



MASONIC MENTOR

Ideas and Information for the Grand Lodge of Alberta's Masonic Leaders
January 2010

BROTHER SECRETARIES

Please distribute/circulate to the WM, SW & JW for their use

Becoming a Stronger Leader

Many of us have questions about leadership as it relates to our year as Worshipful Master or our approaching year as Worshipful Master. These questions are understandable given the lack of "models of leadership" today in our political or business world.

The following are some of my thoughts on leadership. These thoughts are offered to you as "food for thought" to let you decide what kind of leader you can and want to be regardless of your role in Freemasonry since, every Mason can be a leader in his own right.

I will start with this thought - "A leader is someone you chose to follow to a place you wouldn't go by yourself." A leader not only leads but he also needs to motivate, plan, activate, and manage.

As you take the job of leader you need to accept the fact that a leader should serve and not be served. He should praise and not expect praise and he should enlighten and not expect to be enlightened. A leader needs to teach, but he also needs to listen.

The attributes of a leader are well understood. First he must have integrity. He must be committed to task at hand. He must have the courage to envision an improved state. He needs to be a good communicator. He should inspire those who choose to follow. He needs to have compassion for all those who follow. He needs to be loyal to the cause. He needs to trust those who take on assigned tasks.

Good leaders understand that groups are made up of people of increasingly diverse backgrounds who want to know what you are trying to achieve but want input into decisions.

All leaders, particularly Masonic leaders need to recognize that people are busy and that they want to know their efforts are making a difference.

People in volunteer organizations, such as Freemasonry, need positive reinforcement and there can never be too much of that.

The struggle between managers and leaders has been around since time began. It can be seen in many lodges with a new Master coming up with new ideas and others who are strong managers wanting to keep status quo. Leaders are people-focussed, highly innovative with their eye on the long term goal. Managers tend to focus on rules/procedures and, generally, have a short term vision. It needs to be acknowledged that the lodge needs both leaders and managers, ----->

but true positive change will come from those lodge leaders who methodically make it happen.

An insightful leader will share his ideas first with those brothers who have established themselves as managers. In this way he may be able to create buy-in from these individuals.

The frustration will be lessened and the chance for success will increase.

Masonic leaders need to focus their efforts on the future since the past, while useful for lessons learned, is history.

In focussing on the future, there are three guiding questions or principles

First, leaders must begin by addressing the question (s): where is it that people want to go that they won't go without a leader? What can you, as leader, do to close that gap?

Secondly, leaders must take responsibility for preparing for tomorrow and, as many successful businesses know, long range planning is essential for the future of any organization.

Finally, all too often those in leadership positions spend too little time thinking about and planning for the organization's future. Many get caught up in the "here and now" issues which, in evidently, places them in a "firefighting mode". Masonic leaders must find time in their work assessing where the organization is going and, if it is in a bad direction, determining the actions necessary to get it back on track.

Excellent leaders must be the catalyst for the creation of a plan that will create the future people want. Once the plan is in place, it is important to delegate pieces of the plan to willing Brethren and support them in its execution but, at the same time, measuring progress and making necessary plan adjustments to ensure success. When planning, keep Michelangelo's words in mind "the greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it" Leading any part of our fraternal activities is hard work but, by employing all or most of the thoughts presented, can be extremely rewarding because continuous progress is made and everyone feels good about that. No one wants to feel that things are in the "same old rut".

Lodge By-law Tips

The Grand Lodge Office regularly receives by-law revisions due to changes in Lodge fees and dues and requests for dispensation to change the start time of Regular Meetings. Here are some ideas on avoiding these revisions and/or dispensations

Lodge Fees and Dues

A few years ago, the Jurisprudence Committee recommended that Lodges change their by-laws to allow the Lodge Finance Committee to recommend annual dues and fees for approval of the membership. This allows the Lodge to change their dues and fees without having to go through the process of revising their by-laws. ALL LODGES should revise their by-laws to this effect. Recommended by-law wording is available through the Grand Lodge Office.

Regular Meeting Times

Many Lodges are revising their by-laws to allow for more flexible start times for Regular Meetings. Wording such as “Regular Meetings will commence between the hours of 6pm and 8pm by command of the Worshipful Master” is being used. This allows Lodges to have earlier start times when conducting Degrees during their Regular Meeting and not pay for a Dispensation. ALL LODGES should consider this by-law change.



Membership Management – Getting Back to Basics

One of the three pillars of our Strategic Plan is Membership Management and it is focused on membership retention.

We put a large investment of time and energy into initiating, passing and raising new men each year only to have less than half of them become active Freemasons. Why is this? It may be because we are not doing as good of a job on focusing on some of the basics of Freemasonry in our Lodges.

To get back to basics, we need to examine why we exist and what we promise. Our ritual says Freemasonry is “a beautiful system of morality; veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols”. A second definition is contained in a proper slogan “making good men better”. When I asked “what is Freemasonry?”, I usually start out with “Freemasonry is a fraternity that encourages and assists good men to continuously learn and improve to reach their full potential as human beings.” ----->

So ... what is the role of Masonic Lodges in helping men reach their full potential as human beings? It is four-fold.

First, Lodges should cultivate relationships so we can all learn from each other. Second, Lodges should be schools of continuing education to enlighten our members. Thirdly, Lodges should provide leadership opportunities for their members. Finally, Lodges should provide their members with opportunities to serve others.

Cultivating Relations - To effectively cultivate relationships, we have to find ways of really getting to know each other and it is the responsibility of Lodges to create those opportunities. Activities like Saturday Tim Horton’s gatherings, Family Sunday Brunches and summer BBQs/picnics all provide opportunities for members to get to know each other outside of the Lodge.

Educating - Education should be a significant part of our Regular Meetings and it does not have to be Masonic Education. Education of any kind will help “cultivate and improve the mind”. Of course, you can bring in Masonic Guest speakers but what about local doctors, lawyers or financial advisors. Helping your members deal with life’s challenges is just as important as helping them better understand our allegories and symbols.

Developing Leaders - The work of our Lodges provides many opportunities for men to develop their leadership capabilities. Obviously, going through the chairs develops leadership skills but so does committee work and assisting in organizing social programs and special Lodge events or initiative. Give as many of your members as possible an opportunity to develop their leadership skills.

Helping Others - In this day and age, there are so many people in need and Lodges need to encourage their members to assist those in need. Our widows can always use help with snow clearing, lawn mowing, and home maintenance and always appreciate being invited to Lodge social events and receiving Christmas flowers. Of course, there is the MHEBF & MFA that members must be encouraged to support. Food Banks, Toys for Tots and Santa’s Anonymous all need help too.

We need to continue to invest time and energy into keeping our members inspired, motivated and involved.

Getting back to basics in our Lodges will strengthen our Lodges and Freemasonry.

The “Masonic Mentor” is prepared/compiled by the Grand Master. Please direct all feedback, ideas or contributions to the Grand Master *through the Grand Secretary*.