

# **BLUE LODGE OFFICER PREPAREDNESS TRAINING PROGRAM**

2014

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Reviewed by the Committee on Education and  
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2014

# Communication: Newsletter / Trestle Board

Source: Masonic Leadership Training Manual, Grand Lodge of Florida. Pgs. 107-109, 194-198

# Objective

- To provide current subordinate Lodge officers and potential Lodge officers with a foundation for the development of Lodge communication resources

# Communication

- How does the public perceive your Lodge and Masons in your community?
- How do your own members perceive your Lodge?
- A lack of Lodge communication contributes to a lack of understanding about Masonry, and declining membership.
- Little or no communication leaves Brothers questioning why they pay their dues.

# Communication

- The public may be aware of the sign on your Lodge with its peculiar symbols, or have witnessed a Masonic funeral, but they have no understanding of Masonry.
- Their perception of Masonry may be based on inaccurate and misleading information, innuendo and rumor.
- Perception becomes a reality for our members and for the public
- The lack of communication with inactive members may cause them to view the Lodge as staid, not caring, and not relevant, questioning why they remain members.
- The gap of understanding about who Masons are, and what the Lodge does may be attributable to the lack of communication from your Lodge.

# Communication

- Your Lodge has two different audiences you need to keep informed; an internal audience (your members), and an external audience (non-members, general public)
- Advantages of promoting your Lodge and its activities Internally:
  - Keep your members informed of Lodge activity
  - Encourage attendance at activities
  - Give members pride in their Lodge because of increased awareness of its community activities
  - Create pride in members who are recognized in your communications

# Communication

- Advantages of External Communication:
  - Educate the public about Masonry (who we are and what we stand for)
  - Interest men in joining your Lodge
  - Elevate prestige of your Lodge, its members, and our Craft in your community because of the Lodge's involvement in community affairs



# External Communication

Source: Masonic Leadership Training Manual. Grand Lodge of Florida. 2010

# External Communication

- News Release

- A news releases to local newspapers for Lodge events such as Officer Installation, 50 year pin ceremony, or special activities should include detailed information
- In addition to event information, include general information about your Lodge (charter date, Lodge number, location), and information of Masonry in general (number of Masons world-wide, nation, and state; charitable contributions, character of Masonry)

# External Communication

- External communication with non-members in your community introduces Freemasonry and your Lodge to a vast arena of new members
- Informal External Communication:
  - Wearing a Masonic ring and jewelry
  - Car emblems, Road signs
  - Be informed about Masonry, and be prepared to talk about what the fraternity offers, its way of life, “to make good men better,” etc.
  - Present a good public image of your Lodge and the Craft

# External Communication

- Formal External Communication
  - This requires planning, member involvement, and often financial commitment to utilize conventional external methods such as print, radio, and television media
  - Your best bet to be printed or heard on the airwaves is to know someone in the media to assist in getting your information exposed to the public
  - The less editing required in your news release increases the possibility of it being used by the media

# External Communication

- News Releases (cont.)
  - Develop a news release form using accepted journalistic style and standards
  - Doubling spacing your copy allows for editing notes
  - Send the news release in a timely manner for past and up-coming events
  - Include photos with captions. Insure the subject is doing something and appears natural vs. posed
  - In addition to who, what, when, and where, include why the event happen.

# Newsletter

External and Internal  
Communication

# Newsletter

Preparing and sending a newsletter to all members offers many benefits including giving non-active members the idea that they are “getting something” for their dues.

- Newsletters offer the best opportunity to detail Lodge activities for your members.
- Insure articles are short and that graphics grab attention

# How to Produce a Lodge Newsletter

- What do you want to accomplish?
  - Before producing a newsletter, determine what you want to accomplish for your Lodge
  - Is it's purpose to increase attendance
  - Will you recap past activities to let members know what the Lodge has been doing?
  - Is a goal Masonic education (officer duties, budget, etc.)?
  - Do you want to provide a contact list for officers [KC: and committee members]?



# How To Produce a Lodge Newsletter

- What do you want to accomplish (Cont.)?
- Is a goal, messages from the WM and other officers?
- Is part of your reason to publish to recognize members?
- Do you want to reach all members?
- How often do you want it sent?
- Do you want to cover all the above mentioned?
- Write the goals you want to accomplish, and turn your goal ideas into articles for each issue.

# What Appearance Do You Want Your Newsletter to Have?

- Communication of information to your readers is most important.
- An attractive newsletter will invite your members to read it [in detail].
- It can be a simple typed single sheet, or as elaborate as any newspaper.
- An attractive and appealing newsletter can be produced by a computer. Publishing software gives you flexibility of size, type, and columns.

# What Appearance Do You Want Your Newsletter to Have?

- Use a local newspaper for style of headlines and copy as a lay out guide
- **Naming your Newsletter:** The name should say something about your Lodge, e.g. name & number of Lodge, local attraction, names of various Masonic emblems.
- Photos and artwork bring attention to articles. Photos are difficult without professional printing. Masonic artwork and other clip art can be found on Web sites.

# How Will Your Newsletter Copy be Developed ?

- Will you use one person or several to provide copy?
- What role will the WM provide in development? The WM should provide strong direction in content according to the goals of the publication.
- Complete copy in time for regular distribution.
- Lodge newsletters encourage membership involvement by informing members of upcoming meetings and activities
- Masonic education articles remind members of the reasons they remain members.

