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21st Century Masters' Toolkit



Philalethes E-list

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Hi, Brother...

So they elected you a warden. You're looking at suddenly being a "Worshipful Master" in a Lodge you barely know as a 20, 30, 40 or 50-year-old Mason who finds himself only a year or three into his Masonic Craft Lodge.

Or worse, you're a "retread," a 50 to 70-something year old who's sat the Oriental Chair before. You know you could have done better, but aren't sure how.

In both cases, you're honored, concerned and know that you've got to make a difference. You need to bring yourself and the Lodge something called "Success."

You also know the Lodge needs ...
"something." You're not sure that you're "it."

It would be a lot easier to say, "No, thanks."
That's Masonry in the 21st Century.

It's also why the Philalethes International Research Society editor Nelson King first polled the society's e-mail "list," then asked an old newspaperman member to "put this together."

Oops.

The best Masonic authors have written, “How to Prepare for, and Lead in the East.”

Why reinvent the wheel?

An average “collection” of “New Master” books tend to look like an ancestor carried through the U.S. Civil War. They’re good, but look ... old.

So: Here’s the first “print” version of a 21st Century “Tool Kit” for the 21st Century line officer and new Worshipful Master.

We hope it helps. It won’t if you don’t use it.

Advantage: You have more information on the Web than any 10 Masters could find in books in the previous 300 years.

Disadvantage: Ditto. What can you really use for your Lodge and your own “year?”

We’re taking for granted most of your reading will be “on line.” So we’ve included some good web sites as well as books you might want to read.

This booklet in ways will be “outdated” a year or two after it’s printed. The ideas won’t be. Good luck and have fun.

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Before your “year”

Harold “Pete” Peterson of Wisconsin, U.S., put it well: “Nobody but the Master gets blamed for shortcomings in the lodge, but others will step forward for recognition when good things happen. The burden is great.”

Okay.

What he didn’t say is that the true “Master” Mason knows that. He tries to be big enough not to worry about it – or whether somebody else takes credit.

Brother Pete is no “kid,” but he notes, “Researchers like Robert Bly and Robert Putnam would have us believe men born from the Baby Boomers forward lack the ability or desire to commit to voluntary organizations... These men can commit. They want to commit. They need to commit.

“That being said, they will commit to and only to organizations that add value to their lives.”

And that’s where leadership can help to make the difference.

Contributors to this Tool Kit are a “wild bunch” of varying ages, outlooks and

background, but they all agree a Lodge that does “something” under good and well-planned leadership will bring meaning to its members.

You have an advantage. You are probably at least a Deacon or equivalent in your Lodge when you start planning for your future in a “progressive line.”

Brother Jack Buta of Arizona, U.S., took a broad tack in his “recommendations to a new W.M.” that should begin with the new Mason and Lodge officer.

“Over 2,000 years ago a Pharisee by the name of Hillel said treat the other guy like you want to be treated (well, maybe not in those exact words but close).

“Jesus rephrased it and to us Christians it has become the ‘Golden Rule.’

“Over the centuries men have made fortunes by expanding on this basic advice. Goethe stated that everyone you meet is your master at least one thing if you will only take the time to learn.

“Dale Carnegie starts off his course by teaching you: ‘Do not condemn, complain or criticize.’ (Oh boy, do we blow that rule all of the time!)

“Remember that the most important word a man wants to hear is his own name.

“You can always engage anyone in a conversation as long as you take about him and what he is interested.

“You can get more done with sugar than with vinegar.

“All of these are oversimplifications and all of them are true.

“...Enough B.S., my brother! Here is the answer to your question. ...Just take the advice of Hillel, Goethe, Dale Carnegie, Zig Ziegler and Carl Cloudy reach out to you brothers and show them you are interested in them.

“You will be amazed how this oversimplification works. Besides, what have you got to lose by this plan?

“This is your season to lead my brother, I hope that it is one of the most memorable years of your life.”

