

Sharing the Light of Freemasonry

Right Worshipful William Edward Hershey, Jr.

Focusing on New Members and Engaging your Current Members

You, Brethren, here tonight are the leaders of your Lodges, and in no small part, the success of your Lodge will depend upon you. I think you also would agree that the future of your Lodge is dependent on two additional factors: One is attracting new members to keep your Lodge growing and developing; and the other is keeping current members active and engaged in the life and activities of the Lodge.

New members are important because they add new ideas and resources to strengthen your Lodge; they replace those Brothers we lose each year; they provide additional financial resources for your Lodge; and they will be the future leaders of your Lodge.

There are two ways to go about getting new members and keeping existing members active.

The first is to just sit back and hope candidates show up and members keep coming to meetings. For all too many Lodges, this has not been very successful.

The other way is have a Membership Development program – that is a plan and a process to help build your Lodge for the future by adding new members and retaining existing members by keeping them motivated and involved.

A useful way to begin is to establish a Membership Development

Committee in your Lodge. Have them review the Grand Lodge membership program and consult with the Grand Lodge Membership Committee or the District Membership Coordinator. Set goals and give your Lodge Committee responsibility to implement the program. A key part of that program will be to have regular Bring a Friend Night events. Here are a few additional tips.

Prepare yourself and your Lodge

First impressions are extremely important so lead by example. Live the values of Freemasonry each day. From your first encounter with a prospective member, he will be judging you by the way you act. The prospective member is often attracted to Freemasonry by the Brothers he meets. Make sure that every member of your Lodge is ready to meet a prospective candidate today.

You also want to take a critical look at your Lodge from the point of view of an outsider. Is the building clean and in good repair? Is it warm and welcoming? Does it convey an image of Freemasonry as the type of organization of which they would want to become a part? If there are changes you can make so that your Lodge will convey the kind of image you want, that should be a first step.

Identify Candidates

Understand that it takes a certain type of man to be a Mason.

A prospective Mason is a man who is involved in the community, service-oriented, and interested in self-improvement. He is someone you trust, and with whom you would want to spend time.

Men with whom you have established relationships are your best member prospects, including friends, neighbors, relatives, and co-workers.

Approach

Remember Masons do not solicit members.

Talking about Freemasonry and providing information to a prospective member is not soliciting. Most men will not consider joining an organization about which they know nothing. You can talk with a prospective member, provide information, and answer his questions.

Begin these conversations in a way that is comfortable for you and the prospective member. Ease into the discussion; do not overwhelm him.

Do not hesitate to invite a man you think is right for the Fraternity to visit the Lodge and meet some of the Brethren.

Welcome

We need to pay particular attention to the man when he becomes a candidate. Right from the start make him feel welcome in your Lodge. Beginning the very first night, provide him with plenty of support and fellowship. Introduce him to every Brother at the

meeting. Know something about him, so you can spark conversation with other Brothers.

Begin using the Mentor program immediately, but be very careful in selecting the mentor for the new Brother. Try to match men with similar interests and styles. Remember, you are likely forging a friendship that will last years, so give it plenty of thought.

Retention

You can use your Membership Development Committee as more than just a membership committee. It also can play an important role with respect to retention. Get your Committee to help develop a plan to provide a meaningful role for every member, and seek to get every new Brother involved in Lodge activities.

This is important because research shows that the typical Mason becomes inactive in about four years, if he has not been given a role or responsibility in the Lodge. It is important that you know enough about your members, so you can offer them jobs in the Lodge that are appropriate to their interests, their abilities, and their available time. Begin now to retain every Brother in your Lodge by taking an interest in every new Brother and by engaging those who have been inactive or less active members.

Make use of the welcome tools provided in the Grand Lodge of Virginia booklet, "Share the Light of Freemasonry" and the "Membership Retention Tool Kit," both available on the Grand Lodge website.

Try to determine how well your Lodge is meeting the expectations of its members. Survey the membership and make a plan to address the results of the survey. Offer quality and inspiring programs. Offer opportunities to contribute to the community. Also, offer activities that include the whole family.

So I would conclude as I began. “Sharing the light of Freemasonry” means focusing on new members and engaging your current members. Be an ambassador of Freemasonry everywhere you go. Talk to friends and colleagues about the Fraternity. Invite them to visit the Lodge. Make each candidate feel part of the Lodge from the beginning. Know your members, so you can give them a job – the right job – that encourages their participation in Lodge activities, and have programs and projects that interest and excite your members. This will come full circle with respect to membership, because active, involved members will be motivated to refer potential new members.

Remember the attention you pay to your candidates and members creates participation and loyalty, which, in the end, are the real assets of the Lodge.