

LODGE LEADERSHIP...A Must

(Compilations from multiple sources)

In far too many of our lodges, there is no effective leadership. We are all aware of the many lodges, which meet only because the by-laws provide for a stated meeting. If there happens to be a quorum present, the lodge is opened, the bills are allowed and paid, the correspondence is read, and there being no further business, the meeting is closed and the members go home. Sadder yet are the many times that there is no quorum.

Too many times, we find a man elected as Worshipful Master of his lodge who has had very little and sometimes no training for that office. I would guess that in a majority of our lodges, there is no program of training to prepare the officers to be Master of the lodge, except in the practice of the ritual.

We must face the fact that even the Mystic Tie of Masonry will snap under the strain of such repetition - monotony and dullness. I have worked in other organizations over the years and have seen many officers, GOOD and BAD. All of them wanted to be good officers and all wanted the best for the organization. Some succeeded and some failed. Why?

Why do Governments fail and others succeed? It's Leadership.

Where does Juvenile delinquency really begin? In leaderless families!

Where do Slums fester? In leaderless cities!

Which Armed Forces falter, which Political Parties fail? Poorly led ones.

The effectiveness of any organization--be it governmental, business, or fraternal, is determined by its leadership. The importance of leadership is nothing new; it has always been important. Its effect can be traced throughout the written records of mankind. Therefore, the fact that we discuss lodge leadership today does not mean that we consider it something new. From reading and research, I have found that this has been of great concern to all our Grand Masters.

During the darkest days of the Civil War, a message was delivered to President Lincoln that a general had been captured by the enemy. A member of his cabinet exclaimed, "We cannot fight a war without generals. We suggest that you promote a colonel immediately and create a new leader." Lincoln then said: "I can promote a colonel to the rank of general by a stroke of my pen, but that won't make him a leader. Leaders create themselves"

The same is true in our lodges. We can appoint men in line and we can elect them through the chairs, but that won't make them leaders. What are the qualities of a good leader? I would submit the following for your consideration.

Confidence: If a leader does not believe in himself, no one else will. It must be acquired by training and accumulation of experience and skill.

Energy: A leader must be willing to do everything he asks of the members, and more.

Timing: A combination of alertness, imagination and foresight.

Clarity: A leader must be able to reason logically, make decisions, and then convey his thoughts clearly.

Tenacity: Courage is the capacity to hang on five minutes longer and inspire it in others.

Boldness: A willingness to take chances, a readiness to experiment.

Concern: Concern for others is a sign of imagination and vision.

Morality: A firm code of ethics, a strong sense of personal morality.

Faith: Above and beyond all, a leader must believe in his followers as well as in the goal toward which he is leading them.

Basically, the leader is one who by training understands the objectives and tenets of the organization and who has, by planning, devise a method of accomplishment and by proper instruction gets others to follow in carrying out the plans. Lodge leadership is the ability to produce unified lodge action toward an objective by the effective use and cooperation of its members.

How should we train our leaders?

We must make the Masters of our lodges understand that one of their principal responsibilities is training those who follow. We must insist that "going through the chairs" does not mean marking time, but does mean a time in which junior officers are being trained. The end result of a system of line officers must be a Worshipful Master conversant with all phases of lodge management.

The line officers should be assigned new duties and responsibilities each year, so that when the individual has assumed the Master's chair, he will be fully qualified and capable of carrying out his responsibilities of leading, teaching and encouraging his subordinates.

It is the responsibility of the Master to utilize the abilities of various brethren of the lodge on working committees. This accomplishes two-fold purpose: first, the development of potential officers; and second, it frees the officers from some of the routine operations of the lodge.

I would like to assert that the best measure of the success of a Master is not that of his year in the East. The real effectiveness of a Master cannot be measured until six years after his term of office. It is in those next six years that the men he helped train will have put their lessons into practice.

A word to Junior and Senior Wardens. I know you desire a most successful year as Master, and we all hope that you will achieve it. But your chances of success depend upon the amount of thought you put into it. The thinking and the planning comes first, for once you take the gavel as Worshipful Master, you will find other responsibilities awaiting your attention.

If a farmer wants a field of corn, he doesn't sit in the shade during the planting season. You must plant before you can harvest. The process of revitalizing member participation in our lodges can best be achieved through planning and conducting meetings that will stimulate the interest of all members.

The primary purpose of meetings of any kind is to establish communications between members. The one feature that distinguishes a good meeting from a poor one is planning. Lagging attendance at our lodge meetings is symptomatic of ill planned, disorganized or uninteresting meetings. You can have all the plans, ideas, committees and schools of instruction, but if you do not have leadership, nothing happens. Action must come from the top. The Master must realize that the extent to which his members enter into lodge activities is in proportion to the Master's enthusiasm and to the extent that the Master enters into the real spirit of Masonic brotherhood.

We Masons are taught that when there are no designs on the trestle board, there is confusion in the temple. Wardens must study hard. They must plan ahead so that they will be prepared to carry out the duty of the Master, which is to lead: or put another way, "To set the Craft to work and give them proper instruction."

Fraternally Submitted,

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