While every Past Master has lots of good advice and examples to offer, nowadays the Internet has an incredible variety of material.

If at all possible every new “line” officer who believes there is even a remote possibility he

may end up in the East should start some study for the position.

The Internet is a great place to start after this little toolkit booklet.

As a Deacon or Jr. Warden

Think ahead, not just of new parts you have to learn in ritual...

If you've accepted *any* Lodge office, you're now a Lodge "leader." That means you may as well start looking at leadership as much – and some would say more – as learning new ritual.

Your Lodge seems to want you to become an instant ritual expert, administrator, visitor of distressed Brothers, diplomat, peacekeeper, representative to Grand Lodge, leader, student of Masonic history and protocol and...

Probably also chief cook, bottle washer, janitor and... they guy who has no choice but to make sure everything else is done.

Don't worry if you can't do all this flawlessly. No other Worshipful Master has ever done so either.

Priorities. Priorities.

Since no one man has all the skills and personality for that “perfect” year, the next best thing is planning and team building.

The Philalethes “List” had a dozen Brothers saying the same thing in a dozen ways.

The bottom line is that good planning, good communication and having an officer line working together as a team will bring success for any program the Lodge needs or wants.

But in that one year, one man sits the East. He can’t do all the work, but he can see all the work is done. And seeing that the work is done is far easier if he has spent the previous two to five years working within an “officer team.”

Bro. Ed King of Maine, U.S., offered this set of websites that are a perfect example of the quality as well as quantity of material available.

Here’s a hint for using this type of material and keeping it all in perspective on your home computer.

Start a “Lodge” folder; then create an “Officer Ideas” folder inside that.

When you come to a web site that has good ideas, maybe good graphics as well as words, start yet another folder under “Officer Ideas.”

For Bro. Ed’s suggestions, start a “Maine Ideas” folder.

Then when you go to these web sites, you can save the entire site as “web page, complete, html” into that folder.

Later on you can re-read, print out, or otherwise use the materials.

If you have several years “on the line,” you’ll find this sort of “filing cabinet” setup will help you keep all your new material in some semblance of order.

Bro. Ed wrote:

“The immediate Past Grand Master of Maine spent an enormous amount of time writing a BOOK to aid the Senior Warden about to advance. Calling it ‘Hiram Drummond’s Trestleboard’ (a play on the name of one of Maine’s most beloved and well-known Past Grand Masters, Josiah Hayden Drummond). You can read it online at

www.mainemason.org/craftinfo/trestleboard.htm

“While a few of the things are specific to the Grand Jurisdiction of Maine, much of it could be readily implemented in other areas. It’s got a very ‘down to earth’ style that makes for easy reading. While it certainly will fall short on style if the ‘old newspaperman’ picks it apart <g>, some might find the home-spun approach of value.

“The other work here is for *presiding* Masters and can be found at

www.mainemason.org/craftinfo/hiramhandbook.htm

“Pretty good stuff including sample letters and much more.”

Bro. Bill Thomas of New York City brought this idea that is as old as the hills, but as new as this morning:

“1. Travel in foreign countries: visit other lodges to, not only meet other brothers and make yourself known, but to get ideas for your own lodge programs. Nobody has a monopoly on good ideas.

“2-Member retention: All brothers are in the lodge for their own unique reasons. But without question they have in common two strong ties to

keep them at the lodge meeting: good ritual and interesting programs.”

The Internet, traveling and visiting other Lodges – before you’re the W.M....

Then there are the old faithfuls.

Books.

Yes, some such as Carl Claudy’s “The Master’s Book” may be passed to you in an edition that looks as if somebody carried it through the U.S. Civil War.

But the advice and suggestions are as good as when it was copyrighted in 1935.

This and other older Masonic books often fit quite well in a coat pocket – and are great reading any time, even if they look a century old.

Bro. Al McClelland of Indiana, U.S., noted that as he prepared for his “year” while sitting in the West, he was reading Claudy, Micky Ander’s “Masonic Et iquette, Protocol and Decorum, J. Kirk Nicolson, Jr.’s “Masonic Etiquette,” and J. Kirk Nicholson’s “Masonic Etiquette.”

