

Introduction

International president Lynn McKenzie's first goal for this biennium is to build Zonta's visibility and credibility. In her message in the first biennial issue of the Zontian magazine, McKenzie assures us that,

"...by concentrating our efforts on both, we can expect to increase our membership."

The following is a template for clubs to use to assess, analyze and build their credibility and visibility.

Goals

- Retain and rejuvenate our current members
- Raise credibility and brand awareness
- Grow our membership

Why Credibility & Visibility Matter

Keeping the brand promise

The Zonta brand image and promise begins at Zonta International with our mission and vision statements, objects, biennial goals etc. They lay out who we are, what we do and why we exist. The mission statement defines the nature of our membership. Building on this, the ZI website provides both a visual picture of the above as well as more detailed information about our organization and its work. All of these and the myriad other communications Zonta engages in, define our brand image and promise.

Is your club keeping the Zonta brand image and promise?

If you wonder why this is important, consider this: If you decided to go shopping at Macy's but when you arrived the store and its contents were more like the 99 Cents Only store you likely would be disappointed. Why? Because Macy's brand stands for a certain quality of goods and store environment. Your decision to shop at that store was based on its *brand promise*. If it fails to deliver on that promise you likely would not shop there again.

Successful brands always deliver on their promise. Those that struggle, do not. Sears was once America's favorite place to shop - now it is fighting to stay in business. It repeatedly failed to deliver on its brand promise so shoppers went elsewhere. Its brand image is tarnished.

For Zonta to survive and thrive we must deliver on the brand image and promise set by Zonta International.

Zonta clubs have their own brand identities in their own communities in addition to the shared brand image and promise set by International.

Successful Zonta clubs have a strong brand identity that delivers on its local and international promise to members, prospective members and the community. In other words, they are credible and visible.

Weak clubs often struggle because they don't deliver on the promise of the Zonta International brand. For members, potential members and the community, there is a disconnect between what they read, hear, see and think about Zonta International and their experience at the club level.

Clubs that are losing members and/or failing to attract newcomers should consider their credibility, visibility and whether they are delivering on the promise set by both Zonta International and their own club brand. *The more credible and visible a club is, the more compelling it becomes for everyone.*

We have a fantastic mission and there are thousands of men and women who would gladly give their time and treasure to join an organization that offers a unique combination of local and international service as well as education, fellowship, networking etc. But in order to attract and keep them, we must deliver on the promise of our brand.

The following questions and the answers you provide are designed to help you assess your club's credibility and visibility, identify weaknesses and help you chart a course for improvement. Good luck!

Building Your Club's Credibility & Visibility

Answer the following questions and consider the results.
The roadmap to improvement will come from this exercise.

What is your club's brand image?

Your website is your public face. When a visitor arrives what do they see?

- Is the site modern, professional, informative and friendly?
- Does the site display the Zonta logo, reflect Zonta's colors and look visually aligned with the ZI website?
- Does the site reflect our mission?
- Does the site invite visitors to consider membership or support?

Notes:

When a visitor comes to your club meeting, what do they see and experience?

- Is the venue a place where executives and professionals would meet?
- Are attendees dressed in business or business-casual clothing?
- Does the attendance match their expectations?
- Are the attendees happy, engaged and enthusiastic?
- Is the meeting professionally run?
- Does the content of the meeting reflect our mission?
- Does the picture match what they see on your website and on the ZI site?

Notes:

When a visitor attends a Zonta event, what do they see and experience?

- Is the event aligned with our mission?
- Are the goals and accomplishments clear?
- Is Zonta's sponsorship or involvement clearly communicated?
- Is it executed in a professional manner?

First impressions can be powerful. Potential members will be gauging whether or not you look and sound successful and whether they will fit in. Visitors will be comparing what they see and hear with what they've heard about you in the community and/or seen on your website and the ZI website.

If there is a disconnect, there is a credibility gap.

Notes:

What is your club's brand promise?

- Is your brand known in your community?
- What are you known for?
- What do community leaders think of you?
- What do supporters think of you?
- What do potential members in the business and professional community think of you?
- What does the general public think of you?

*Answer these questions honestly yourself, survey your community and consider the answers carefully. **If the brand promise of your club does not match that of Zonta International, there is a credibility gap.***

Notes:

What do you accomplish?

Volunteerism in America is being transformed by the same forces that have made our corporations the most productive in the world. Companies are encouraging their employees to volunteer in places where they won't waste their time and will see tangible results. Philanthropists are demanding accountability from the nonprofit organizations that they fund. Zonta competes for both volunteers and funds. To attract the skilled executives and professionals we need to keep our clubs strong and thriving in the future, we must demonstrate our credibility with an impressive record of accomplishment in carrying out our mission.

How has your club advanced our mission in the past year, two years, five years?

- What do you do to improve the lives of women in your community?
- How many lives do you make a positive difference in each year?
- What kind of advocacy is your club engaged in to advance the status of women? Have you moved the needle in affecting change? How?
- How much money do you raise each year and where is it distributed? What is done with that money? How many people are helped?
- Inventory your accomplishments in the past year, two years, five years and even the past decade.

*Even the smallest accomplishments add up over the years. **But service that is not mission-focused doesn't count. It won't improve your credibility as an organization dedicated to advancing the status of women. If anything, it detracts from it.** Do the math and figure out the answers to the above questions. This is your record of accomplishment and establishes your credibility as a service organization dedicated to advancing the status of women.*

What is your value?

- What is your club's value to your community? What are you doing that would be missed if you stopped doing it?
- What is your club's value to a potential member? What difference will it make in a woman's life if she joins your club?
- What is your club's value to donors or supporters? Why should they support you over another organization?
- What is your club's value to Zonta International and District 9?

Notes:

Is your club visible?

- If your club disappeared tomorrow would it be missed? By whom?
- Are your community leaders aware of your club and the value it is creating and contributing in your area?
- Do potential members, civic leaders, nonprofits, organizations or individuals contact your club regularly looking for help or engagement?
- Are you getting media attention for your accomplishments?
- Are your members recognized as community leaders?
- Are you doing regular e-newsletter or other outreach to potential members, supporters, business and community leaders?

Notes:

Through the process of answering the questions in this template, you should have identified the issues that may be affecting your club's credibility and visibility.

The next step is to take the information gathered and begin applying it. As decisions are made and actions taken, reference back to this document to see if they will build credibility or harm it. Will they add to the value of your club, or not?

**Clubs that make a continuous effort to build and maintain their credibility and visibility will always be relevant and will therefore retain and attract new members.
Good luck!**

Coming Soon: Enhancing Credibility & Visibility Through Effective Communication