

Rite Notes

Membership and Recruiting

Grand York Rite Bodies of Florida

15 October 2008

Ever wonder who at first appear interested suddenly shy away from the organization? Whether a potential member or a newly made member, they suddenly disappear. Why?

We send a lot of signals about ourselves. Some are verbal, others are non-verbal. Both are very powerful and can have positive effects on an organization. Most problems can be addressed, and improvements made. The biggest problems are disappointments and intimidation.

Disappointments occur when a new member is unimpressed by his initiation. It wasn't what they expected. The problem may be very real, or that they expected more than they were entitled to. Somehow it didn't meet their needs or expectations. There is still hope of keeping this member active, but efforts must be made soon before they are lost.

The other is intimidation. Somehow they felt threatened. They were made to feel uncomfortable and unwelcome. This, too, can be overcome through mentoring, as well as being aware of potential problems within our chapter, council or commandery.

So what does "turn people off" in your York Rite Bodies? Following is a list of problems that plague organizations. Take inventory as you read this list over and see what may apply to your group:

Internal Bickering –Organizations, especially those that are facing controversy are often plagued with various cliques. A new member discovers that both sides are trying to "triangle" him into their camp in an effort to strengthen their sides in a battle. What happens? The new member, unless he also has a axe to grind, decides to leave. The internal politics is just too deep to get involved in. Instead of brotherly love, he discovers more clock and dagger. His response is probably flight. And he's gone. Warring parties must learn to put aside their differences for the common good. While we can have healthy disagreements, vendettas and revenge along with desire for power ruin a good organization.

Unwritten Internal Rules–Most organizations have rules developed by tradition. No one remembers when they first developed, but they all know that these rules must be followed. They may not even know why, but blindly follow the tradition. These rules have never been written down because "everyone knows them." Some of our traditions may be challenged, especially if they no longer serve any good purpose. If you can't explain "why it's done", then maybe its time has passed.

Useless Meetings—There sure seems to be a lot of useless meetings within our fraternity. We meet because the by-laws say we must. Yet what is accomplished is of little value. Dying organizations have lots of useless meetings. New members are not going to stick around if there is no value to the meetings. A member's time is a precious commodity. It should be treated with respect. Meetings that have no agenda, plans, or reason for gathering may be best cancelled. More especially, if the meeting is a stated, then make it into an event, five minute presentation on Masonic education can go a long way to making a meeting worthwhile.

Lack of Fellowship—People join to have contact with others. If they feel there are no opportunities to connect to connect with other members, they will drop out to seek that connection elsewhere. Make sure the coffee pot is on, and provide some snacks. A little effort can go a long way toward building fellowship that will make people want to come back.

Feelings of Embarrassment and Humiliation—No one likes to be embarrassed. No one enjoys being humiliated. While it happens to all of us from time to time, it can be especially critical to a new member who is still finding his place within the organization. People makes mistakes. The fraternity should be a safe place to try new things. Helping people realize that mistakes are a learning opportunity will go a long way to helping new members learn tolerance as well as being to volunteer for something new.

Lack of Purpose—Why do our York Rite Bodies and our lodges exist? Many members don't have a clue. Organizations without a purpose do not retain members. The members must know why they exist, and must be able to articulate that purpose in order for it to be owned by the members.

Note: If any York Rite Bodies plan weekend festivals, please let me know, with the date, time location and contact person, and I will put it in the next newsletter, and on the website.

March 6-7(Outdoor) Box Ranch, Stuart Paul Friend, 772-266-6404

Attached also is a copy of the Executive Order No. 2008-01, by our M.E.Grand High Priest, Companion James Rudman, in effect until 8 April, 2009. This allows our companions who have been dropped because of NPD, to come back in to our Chapters by only paying the current years dues. This may or may not be an incentive, we can only try. As mentioned above, there are reasons companions stop attending meetings. We must work on those problems also. I commend M.E. Companion Rudman, in this effort to rebuild our York Rite Bodies.

HENRY A. ADAMS
Eminent Grand Junior Warden
Chairman, Membership Committee

*some excerpts from the book, Making Members, with permission, by Rev. Jan L. Baderstadt, OPC, KYGCH, and from Guidelines for Membership, published by the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States.