1. The Internet has dramatically changed how people interact and connect with each other, both with current and future generations.
2. Mobile phones and handheld wireless devices allow people to be in instant contact multiple times during the day.
3. Attention spans are shorter and people are accustomed to quick and efficient interactions (get to the point quickly),
4. Instant communication and information sharing has shortened decision-making cycles and the need to meet face-to-face.

We have three choices in light of these realities:

- A: Ignore them and hope they go away.
- B: Resist and rebel against them.
- C: Embrace and leverage them to our best advantage.

Since options A and B are not viable, our Kiwanis Next Research and Development Team has been focusing on embracing and leveraging current and future technology to create the most robust and dynamic Kiwanis experience possible.

Social networking and social media are two of the most exciting advances in technology we believe can be leveraged for Kiwanis. Facebook, Second Life, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, Ning, wikis and blogs are just a sampling of what is available to us to market and develop Kiwanis. These tools can be used to refresh and enhance an existing Classic Kiwanis club, or they can be used as a communication platform upon which a new kind of Kiwanis is formed. While the Internet will never replace the value of face-to-face contact, it will certainly play a huge role in the interconnectedness of future Kiwanis members.

On February 16, 2009, Kiwanis will welcome its first full-time staff member dedicated to the development of strategies to reach the next generation for Kiwanis. Michelle Sperr has been part of the Kiwanis family for the past four years, working on leadership development, club education and executive project management, while also working on her MBA at Butler University. Michelle is very interested in hearing from anyone who has ideas, recommendations or questions about Kiwanis Next. She can be reached at [msperr@kiwanis.org](mailto:msperr@kiwanis.org).

## 2009 Kiwanis International Convention

Don't miss this year's International Convention in Nashville June 25– 28. Visit [www.kiwanis.org/convention](http://www.kiwanis.org/convention) to sign up and secure your participation in the biggest Kiwanis party of the year.

Thanks for leading,

