

Masonic Leadership

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Introduction

The role of a leader in a volunteer organization is a special challenge. It requires thoughtful understanding of the group to be led. This is especially true in a Masonic organization, because the lodge in most instances is composed of some members who have proven capacities for leadership, and others who may have had no training or experience in any type of leadership role. Your role also requires an understanding of Masonry, its tenets, its teachings, its practices, its organization, and the authority and responsibility of the Worshipful Master and other officers of the lodge, both elected and appointed.

When leadership is discussed regarding the Masonic lodge, it is extremely important to understand the authority and responsibility of the Worshipful Master. Because of the Worshipful Master's sovereign authority and power within the lodge proceedings, a person with little or no leadership qualities or training, will be very ineffective in conducting the lodge affairs and accomplishing the many objectives and tasks that must be done during the year. However, a Worshipful Master who can organize his plans for the year, can envision the obstacles of manpower, monetary needs, time restraints, etc. and can enlist the help of other lodge members to work in a unified force toward achieving the goals, will have a very successful and enjoyable year as Worshipful Master, and the lodge will benefit.

With these general precepts you must understand the unique composition of your own lodge. Is it a young lodge? An older lodge? Does it have specific areas of weakness that you should address in your year? Knowing the needs of your lodge will help you define your role as the lodge's chief executive.

So, when do you begin to think about your year as Worshipful Master and begin to plan for it? Obviously, it should start long before you are actually installed. You should start to prepare yourself as soon as you get elected or appointed to your first station and have hopes and ambitions of serving in the various chairs and eventually becoming the Worshipful Master.

The Junior Warden's station in some lodges becomes the first real "test" of a person's leadership and planning abilities. For example, in the Slidell Lodge, the Junior Warden is responsible for

all refreshments at each meeting and meals for all open meetings – working within the budget, providing the food, preparing the dining area, serving the members and guests, cleanup, etc. A lot of preplanning, preparation and coordination of many people are involved.

After this initial test, the Senior Warden's position has relatively little outside responsibility, because it is here that the Senior Warden develops his plans for his year as Worshipful Master and begins to consider the most qualified, dedicated, and promising members for the appointed positions. This is perhaps the most critical year in the short career of a Worshipful Master.

To be an effective leader of the lodge, you must set realistic goals that may be implemented during the year. You must also evaluate your position relative to the other members of the lodge. Are you involved in any clique that might make it difficult for you to lead effectively? It is essential to know where you stand with others in any administrative position, but particularly one in a volunteer organization.

What kind of Worshipful Master do you want to be?

The way you view your leadership role will go a long way toward shaping the decisions you make as Worshipful Master. In any case, there is one quality you will need to demand of yourself as leader – flexibility – because you will be leading volunteers. You cannot overly reprimand or terminate them if they fail to perform. That is to say you cannot be so critical and harsh in your dealings with your fellow officers and or members that you begin to alienate them from acting as a team. Tact, consideration for another's feelings, and common courtesy are always good rules to follow.

What are the various styles of leadership?

With flexibility as the key, we can say that there are three fundamental modes of leadership in a volunteer organization: The leader who shares responsibility; the leader who reconciles differing factions; the leader who chiefly builds on what has been done before. An unusually gifted leader may be able to use all three styles as the occasion demands, but most people will tend to favor one style over the other.

1. The sharing leader. Shares responsibility with the other lodge of ficers. The sharing leader may receive less public attention, but will surely achieve greater results than the Worshipful Master who has difficulty delegating authority. The role of this type of leader is that of delegator in the midst of personal interaction. NOTE: As a point of information, it must be noted that while authority may be delegated, you cannot delegate responsibility. You may assign responsibility to the person to whom you have delegated authority so that person may effectively accomplish the task assigned.

Although you may delegate authority and assign the responsibility for performing, you as Worshipful Master are still ultimately responsible for all that happens in the lodge during your year.

2. The reconciling leader. Even within the fellowship of Masonry, there are times when pressures and tensions create factions in the lodge. No greater contribution to a lodge can be made than by a Worshipful Master who strives to restore harmony and friendship. Reconciling leaders may not see their cherished projects realized during their year in office, but will undoubtedly pave the way for growth in many areas for the Worshipful Masters who follow him. During the term of such a Worshipful Master, a lodge can solve thorny problems.
3. The building leader. A Worshipful Master should know what to change and what to build on. Much energy is lost when a project is launched one year and dropped the next, before it is completed, and another is started in its place. However, it is not an example of good leadership to allow something to continue just because "it's always been done that way."

SUMMING UP

Outstanding leaders of volunteers are realistic people who can measure themselves and their goals for the lodge in relation to the facts around them: i.e., the resources and manpower they have to work with, chiefly their committee chairmen. Such leaders are able to keep their forces in balance and to work to increase their assets and diminish their liabilities.

BRIEF LEADERSHIP TIPS

Old fashioned leaders have a "heroic" concept of their role. They must be everywhere at once and do everything themselves. This is unfortunate because it stifles their committee members' initiative. On the other hand, successful leaders in a volunteer organization are friendly and understanding; communicate frequently and openly with their committee members; provide frequent encouragement and motivation; praise lodge members for a job well done; harmonize differences; attempt to enable team members to work to their full potential; take pleasure in developing the leadership talents of younger members in the lodge.

TIME MANAGEMENT: AN INFALLIBLE RULE

Any number of books have been written on how an executive should manage time, but there is one sure pathway to more efficient use of time, and it can be simply stated.

Because of your unique position and complete authority as Worshipful Master of your lodge, you are the only one who has ALL the relevant information and resources to know the difference between which matters are truly important for your lodge and which matters are merely "urgent to the person who brings them to your attention."

Your phone rings constantly, or will immediately upon your installation in the East, and you know that certain matters are critical for you to accomplish in a given time period. And you know what should be deferred no matter how urgent it seems to the person who brings it to your

attention. The rule: unless an emergency interferes, keep your eye on the larger goals and let the "merely urgent" wait – not too long – but let it wait while you get the truly important things done.

LASTLY

As you continue your year in your present position, and especially to those who will assume positions of responsibility in their lodge next year, please remember this little phrase, and perhaps pass it along to your new officers: Realize that you, in essence, have volunteered to serve the lodge in either an elected or appointed capacity.

Remember, you are a volunteer until you volunteer. Once you volunteer, you then are a Mason with a job to do!

The following list of Short Talk Bulletins and digests dealing with Masonic Leadership and Program Development are also available through the Masonic Service Association.

SHORT TALK BULLETINS

- 10-78 Attracting Masonic Leaders
- 2-87 Dare To Be Different
- 5-67 Keeper of the Springs
- 9-79 Leadership is Expected and Respected
- 1-79 Masonic Maturity
- 1-81 Masonic Public Relations
- 2-41 Master
- 2-88 Master as Manager
- 10-83 Seminar Techniques that Work
- 6-47 Sword in the Stone, The
- 8-66 Short "Short Talks" for Special Occasions
- 7-79 To Exist – or to Live
- 3-83 Who Leads the Leader?
- 12-61 Youth Programs for Boys and Girls

DIGESTS

Think Tank for Junior Wardens

The Hat and Gavel

Program Notebook for Worshipful Masters

Worshipful Masters Workbook

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