Bro. McClelland also raised an important point for readers of this tool kit: “If there is anything else out there, I’ll be overwhelmed. Keep looking, though.”

There is so much material that ... the average Mason simply doesn’t have time to wade through it.

Once only Masons in larger Lodges with excellent libraries had the “problem” of too much material. Now it’s a problem for us all.

Start early. Start reading when you’re a deacon or equivalent. Start asking for “why” and “How do we” then.

Ask the Master and Wardens if there’s a long-term program you should be studying for, such as many Grand Lodges’ “award program.”

Does your “line” have a long-term calendar and plan for programs such as an event for widows?

It may not be time to “push” for long term planning, but a set of calendars with Masonic “special dates” affecting your Lodge might be a good project for the new officer.

It reminds everyone that the Lodge doesn’t go from year to year, but there are cycles of events such as Grand Lodge, officer elections, installation, annual programs...

Some Lodges and Grand Lodges are far more formal on their calendar than others – just as they are in protocols, dress codes and such.

Making a calendar for several years “out” certainly gives the new officer the start on a calendar and trestleboard for “his” year.

It also may help other officers ahead of him on the line.

It's Closer! As Sr. Warden

Frankly this chapter is where the Philaethes E-List began with their numbered lists.

The society's editor started the ball rolling, then others added their bits, sometimes with the same number system, sometimes starting anew.

That is just like your "year" will be.

Without a calendar and the idea of a plan, you will find a rather chaotic time.

Of course, often with a calendar and a plan you also might find a chaotic time. That's why you need to plan and think ahead ... and why you need to be certain that there will be a team to solve even the greatest "disaster" or "honor" you could imagine.

This booklet was designed with "use" in mind, not something to put into your library as a reminder of something that you should have read.

So, complete to check-boxes, fill this booklet with notes, use your “legal pad” to help with priorities and ideas you have.

If you are like most new officers, the notes will be lost or put under a stack of higher priorities.

But writing down things you think are important, and marking check boxes on this “concept list” can be excellent memory aids.

Now...

Here is a set of suggestions of “how to be a successful Worshipful Master.”

Some may be part of your Lodge’s culture.

Some may be entirely new ideas.

You personally may need to work on one idea more than others because ... you simply should.

Others may not be a problem for your or your Lodge.

NOTES:

Lodge Idea Checklist

1. Don't worry about what the District is doing, don't worry what Grand Lodge is doing.

2. Concentrate on your Lodge and your Lodge members.

3. Write a letter P.M. and every member who does not usually attend Lodge and personally invite them to Lodge. Offer to have junior members pick them up and bring them to Lodge and then take them home. Long-lasting relationships can be formed by this, and it is good for both the old member and the young member.

4. In this letter (from #3), include your program for the year. And please have a ***program*** that is not just the usual business meeting and degrees.

5. Have one "town hall" meeting. Open Lodge, close Lodge. And then the town hall meeting. Ask questions from the members, what they like, what they don't like, etc.

6. Open on time. ***Never open late.***

7. Keep the business section ***short.***

8. Keep the meetings ***moving.***

Brother Nelson adds to his own list this “appendix.”

Program: Again there are a thousand things you could do.

Special meetings to honor _____. Just fill in the blank.

Hold an open house. Invite the mayor and anyone you can think of. If they don’t show up, then it is their problem. (But make certain they know they’re invited and had a “reminder” soon before the meeting.)

Have nights such as Past Masters’, Step Up, do a practice degree.

Invite degree teams to meetings to exemplify a degree.

Have visitation with other Lodges.

Have real banquet hours, not just coffee and a ham sandwich or stale cookies.

From Israel, Bro. Leon Zeldis, FPS, adds by the number:

□ 9. After every initiation, have a regular meal attended also by the ladies. Make sure the wife or companion of the new initiate is made feel welcome. Prepare flowers for her.

