

Supporting Our Membership: Five Guiding Principles

2018 Recommended LEO Program

By Right Worshipful Brother Chad Kopenski

Masonic membership varies from Lodge to Lodge; but in many of them, you will find discussions on the best ways to recruit, retain, and restore members. Many of these discussions focus on generational differences or utilizing new technologies or implementing incentive programs as the basis for creating the one simple solution to membership development. The truth is that there is no one simple solution, because the issue itself isn't simple; but defined differently for every Lodge.

The best solution is one that comes from the Lodge itself, through the Brethren committing to and utilizing tactics rooted in five principles:

Friendship First

The relationships between the Brethren are the core of the success and work of the Lodge. Whatever else, Freemasonry is about these relationships. Brethren should know potential members first; and only bring someone in that they could see as a friend and as a good fit for the Lodge. Brethren should be responsible for and accountable to each other, whether it is remembering a Brother's birthday, helping take a Brother's mother to the doctor, or working together towards the common good. Inspiring, cultivating, cementing, and preserving those relationships, inside and outside of the Lodge, should be at the heart of everything we do.

Have you considered?

- Inviting prospective members to dinner before the stated?
- Making sure that no one ever sits alone in Lodge or without someone nearby to talk to?
- Calling a Brother on his birthday or Masonic birthday?
- Inviting a Brother to lunch?

Do What's Best

Because every Lodge has their own unique strengths, personalities, and challenges, Lodges should do what is best for their Lodge and what is best for their members. There are common goals across our state and many different tactics to accomplish them. Lodges should share best practices in Lodge Management, Fundraising, Ritual, Community Outreach, etc., and use the tactics that best fit the character of their Lodge and community. Likewise, Lodges should be encouraged to strive for their best work in Ritual, Education, Leadership, etc., as part of an overall strong Lodge Experience based on substance, standards, and solidarity.

Have you considered?

- Matching people to work with candidates based on personality and interests instead of Lodge Office?
- As a Lodge, committing to improving one area on the Roadmap for Improvement this year?
- Making small things in Ritual, like the due guards and signs, consistent and clean as a Lodge?
- Visiting other Lodges at times other than Inspection to share tactics and thoughts?

Remove the Obstacles

Lodges need to remove the obstacles for Brethren attending and being active in Lodge, which may include providing transportation, better communication, cultivating events outside of the Lodge, or incorporating a Brother's family. Some Brethren are weak at memorization or have no desire to hold office, but there are ways that they can be active and contribute. Some Brethren just aren't a good fit for their local Lodge, but may be a good fit for the one across town. Likewise, Lodges need to remove

obstacles to their own success, which may include an expensive building, weighty traditions, or territorial boundaries.

Have you considered?

- Calling Brethren who haven't come in a while to remind them of meetings and offer a ride?
- Finding ways for Brethren to contribute that match their strengths and interests?
- Inviting family to dinner before Lodge or having homework help for the children during the meeting?
- Not settling for "But we've always done it this way...?"

Replace Yourself

Freemasonry in the community needs to be protected and preserved. Brethren should mentor and guide new members, investing in them so that the vital functions, traditions, and activities of a Lodge are not tied to any one Brother. Brethren have a duty to make sure that there is someone else who can give a Lecture, run the Monthly Breakfast, or can lead as well as they do. Brethren should invest in the future health of Freemasonry in their community by ensuring continuity and succession.

Have you considered?

- Asking someone to mentor you in a Lecture or teach you how to run a particular Lodge event?
- Dividing up the Lecture into parts and helping a Brother learn his part, to start with?
- Documenting Lodge wisdom, stories, or events through video, checklists, or other means?
- Bringing in members who are as committed and skilled as you are?

Be Masons

There is nothing wrong with Freemasonry that needs to be fixed; we need to get Masons back to being Masons and Lodges back to being sacred and exceptional places. Brethren need to live their Masonic values every day, inside and outside of Lodge. Lodges need to be visible and necessary in their communities, provide a quality Lodge experience, and be responsive to the needs of the Brethren. We are modern men with timeless values, sorely needed and well sought after; by being Masons, we will find others and they will find us.

Have you considered?

- Living your Masonic values of Brotherly Love, Relief, Truth, and Universality every day?
- Being visible as a Mason and necessary in your community?
- Creating a quality Lodge Experience that is responsive to the needs of the Brethren?
- Being a Mason?

There is no one simple statewide solution to recruiting, retaining, and restoring members; but there are things Lodges can do to address their particular situation. Going forward, you will see programs, tactics, and resources rooted in these principles offered and showcased so that Lodges can develop and support their membership.