



Rite Notes
Membership and Recruiting
Grand York Rite Bodies of Florida
15 September 2009



Managing the Way Others Perceive Your Commandery

You know your Chapter, Council and Commandery inside and out. You know who the members are, and what they want. You have served as an Officer with dignity, and love of Christian fellowship, and you are able to bring the “Light” of this fellowship to others. You may also know many Non-York Rite Masons, and what you thing they want. But maybe you need to know something more.

Perhaps your Chapter, Council and Commandery needs to perform a self-evaluation of its reputation of “implementing change” to meet the needs of its membership. How do they perceive your York Rite Body. What are you doing right? What could you do better? What keeps potential members away from local York Rite membership, and yet they may be active in Symbolic Lodges or other Masonic organizations? Is there any way to change their perception of the Chapter, Council and Commandery.

The answer is “yes”! Any company or fraternity can research, and manage the way it is perceived by its current and future members or any other group that’s important to its success. Perceptual issues, if not positive, can have many tangible effects on a local “Body” ranging from revenue impact to morale.

The key is for the leadership of the of the York Rite Body to identify and manage the perceptions of those it wishes to reach. This can be accomplished by borrowing from many of the traditional disciplines such as market research, marketing, public relations, customer service, and media advocacy programs.

But these are fancy terms for performing a “situation assessment” of your organization. How can we do this quickly, determine if changes are needed, and prepare for our membership development efforts? Do we want to assure our selves that we have a good product with defined features and tangible benefits to sell to an emerging audience?

A Quick Situation Analysis - Simple market research can be accomplished by identifying three (3) separate categories: Existing Knight Templars, Former Knight Templars (who either demitted or are inactive in the Commandery), or Non-York Rite Masons active in Symbolic Lodges. Call a meeting of the Commandery leadership. Agree that the task at hand is to determine what

changes in our product offering are needed, if any, to improve the perception of the Commandery by members, former members, and potential members. Develop a list of names of people who you know and respect that fall into one of these categories. Agree as to who should contact them.

Active Knight Templars (satisfied customers) - Ask them what is it about the Commandery that creates the commitment, and desire to participate in our Order. Is it the meeting, the ritualistic conferral of the Orders, the family activities, programs, drill team, philanthropies, and fellowship? Ask them to identify areas that need improvement. Ask them for any recommendations of changes that, if made, might bring back inactive Companions and Sir Knights, or assist in attracting new Companions and Sir Knights to join our ranks. Make a list of recommendations.

Inactive Companions and Knight Templars - (possibly dissatisfied customers) - These are the Sir Knights that are either inactive members or have demitted from our ranks. Performing a “product assessment” with this group requires patience and perseverance. But these are also the Sir Knights that may feel the Commandery did not meet their needs or expectations. Perceptions to these Sir Knights are based on first hand experiences.

First, tell them how much they are missed. But begin to further explore the reason for their inactivity or separation. Focus the questioning on what changes could or should be made to meet their needs. Listen intently, and avoid being defensive. Acknowledge their observations or recommendations, and make a list of them.

Potential Knight Templars (New Customers) - These Masons are the primary target of our membership development effort. These are the future Knights Templars that will not join our ranks unless we have the “right product” for them. They may know little about our Christian Masonic heritage, but may have formed an impression of what it represents based upon perceptions.

Share with them an overview of the York Rite, and emphasize the features and benefits of membership. Ask them to consider joining the York Rite. Invite them to a planned activity. But, does your local Commandery really meet their needs?

Feedback Results

Once you know what motivates your target audience, you can take the appropriate action. Do they need to be reeducated, inspired, trained, won over or even entertained? Must we “redefine” or change our product to meet their needs? How can we persuade them to join Templary?

Action Plans

We might now have learned that our beloved York Rite is not meeting the needs or expectations of some current, former, or new members. Our product may need to be “re-engineered” for the

existing, and perhaps be “re-defined” for the new. We are not referring to changes in our Orders or our Christian teachings and principles, but changes in operations that might be considered.

Perhaps we have learned that we may need more programs at Stated Conclaves involving diversified topics of current interest, more family involvement and scheduled activities. We may also need more Masonic education, leadership training, and increased promotion of our good works. Perhaps support in community projects, programs and activities for our youth, and more joint activities with other Masonic organizations. Maybe some “team building” is in order.

Discuss the results of your feedback with the Commandery leaders, and decide what changes need to occur. Establish both short and long term changes that should be implemented. Begin the implementation process with enthusiasm.

Promote any Progressive Change

Begin to communicate the changes, and include all three groups in the implementation process. We will grow together, not separately. You might be surprised at the enthusiasm this process can bring. You must develop effective programs that can best connect with your key perceivers. Finally, follow up. Continually monitor the results of your efforts and make adjustments to achieve the best possible results. Ask for restorations, and seek new members to become a part of the Order.

Once this is accomplished, it’s not a once-and-for-all activity. Perceptions, like anything else can change over time. Changes in our social climate can have an ongoing impact on how your key perceivers get their information and form opinions.

That’s why it’s important to continually track your efforts overtime making sure that our product offering meets the major needs of current members, rekindles interest to former members, and is attractive to potential members.

So Whats the Point

Perceptual issues can be managed just as you manage finance, or growth of any enterprise. Taking this approach helps avoid the effects of “unfavorable opinions” by understanding the “needs” of your target audience, and implementing the changes needed to satisfy them.

With the implementation of creative new management techniques, we have the opportunity to re-examine our product and assure ourselves of the value received. Until you have seen your Commandery through the eyes of others, you haven’t seen one of your greatest opportunities for customer satisfaction and growth.

Promote Your Good Works. Write articles, take pictures, and publish your Crusade program activities. Promote your activities. No one can purchase a product they are unaware of.

As of the end of August, we have Knighted 90 new Companions and Sir Knights. Six districts will have festivals in September and October. Lets continue our work during this

period and began the process of bringing new brothers into our bodies. However, of more importance, we must keep those members that we currently have. As we begin to pay our per capita to Grand Commandery, make every effort to bring those lost companions and Sir Knights back into the fold so NPD's cease to exist.

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. Remember, Membership and Retention is everyone's business.

Dist 3	October March	Tampa Tampa
Dist 5	Feb/Mar September 26	Eola, Orlando Eola, Orlando
Dist 6	March 12-13, 2010 October 2-3, 2009	Box Ranch, Stuart (Outdoor degree) Melbourne YRB, Harbor City Lodge
Dist 7	October 29-30-31	Jax York Rite Temple
Dist 8	October 2009	Gainesville,
Dist 9	postponed	Tallahassee
Dist 10	October March	Pensacola Pensacola/Mariana

If any of the above dates are incorrect or if there are any additional dates please let me know, I will include them next time.

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

*some excerpts , from Guidelines for Membership, published by the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States, p.9 and Grand Commandery of Florida,, And from the Grand Commanders Handbook given to the Grand Line Officers. Membership Development, Grand Encampment, 2003-2006

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