□ 10. Give the new initiate reading material. Not to memorize, but to learn.

□ 11. Have regular meetings (once every 4 to 6 weeks) conducted by the JW, perhaps assisted by more experienced brethren, especially for the recent EAs. Ditto for recent FCs. Make attendance compulsory. What to discuss?

Q&A, structure of Freemasonry, how the Lodge is organized, ditto the Grand Lodge, why ritual, why symbolism, etc. etc, The FCs could expand into areas of general culture: architecture, art, philosophy, and history.

□ 12. Prepare reading lists for each degree. Advise where are the nearest Masonic libraries, visiting hours.

□ 13. Explain the procedure when going to visit another lodge. Promote new brethren going out with veterans to visit other lodges.

Bro. Milo Dailey of Wyoming and South Dakota, U.S., Grand Lodges added:

“**First**, get or improve a Lodge newsletter that arrives in time, and timed to remind all that it’s “Lodge Night” next Tuesday.

“**Second**, ensure there’s a program before the year begins. If there hasn’t been joint planning with the ‘line’ officers in your Lodge for ongoing program, start it.

“**Third**, ensure that ‘program’ will continue even if the Worshipful Master, or even the WM and Senior Warden can’t be at a given meeting due to illness, weather, work or family emergencies.

“That’s where the Lodge ‘officer team’ concept proves itself. It also means that junior officers have to be ready to step up and be counted and show their leadership.

“But it’s far easier if there are officer meetings and an understanding of what the program for a given meeting is planned to be, and what the officer leaders should do to make it work.

“Ideally if the new Master has done his ‘year’s preparation,’ he ensures his Lodge’s success during his year even if he is unable to serve after installation.

“... Additional program ideas: Many have never seen, let alone participated in, a Masonic funeral, officer installation, cornerstone laying... Do a ‘mock’ presentation of each and discuss them.

“Two other possible programs are at the Frontier Army Lodge of Masonic Research web site,

www.falmr.org

“Look under the ‘Site Map’ for ‘Public Opening’ and ‘Empty Chair Degree’ programs. Both are written out with instructions, and could be run through and discussed.

“There also are good Table Lodge programs at the Philalethes web site and elsewhere.”

Bro. Errol Feldman, now of the Netherlands, has his own number list:

1. Be the Master. That does not mean run roughshod over everybody else.

2. Don't let the secretary run the meetings.

3. Don't accept, “We have always done it that way.”

4. Do try some of your own ideas. They will be just as good, if not better, than previous ideas.

5. Think about it: If you have finally reached the Chair of Solomon, you have been around (generally speaking) for some number of years in the committee and should have some

idea of what works well and what doesn't work at all.

□ 6. Don't be afraid to innovate. Try getting one of your more "learned" members to give a paper (not too complicated) at a Lodge meeting and then discuss it as is done in European Lodges.

□ 7. Do a demonstration working where any Brother can interrupt and ask questions about the "why" and the "how."

Bro. Jim Kornegay of California, U.S., adds along similar lines:

"Don't let 'them' tell you it won't work. Make them show you it didn't work.

"Lots of my old-timers said, "We tried that back in '47 and it didn't work.

"Times and people change. Things that didn't work back then may well work now. Try it. What have you got to lose?"

Bro. Samuel B. Walker, FPS, Past Grand Master in Connecticut, offered yet another numbered list:

□ 1. Take time to evaluate your Lodge. What are its strong points? What are its weaknesses?

Try to determine why the members are not coming out and then... do something about it!

□ 2. Greet all members and visitors cordially before the meeting if possible.

□ 3. Instruct all officers to greet members and visitors cordially at all meetings. Officers should devote more time talking to those on the sideline than with each other. Some of the Brethren may be shy or timid, particularly if they have not attended Lodge recently. Make them feel at home.

□ 4. When a member who has not attended recently does come out, recognize him in open Lodge, but *do not* dwell on how long he has been absent, however. Let him know that he has been missed and that his presence is appreciated.

