

DISCOURSE

Volume I, Issue 13

February 23, 2011

“Membership do we have the right approach?”

Dear Brothers:

Have you stopped to think about Membership. I mean really think about membership. For example have you taken out paper and pencil looked at your Particular Lodge's members such as Initiation's, Passing's and Raising's, Dual and Plural Members, death and transfers and most important Non-payment of dues (NPD's).

Have you gotten involved and asked the Brothers why they are not paying their dues. Have you looked at the root cause of their dissatisfaction with Freemasonry? Probably not, yet membership is the biggest concern we have been encountering in Freemasonry since the early 1980's in Florida. It happen much earlier in the rest of the country.

The minute the Brother is late or has not paid his dues, we immediately toss him out like a used tissue. This attitude leads me to think that we must be so rich, so well of, so full with members that we have reached our goal or saturation point in membership that the loss of those members is no longer relevant.

I know of no business that could sustain this loss of customers for so many years and remain in business, because in the real world, profits are what drive success or failure and that is directly tied to the number of customers.

We as a Fraternity or a Lodge will never come to grip with the membership problems until we understand the causes of NPD's. How do you determine that process, well there is no set course that I know of and for all I know there may be several ways or avenues of approach.

However, the one thing I know is that whatever avenue you take you must first set the course that you will take and follow it through to the end. If there are to be any changes make sure you apply them to all members surveyed.

One thing is for sure you must study it, digest it, and dissect it, before we will have a clear understanding of the cause and this has not been done. I assure you that there will be things in common from Lodge to Lodge but we will also find some situations that will only be germane to your area or Lodge.

So where do we start. Well my Brothers, if charged with heading this committee for the Lodge, this should be the approach. Start small no more than 50 NPD's to start with, picked at random, for example the last 50 whether it was from this year or the past several years but do not go back more than five years as listed, no picking or choosing because someone in the committee knew them.

List names alphabetically with the following information on one sheet of paper per person, you may use their Masonic information sheet provided by Grand Lodge, which already has this information. For some Brothers it may be several sheets long, make a copy of it and it will save work for the committee.

1. Address, Telephone numbers and Email address, etc.
2. Masonic History for Lodge and Grand Lodge how many years of service and any projects he may have done around the Lodge.
3. Age, Marital Status, Children etc.
4. Known Hobbies, recreations, sports etc.
5. What is his profession?

Write the Brother a letter or email of introduction and inform them that you would like to speak with him, on a specified day to conduct a survey if he would be so kind as to assist us in this endeavor. Make sure to express your

anticipated gratitude for his participation and the importance of this survey, to try to understand the root cause of the loss of interest in Freemasonry.

We need to think the situation differently, this problem has always been addressed from the viewpoint of non-payment of dues, yet the real reason is the lost of interest. Realistically my Brothers, would you pay money to belong to or subscribe to something you have lost interest in or no longer perceive as real value.

We need to be willing to hear and understand the reasons why this is happening, I promise it will not be fun, it will be hard and possibly unpleasant but at the end, we will have learned some of the issues, which caused these Brothers to leave. When conducting the survey use a sheet of paper with the questions on it, and another blank sheet with the number of the questions on it to write the answers given by the Brothers. This can be written on the back of the original sheet of paper with his information, where his name is already on it and will save time and money.

The following questions may be appropriate:

1. Brother _____ what changed from the time you were raised to when you decided you no longer wanted to be a Mason.
2. Brother _____ what caused you not to want to be a member of Fraternity anymore?
3. Brother _____ what were your expectations of Masonry versus what you found that made you want to retire from the Fraternity?
4. What did you like most about Masonry?
5. What did you dislike most about Masonry?
6. Were you ever mentored as you were going through the Degrees? Not Coached? Explain mentoring process in Masonic context.
7. Where you ever involved in any schools of instructions related to Masonic Education?
8. If you could change one thing you think would make Masonry better within the confines of our rules. What would that be?
9. If you could change, one thing you think would make Masonry better within or without the confines of our rules. What would that be?
10. What in your mind make the Fraternity interesting enough for you to join its ranks again, if anything?

This can also be accomplished in a written survey, post card or in envelop no postage necessary or a self addressed and stamped return envelope, where all that has to be done is either folded or stuff and sent, must be made easy.

The following are additional questions that can be asked of the Brothers that may shed some light on the reasons why they did not want to belong anymore.

1. What relationship was your first line signer to you?
a. Father b. Father in-law c. Brother d. Friend e Co-worker f. Others _____
2. What relationship did you have with your sponsor after you became a Mason?
3. Was Masonry what you expected based on what you were told it was?
a. If not why not?
4. Are you still friends with your sponsors?
5. Was the distance that you have to travel to the Lodge an influence on your retirement from Masonry?
a. If Yes, did you check the Local Lodges?
b. If No, why not?
6. Were you made to feel a part of the Membership after your initiation, passing or raising?
7. Were you ever given jobs in and around the Lodge?
8. Were you ever made part of any committee?
9. Did you ever take part in any Degree?
10. Were you interested in learning the Ritual?
a. Did you?
b. If not, why not?

As I see it, we have more reasons than just not paying the dues that is too encompassing a reason, we need to get to the actual root cause that leads the Brothers not to pay their dues.

This is another one of those tasks that no one wants to do, and by the way is not the Secretary's job to do this, if that is what you are thinking and it is not the Masters either. It is every ones job; we all have something at stake here. So volunteer to head up this committee or be a member of it, get the information from the Secretary, assist him in compiling what you need. Discuss it with the Master see what is the best approach would be. Formulate your questionnaire and go to it. Gather all the information and see what the results are, you may be surprised.

One very important part of that survey, please share your information with the Grand Lodge Officers. We would like to see the entire data gathered and the results of the survey. This very important work and needs to be accomplished at the Lodge level and it has not been done.

When the information is collected, please make a copy of the questions asked, the responses, and the Brothers information. If you have it on a spreadsheet it would be great, if not is okay too. The only thing I would request that if you send the information please send it in its entirety so we can catalog and group according to area, age, profession, and answers to all the questions as well as the questionnaire.

Respectfully and Fraternally Submitted, I remain your most humble servant

Jorge L. Aladro
Senior Grand Warden

If you would like to receive, these newsletters make request at email below if you would like to forward to your list of friends you have my permission and thank you in advance.

“My Brothers, the newsletters are intended to be thought provoking, to get you to think creatively, to get you thinking what if?, to dare you to improve yourself and your Lodge.”

Note: If you would, like to have any of these presentations made at your Lodge or District Associations feel free to call.

“Masons always rise to the occasion”