# How Will Your Newsletter Copy be Developed ?

- Newsletters should provide contact info of officers, [committee members], and information of Grand Lodge programs.
- Summarize the work of committees showing the involvement of your members, and that the Lodge is active.
- Recognize your members: birthdays and Masonic dates of Brothers; profile members and their families (particularly new members)
- Provide sickness and distress information
- Report activities of appendant bodies

# How Will Your Newsletter Copy be Developed ?

- Articles to Consider:
  - Calendar of upcoming events and activities, Masonic education, Contact information of Lodge officers, Grand Lodge programs, Lodge committee activities, Masonic or natural birthdays, Messages from at least one elected officer, Sickness & distress, Profiles of members and their families, Appendant bodies information

# Frequency of Distribution

- The more frequently you communicate with your members, the more likely they will be to respond to activities, and increase their interest in the Lodge.
- Once a month distribution is ideal. Additional time between communications brings the risk of members forgetting information, and may require your articles to contain more and interesting information to make a desired impression.
- Consistency in distribution on a certain date will build expectation for its arrival among your members.

# Who Should Edit the Newsletter?

- Select an editor who had command of the English language, and who may have experience with newspapers or newsletters, or who can [manage] a computer.
- Appointing an assistant editor or reporters who are good at completing assignments on time, and who write well, is advisable.
- Having the WM or another Brother review copy for errors is a good idea.



## To Whom Should the Newsletter be Sent?

- It is advisable to send your newsletter to all members, near and far.
- Every member pays dues, and is entitled to know what his Lodge is doing.
- Feeling they are getting something in return for their dues, regular newsletter communication may help limit suspension for non-payment of dues

# How Should the Newsletter be Distributed?

- E-mailing saves money.
- E-mail communication is an excellent way to distribute your newsletter to those comfortable with the computer.
- Send a paper copy to all other members
- [KC: Some members want a paper copy for better readability, reading convenience, as a hand-held reference, and to archive the newsletter]

# The Trestle Board

How to Make Your Trestle Board  
Interesting

# How To Make Your Trestle Board Interesting

- Trestle boards are the essential communication tool of the Master and the Lodge
- It covers 100% of the membership; those active or inactive, housebound, or those with driving limitations
- For many members it is the **ONLY** contact with their **Lodge**, giving them a sense of knowing the active members by reading about them this publication

# How To Make Your Trestle Board Interesting

- The Trestle Board projects your Lodge's image to its members, and to non-members who may pick up a copy.
- The impression to members and non-members can be favorable or non-favorable depending on its overall appearance and how well it is written.
- Take a critical look at your present trestle board. Is it too big or too small? A larger size allows larger print for easier reading.
- Photos are expensive and difficult to print, but are worth a thousand words.

# How To Make Your Trestle Board Interesting

- Ideas for Trestle Board Articles
  - Review your previous articles and articles from other Lodges for ideas.
  - Publications of Appendant Bodies (Scottish Rite Journal, York Rite's Knight Templar, etc.) provide such ideas.
  - Find articles from Research Lodges, books on Masonry, or from the personal library of your members for ideas.
  - In using published items for the basis of your articles, use your own words. If you quote articles or parts of one you will need permission from the author and/or publisher

# How To Make Your Trestle Board Interesting

- Collect your ideas early, gathering two or three times the quantity you will actually use, and select from the best available
- Ask the Craft to submit articles
- Create a communications committee to manage the trestle board, news letters, etc.
- Use monthly theme articles (Washington's birthday, Lodge founder's day, Why does the WM wear a hat?, Where did the phrase "Meet me on the level" originate?)

# How To Make Your Trestle Board Interesting

- Getting Organized:
  - Use 3x5 cards for article notes, especially during Mason activities, for later reference
  - Sort collective articles into monthly files
  - Pass files to junior officers for their consideration as WM
  - The WM must write his own message as an obligation to his Lodge



# Internal Communication

Communication Vehicles

# Internal Communication

- Internal communication creates an informed membership and encourages participation in Lodge meetings and activities
- One of the worst things for a Master to hear is that a Brother intended to be at an event, but could not find event information, or that he forgot about it.
- Take advantage of every opportunity to inform or remind members about future activities
- Hand out the Lodge schedule at the times of the greatest attendance such as Officer Installation day.

# Internal Communication

- Communication vehicles that may help inform your members:
  - Lodge newsletter, E-Mails, Calling Committee, website, Postcards, Handouts, Invitations, Bulletin Boards, Community Calendars
  - Improve Lodge communications: For easy updating of personal information, input member records into a computer (name, address, phone, occupation, employer, wife's name, birth date, date Raised,

# Internal Communication

- Members respond to a personal invitation.
- Ask for members who may be designers, graphic artists, or desktop publishing masters to review all Lodge communications for their recommendations.
- Spruce-up your existing publication and communication to your members
- Consider at least a quarterly supplemental publication mailed to members

# Web Site Communication

External and Internal Communication

# Web Sites

- A Lodge web site is an outstanding method of external communication
- Remember that although your web site may be intended for your membership only, the World Wide Web is available to anyone at any time
- Your web site must conform with the regulations of the Grand Lodge
- Lodge web site info must be accurate and up-to-date regarding officer contact info,
- You may wish to include your Lodge history, past masters, contact info, WM message, and upcoming events.



END  
Communication Section