□ 5. Get to know your members! Greet them by name whenever possible. Instruct your Secretary (he usually knows most members by sight) to quietly advise concerning the presence of members and visitors he may know. Be sure that he includes any titles that may be involved.

□ 6. Visit or call members who do not attend Lodge. It is possible that a slight misunderstanding is keeping them away, or possibly they need assistance or advice.

☐ 7. Frequent telephone calls can add that personal touch that is so often lacking.

☐ 8. Send friendly and newsy notes to Brethren who live some distance away. (A Lodge “Newsletter” is an excellent way to accomplish this in a blanket manner).

☐ 9. Send postal cards, or a letter each month to a select list of your members, personally inviting them to the meeting.

☐ 10. Visiting the sick is not only a basic inherent duty of a Mason, but it also helps attendance. They appreciate your interest and will return.

☐ 11. Visit other lodges... you will find that there is a measure of reciprocity involved. Sort of, “you come to my house, and I’ll go to yours”. Besides, you will need their support in your year as Worshipful Master and cooperation is a two-way street!

☐ 12. Give proper recognition to Brethren who have been honored for any reason. Be generous with your praise.

☐ 13. Start your meetings on time!

☐ 14. Stimulating and varied programs help attendance.

☐ 15. End your meetings in good time!
Program your meetings from a time standpoint

so that they will not become too long and boring. Long meetings are one of the most common causes for a drop in attendance.

□ 16. Always maintain control of your meetings. Wield your gavel with discretion, but with authority. Allow no disrupting conversations that will tend to interfere with or prolong your meeting.

□ 17. To the best of your ability see that all degrees are conferred with the proper spirit and dignity. The ritual should be rendered in a forceful, expressive and eloquent manner. Train your officers to speak loud enough to be heard throughout the Lodge. Nothing is more disconcerting to the Brethren assembled than to be unable to hear the officers speak.

□ 18. Create activity. Provide opportunity for various members to participate. Use different members for committees; solicit the assistance of different members for program planning or directing. Permit different members to give the “Charges,” present the “Working Tools,” give the lectures, etc. When making such appointments, emphasize not how easy or how difficult the assignment is, but how important.

□ 19. Invite Masonic Dignitaries to your meetings, not necessarily to speak, but just to be

there. They are usually delighted to come; just ask them. Their presence may create additional interest for your members. The top ranking officers of Grand Lodge have busy schedules, so when an invitation to them is contemplated, give as much lead time as possible.

□ 20. Add the names of your Masonic District's Dignitaries to your Lodge's mailing list. They will "spread the word" throughout the District of your upcoming programs. Always keep them informed. They are may be of service to you and your Lodge and are usually willing to be of assistance at all times.

□ Finally: Remember, if your members can:

☞ Witness ritualistic work they can be proud of,

☞ Attend non-degree meeting programs they can be proud of,

☞ Meet congenial members and officers they can be proud of,

☞ See an improved and steady attendance they can be proud of,

☞ Participate in programs they can be proud of,

☞ Attend Lodge social functions they can be proud of;

📄 Be assured of refreshments they can be proud of:

📄 Then, you will have a strong, active, well-attended lodge in which you can take justifiable pride, because through hard diligent work, and much of your valuable time, you will have made it so.

Bro. Jack Pos, Past Master of The Heritage (Research) Lodge No. 730, G.R.C. in the Province of Ontario, Canada, wrote on the Philalethes Society e-list:

“A couple of list members have already posted very good suggestions for the new W.M.

“...I could add one or two thoughts. When I was W.M. in 1965, I prepared a complete list of all the bit parts for each of the three degrees of Freemasonry and then added additional columns with year headings.

“Previous documents and work assignments were researched to determine who had previously done the specific charges, and then added additional columns for the next five years (or more if desired).

