

Report of the Grand Historian, V.: W.: Dean W. Heinemann
2007 Grand Lodge Communication

Most Worshipful Grand Master and Brethren all,

Do we have problems within this Grand Jurisdiction?

YES

What are the root causes of these problems?

PLANNING, COMMUNICATION, COMMITMENT

I will leave the topic of planning to the Chairman of the Committee on Long Range Planning and will focus my comments on communication and commitment.

Identifying problems without offering viable solutions are the equivalent of shooting one's self in the foot and not seeking medical help. Freemasonry continues to not only shoot but then to reload and shoot again. We talk and talk and talk some more but few take action and fewer still take appropriate and timely action. My Brothers, this is not brain surgery. This can and must be simple. Not because we are simple minded but because the simplest of ideas turn out to be the best ideas.

An example: Bikes 4 Books - go to the school with the proposal to help with their reading program, provide the bikes and let the schools provide and administer the program. This is the efficient and very effective way to have a positive impact on the youth of your community. Some will say that this approach is the equivalent of mailing in the program and not being involved. This could not be farther from the truth. Be involved in the planning, fundraising, transportation, presentation of the bikes and let the teachers do what they do best; TEACH. Enhance their program and they will be doing back flips; show up at their school with a canned reading program and they will flip you and not in a good way.

Bro John Ward Worlein, Member of the Education Committee of the Grand Lodge A.F. & A. M. of Minnesota, noted in his paper "The West Gate". The very simplest, yet most effective, activity for your Lodge is to communicate at your stated meetings. Crass business meetings are not

Masonry, they do not make good men better - they make all men bored.

Here are a few topics you may want to explore:

1. If I find a man who may be interested in Freemasonry, what can I tell him about the fraternity?
2. How do I "sell" the positive aspects of Masonry? What are they?
3. Can I suggest a book to a prospective candidate? (How about "Freemasons for Dummies" for a fresh look at the Craft?)
4. What is the history of our Lodge, of our Grand Lodge, of Freemasonry in general?
5. What information about Freemasonry is "good", and what is myth?
6. Can we "target" men who would be good for our Lodge? How?

Have a Brother pick a topic, make a presentation, and plan to spend an equal amount of time in discussion, questions, or even 'rebuttal'. Remember, the discussion is typically more of a learning experience than the presentation it revolves around. If there is a problem at your lodge - discuss it, analyze the situation, and then decide what you need to do to address it.

Finding interested prospects and bringing them into your lodge is one thing - retaining them is quite another. Strangely, many lodges raise enough new Masons to sustain a viable membership, but they just can't keep them interested and eventually lose them - and when we lose a member it is forever. Not only have we expended hopeful energy on their behalf, but they have formed a negative opinion about Freemasonry. I cannot think of a more discouraging situation - hopes dashed, a good man lost and another word of mouth testimonial about what a disappointment Masonry can be.

Simply put, no amount of promotion or publicity will change our fortunes unless we change our approach to giving men a reason to become and to remain Masons. If you do as you have always done, the result will be the same one you have always gotten; WE MUST CHANGE. Insanity is doing things the same old way but expecting different results each time, again WE MUST CHANGE.

However, we must continue to "Expect Greatness" in ourselves and others. We must not be afraid to "Change" what isn't working; we must "Walk the Talk". We have an opportunity to make Masonry even better and we have an

obligation to Masons and all those prospective Masons out there to leave this fraternity better than when we found it.

I ask that each of you make a commitment to your Lodge and to your Brothers; A commitment to become more active in Lodge meetings; A commitment to become more active in Lodge activities and A commitment to talk with a Lodge Brother who does not regularly attend meetings. Find out why he does not attend and share that information with the leadership of your Lodge. They might be surprised. Have them take action on the reason he is not active. Then, take that one additional step and convince the Brother that he needs to become more active in his Lodge; "Walk the Talk". If each of us accepts this challenge and is successful, attendance at Lodge meetings will double. Why is this important? It's important because the more that participate the better the programs can be; the better the ideas can be; the more fun we can have; and **THE BETTER WE WILL FEEL ABOUT OUR FRATERNITY AND THE HARDER WE WILL WORK.**

But, we must do one additional thing; **TEACH**. We all get tired of organizing events year after year after year and we wonder if anyone will ever step up and take over for us. We have failed, failed our Lodge, failed ourselves; we have failed to prepare and teach another Brother to be our replacement. This is true for each and every one of us. Take that new Mason and continue his instruction; **TEACH** him what you do and more importantly why you do it; use the Lodge Officers Handbook to **TEACH** floor work, use the New Candidate Education Program for additional instructional material; use the Proficiency in Lodge Management examination. Get a group together and study, read, discuss and learn. You can become an effective Mentor to the next generation of Masons and then sit back and watch things happen, but not for too long because we have important work that must be done.