

# The Essentials of any Masonic Body

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*Bro. S. Godfrey – August 2019*

The years that many of us individually have worked in the quarries of Freemasonry are many decades long. We constantly find ways to aid and assist the officers of our Lodge, of our Chapter, of the Rite, of Shrine, of our Council. [*Will use Lodge to cover all groups onwards*]. No matter what the fraternal organization we find ways to assist. Some of us are members of several groups and no matter how many we belong to we find ways to contribute. The many hills and valleys that the lodges travel along their timelines, we help when the lodge is healthy and we help when it needs propping up.

Masonic Leaders have written innumerable articles about Leadership, team building, planning, motivation, from the time Dudley David wrote his reports to the Conference of Grand Masters of north America that no matter what Lodges, Grand Lodges were doing, that about 20% of all members initiated would stay and work in the quarries while 80% would remain members but rarely help the support of the lodge to which they joined. This was the first nationally that America faced the issue of lost members and asked a man – a statistician – to devise a survey to find out what was happening. [*Dudley petitioned to join a lodge after the work he completed.*]

From that time on we saw Grand Lodges and lodge both look for ways to maintain members – reduce dues, create large class initiations, passing and raising, make festive boards delicious banquets rather than dried sandwiches, hold leadership workshops, write articles of successes, write articles from

those who had found the answer to build membership bases, – some even wrote books on the subject. Rarely in North America did we see any true and constant turnaround of numbers.

This is not going to be another article on how to be a successful lodge. It is about what my 46 years of Masonry has shown me as key elements that I will take to my grave as being the characteristics of all masonic groups, indeed groups masonic or otherwise.

All groups must have some Leadership, good Communication and good Relationships with all members of the group. Any one of these which is missing will find the groups working to overcome, and will struggle. These are the foundation of all groups. Once there are in place, are set, are recognized as important, then the group can begin to build.

## **Leadership**

The highest characteristics of a leader are Honesty, Forward looking, Competent, Inspiring. These four characteristics came up as the top four from surveys conducted three times over a 15-year period. The question was asked of seventy-five thousand people around the world. The next characteristic following these four was Intelligence and this was 20 point below the last of the four characteristics. (Kouzes and Posner, *Leadership Challenge*, p. 25). If you review these characteristics you will note that they appear to be the way a leader would respond in discussion, would clearly show what he sees in the future, that he appears to be in control, and that he relates his goals with excitement.

**John Maxwell** says in his *The Leadership Handbook*, that the best Leaders are Listeners.

All leaders should take time to evaluate their skills. What

skills does the leader need in the job he is about to take on? On a scale of 1 to 5, one being poor, five being high quality, where do his skills land? Where does he need to build his skills, or even where can he get help to work on improving his skills?

The style of leadership in Freemasonry, in my humble opinion, is Servant Leadership. Established by Robert K. Greenleaf in 1970, this style of leadership remains a focus on helping others. Characteristics are empathy, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, healing, stewardship, commitment, listening.

## **Relationship**

The priority of relationship is trust. Stephen Covey Jr. said in his book, *The Speed of Trust*, that to get projects done quicker requires full trust in the team. The higher the trust, the quicker work gets done. And the obverse: the weaker or lack of trust the longer work is done together, perhaps even failing to fulfil. When trust is forefront to all communications, there is no hesitation in moving ahead.

The care of words spoken is paramount in this part of the work of any group. New masons to Lodges may tend to be cautious about speaking up and letting brethren know how they feel about a situation, and contributing with something supportive. Our ritual is a perfect exercise book on proper speech and good phrasing. You will never find a harsh word anywhere in the work of the philosophy that Freemasonry is demonstrating. A Past Grand Master had this for his theme for the year:

*Positive thinking Freemasonry*

*If you cannot say anything positive about Freemasonry or a Freemason, best leave it unsaid.*

Important to Relationships are that we spend time with all the masonic members in a lodge, not just the few. Take time to welcome all to each of the meeting you have, even at General Purpose meetings and practices. Make it a habit of shaking the hand of every brother who comes into the lodge room. Greet them warmly and genuinely. Give time with each with a few words of greeting and welcome.

Keep a note of requests that require you to do some homework, and get back to the brother needing assistance immediately.

**John Maxwell** said in his book, ***Everyone communicates, few connect (2010)***:

- Connecting increases your influence in all situations.
- Connecting is all about others not you
- Connecting goes beyond words
- Connecting requires energy
- Connecting is a skill more than a talent.
- Communication

As Maxwell says so clearly – Everyone communicates – few connect. Since the late 70s the methods of communications have increased with the developed of electronics, internet computers – getting smaller every day it seems. Conversely some communications have been lost – or should we say are less used. Semaphore, Morse code, and yes to some extent letter writing. Fewer and fewer stamps are being used by society and sadly the personal letter from one brother to another has gone. Emails is quicker. Thank you notes received by letter post get rarer and rarer. The whole hobby of stamp collecting has almost disappeared. In the 1970's Fort Street in Victoria boasted close to 10 stamp shops where one could purchase stamps of old to complete a collection. In 2020, there is one left.

Communication however is still just as important today as it

will ever be. The YouTube webpage is all about sharing ideas through a speaker. TED videos & podcasts, Spotify podcasts are similar. Conversations are how we express ideas and thoughts to another. **Listening** – the other part of conversations – is just as important. **TED Talk on Listening.** 7 min 34 sec

Leaders have to have both relationship savvy and good communicators. This is the reason why these three – Leadership, Relationship, and Communication – are the essence of all organizations. All three have to be prime skills for success. You lose one, one is poorer than the other two and the organization will break down.

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