A quick review of the chart will reveal the names of all the brethren (and brethren from

other lodges) who had previously participated in the work, and at the same time provide interesting patterns of names that appear consistently opposite different parts of the work, and also disclose, from a knowledge of the membership, those who never do any work.

The very existence of such a ‘Worshipful Master’s List’ can be of immeasurable help in allocating the work for the various degrees depending on whether you wish to employ someone who has done that particular charge or whether you want someone to learn a new piece of work.

“Additional code letters can be added to the list to identify the quality of work rendered.

“Such an aid can be passed on to successive W.M’s., but they must keep the list up-to-date.

“It is also a good idea to maintain a breast pocket booklet, like a diary. Devote a page or pages for each of the scheduled lodge meetings for the coming year of office, with complete notes for each meeting of projects that have been scheduled for the year. (Use a lead pencil with a good eraser for all the corrections that will arise during the year).

“The most important advice is to have a well-organized plan (that can be modified) for the coming year.”

Notes:

Planning Installation

In most Masonic jurisdictions, there are elected and appointed officers. The appointed officers serve at the will of the Worshipful Master, but frequently continue “up the line.”

These officers are not the same in every jurisdiction. U.S. Masons often are surprised to find a whole host of appointed positions elsewhere that they never have heard of – and vice versa.

But the principles remain.

Still, if the incoming Master wants to have a successful year, it’s best for him to do some advance planning.

That means planning installation of officers for “his” year even before he takes the West, let alone when he is elected to the East.

First, even in Lodges with a “progressive line,” will the Brothers involved be able to serve in “your” year?

Will they be able to serve as leaders or has some personal circumstance arisen that might better be discussed on an individual and private basis rather than in Lodge?

A good private talk, face to face, with each officer, regardless of your Lodge “traditions” also will help establish you with these men as a leader thanks to your concern and courtesy.

If a current “progressive line” officer may not be able to serve the following year, it may then be well to discuss this with the seated Master before the election, again as a courtesy to all concerned.

Ensure that each elected and appointed officer might have the opportunity over the preceding year to learn not just the “traditional” role of his seat, but also what you will be expecting during the coming year.

Find an installation date, if one is not pre-set in your Lodge or Grand Lodge regulation, when the most men might be available.

If allowed – and most U.S. jurisdictions do allow it – a public installation may be an excellent opportunity for a family dinner event of some sort. This allows the wives and families to have a better understanding of what is expected.

The dinner might also be an excellent opportunity for an official presentation of a Past Master’s pin or other mementos.

But with advance planning, the installation is the beginning of a new Lodge year – not half a year of preparation and half a new Lodge year.

Notes:

- 1. Time and place set?
- 2. If a meal, has the mode been selected and prepared for well in advance?
- 3. Has the Installing Master been selected and guests invited if appropriate in your jurisdiction?
- 4. Since the incoming and outgoing Masters likely will be rather busy, have other officers been detailed to prepare the articles required in your jurisdiction for the installation?
- 5. Has there been an appropriate announcement and follow-up to ensure good participation?
- 6. Has an “official photographer” and “reporter” been selected to forward a photo and information on new officers to local media, the Grand Lodge or others according to traditions in your jurisdiction?
- 7. Either at the installation itself or at the meal before or after, it is traditional for the incoming Master to make a “statement.” Do this

well in advance and time it to no more than two or three minutes. Your officers and active Lodge members should know the year's plans in detail, so this is simply a "Thank You" to those who have put their trust in your leadership.

□ 8. What have you forgotten for the Installation? It's virtually guaranteed that when this hallmark event is completed, you'll think, "I really should have..."

Notes:

Your Year.

Did you prepare?

Around the time of installation there's inevitably a time of "buyer's remorse" by the new Worshipful Master.

Is he "duly and truly prepared" for the job?

Assuming a trestleboard/calendar has been set for the coming year, and other plans such as suggested in the first section of this book have been adopted, you've got a good start.

But there's no question that "stuff" will happen. Weather, war, the inevitable Masonic funeral or other unexpected circumstances certainly will crop up.

In many jurisdictions, for example, the incoming W.M. may wish to discuss with his secretary when local funeral homes last were visited to discuss Masonic funerals, mutual contacts in the Lodge and funeral home for such plans, etc.

There should be alternate contacts for this and similar needs of the Lodge.

If the secretary usually is the contact person for funeral homes, who would make up two or three layers of “backup” in case he is unavailable?

Building/other emergencies...

Up to now, we have discussed mostly the “Fraternal Leadership” aspects of being responsible for a Lodge.

But there are other responsibilities as well.

Leadership also means being aware of the operational side of the Lodge.

Nobody wants an emergency. But have you checked out the “contact numbers” at local police, fire, gas, electricity, water, telephone and other utilities?

It’s much easier to have that contact kept up to date in case of an emergency.

For example, if a water main bursts, partially flooding your Lodge building, many problems can be alleviated by ensuring that there is enough depth on the “contact lists” that one of your officers might be able to open doors and make needed “on the spot” decisions for the Lodge.

The same is true of lights left on, fire, a piece of someone else's roof blown through your building or vice versa... a burglary or suspected burglary

These may sound so "unusual" as unworthy of concern, but inside two years at one Lodge the basement flooded due to outside road construction, police called the Master a half dozen times for lights left on and suspected burglaries. The Fire Department required entry for a routine inspection. The electric company required entry as well.

In larger communities it may be even more important that these agencies have appropriate contact names on file. Imagine working late at the Lodge office as two officers bang on the door wanting to know who's in the building and whether they've a right to be there.

The telephone is another "problem."

Many Lodges in North America, at least, have a telephone and an entry in the phone book. Yet, except on Lodge nights or at other events, there is nobody in the Lodge.

The new Master may wish to consider either an answering machine of some sort that could

announce schedules and “contact people” – or even a “call forwarding” scheme.

If there’s a Lodge web site and email address, who has access for receiving mail and changing the site? At least two backup people are available for this, right?

Who gets the “paper” mail, where does it come and are there alternate people besides the secretary who might check the mails?

What of the Treasurer? Are there alternate signatures to access Lodge accounts and pay bills?

And by the way, when is the last time your Lodge had its accounts audited? It need not be by a professional accountant, but when I was Master of my Lodge, our Treasurer – a Certified Public Accountant with high professional as well as Masonic credentials – came to me to ask that a knowledgeable Brother or “somebody” review the Lodge accounting.

That is good to protect everyone involved and is good “professional” practice.

Where are the secretary’s work records and correspondence? Are they readily available in case something happens to him – or to the records themselves?

A computer record is not usually difficult to reproduce at least on a monthly basis.

Again, some Grand Lodges have more specific regulations on this – but does the incoming Master know what’s going on, what is required and how to handle a “disaster?”

If not, why not?

Backup, backup, backup.

The next chapter in this booklet is “What happens if?”

But if planning and backup plans are in place, much of the “What if” problem is far less a disaster than if planning and backup is not in place.

Much of this is under the same category that every small business person should have in place, but most of us never think of when it comes to our Lodge.

But having a set of Lodge records, accounting, and backup officers available to make decisions on the spot at any time can be invaluable.

The “backup officers” should perhaps be the Wardens as well as secretary and “good old Joe”

who are familiar with the regular operational needs of the Lodge.

It takes only one situation where the “lead” officer is out of town, ill or otherwise unavailable to make the “back-up” system prove itself – and it’s not difficult to organize.

Another advantage is that there is greater depth of perceived responsibility rather than the assumption that, “The Master Will Do It” or ditto for the secretary.

Your Lodge will be far better served.

In fact, what we’ve done is incorporate the “operational” side with the “leadership” side – and hopefully we have increased our depth of leadership and leadership training this way.

Notes:

What Happens If?

The bottom line of this chapter is to get the Worshipful Master-elect thinking about covering as many contingencies as possible.

“Backup” for Lodge operational duties or emergencies and “backup” for degree work are both absolute needs for Masonry.

Yet too often Lodges “get out of the habit.”

If your Lodge has good “habits,” you have only to ensure that they are continued both through your own efforts and other appropriate officers in your Lodge.

If your Lodge has fallen into bad habits, you have the leadership challenge of changing them without dismissing the valuable contributions of the very men who believed in you enough to elect you Master.

This is why planning is so important.

In fact, many of the “operational” aspects of Lodge management in this booklet are so common-sense that you may wish to discuss them in private with your predecessor.

Each of us has his own strengths and weaknesses.

Some Masters are exceptional ritualists who can assist and improve the quality of “Labor” in the Lodge.

Others may be “weak” at ritual, but excellent administrators or organizing leaders.

The advantage of a progressive line is that there is a “management team” rather than placing all the responsibility on one man – who simply cannot do it all.

What if...???

With a good management team, no disaster, illness of the Master or secretary, fire, hurricane or loss of part of a degree team is a problem that cannot be overcome with smooth dignity.

Notes:

Great Web Sites

www.mainemason.org/craftinfo/trestleboard.htm

www.mainemason.org/craftinfo/hiramhandbook.htm

These are the Maine, USA, Grand Lodge pages with extensive files, sample forms, etc., on planning and managing a Masonic Lodge. Although they were designed for Maine, nearly every Master, Lodge and Grand Lodge can gain from a study of these pages and suggestions.

www.falmr.org

This site has several programs of interest for both public and private programs, including a Public Opening Ceremony that explains what Masons do in Lodge, and a memorial service called the Empty Chair Degree written in U.S. style ritual wording.

Frontier Army Lodge of Masonic Research #1875 is a living history Masonic organization that has specialized in public presentations as well as historical research itself.

<http://freemasonry.org/psoc/>

Everyone is entitled to a little “commercial.”

The Philalethes Society is the world’s largest and oldest Masonic Research Society.

Along with a traditional printed magazine, members have access to a worldwide network of Masons who follow Anderson’s Constitutions as Regular Freemasons regardless whether their Grand Lodges may or may not be in amity.

Members include some of the better known Masonic scholars as well as those who simply find light as reflected from a broad spectrum of current Masonic thought and “news.”

“The List” is a worldwide Masonic e-list that brought this booklet to fruition. It is open only to Regular Freemasons who are PSOC members.

One day the list may dispute a point of history, ritual or Masonic ethics and the next open their hearts, pocketbooks or even homes to a Brother or his family when in distress.

WWW. – Your Grand Lodge site.

Too often Masons too seldom look at their own Lodge or Grand Lodge site.

Is your own Lodge web site updated with contact and other information you would like the public to have access to?

Ensure it is representing your Lodge.

What are you missing from your own Grand Lodge site that could be of benefit to you and the Brothers you serve?

<http://freemasonry.org>

This short page includes E-M@son links, links to Philalethes and its Prince Hall (PHA) counterpart the Phylaxis Society.

It also under “links” offers 1,690 web sites that certainly are not all the possible noncommercial and commercial web pages available – but it certainly is a well-ordered page that is an excellent start for “everything you ever wanted to know about Freemasonry.”

Here’s the index.

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Great Books

Masonry has far more “great books” than might be expected by someone relatively new to the Craft.

There are incredible flights of Masonic philosophy, ethics, history ... encyclopedias and books that cover subjects from the incredibly esoteric to the very practical operation of a Lodge.

But right now... the task of reading, then putting things into action, is daunting.

We would recommend rereading this manual with a tablet or keyboard next to it to record what and how you think you’re doing and “things to do.”

Just the “practical side” information here could take several weeks of “recreation time” for you to properly prepare as an action plan.

Yes, the job of a Worshipful Master is one of great responsibility – in most Lodges with financial and building implications far greater than most organizations.

Good luck. See you in Lodge.

Inside Back Cover Notes:

Basics for managing and leading a Masonic Lodge...

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research society.