



RITE NOTES
Membership and Recruiting
Grand York Rite Bodies of Florida
15 September 2019

Making Your York Rite Bodies New Member Friendly

We have been focusing on what people want in a fraternity and what drives people away. We've organized a membership committee and surveyed how others see our York Rite Bodies. It is now time to put this information into practical application.

This exercise can be done individually or, preferably, as a committee. This section can be a bit painful as it will take a hard look at your members and attitudes. It may even challenge your attitudes. When I severely damaged my knee, it was not fun doing physical therapy. I preferred the narcotic muscle relaxers and pain-killers. Pop a few pills and the pain went away. But I wanted to be able to be able to walk again without a cane, it was necessary to endure the pain. The pain I endured was small compared to what I was able to accomplish.

The same is true for your York Rite Body. Stagnant Chapters, Councils and Commanderies suffer from a lot of dry-rot, that has crept in over a long period of time. Some of it has been around so long that we don't even recognize it until it hits us right in the face.

In this exercise, you are going to focus on what it is that drives people away. You will look for ways to bring improvement and make people want to be part of your organization,

You will also be looking for strengths. These are areas that you can promote and expand upon. , Remember, no organization does everything well. Your goal is to do that best you can.

One problem with this exercise will be dealing with difficult personalities. Some people can be a real problem as their personalities drive people away. These are the people that desperately want to be loved by others, yet their very actions drive people away. Some of you can talk over a cup of coffee, and they will be willing to listen. Some will simply become belligerent. A little diplomacy combined with privacy and a true brotherly concern can help to make these transitions smooth.

Begin with your legal pad. Divide your page into two columns. In the left hand column, put the various categories that drive people away. In the right hand column, list those problems that pertain to your York Rite Body.

A word of caution: If you name names in this exercise, be very careful who you share your paper with. It can certainly be a bombshell in the wrong hands. This is not meant to be a witch hunt. Always keep in mind the due bonds of fraternal brotherhood.

Now let's look at some of the problems.

Security: How do some of your members feel coming to your Lodge. Does the place have proper lighting? Is there a feeling of security?

Many of our older Masonic Centers are located in changing neighborhoods. There may be a need for lighting or cameras. Also once inside, make sure there are signs pointing to the restrooms, dining hall lodge room, etc. A new member or visitor will not know where to go. Hallways should be well lighted.

Are there any people that belong who will make others feel unsafe? As members, as members we need to screen our organization from unsavory types. Masonry has had a long history of being a quality organization. Do not compromise our standards in order to bring in new members. We don't need drug addicts and pedophiles as members. Our members, as well as our families, should feel safe when they are among members as well as our Masonic Centers.

Is there a sense of class in belonging? Most members and their families want to belong to something that will enhance their status in the community. Masonry has long provided that opportunity. Just how classy is your York Rite Body.

When it comes to class, it is the little things that count. The greatest of programs can look cheap when the details are ignored.

One of my pet peeves is paper plates. I've been to some to some formal banquets where they have served the meal on cheap plates. While easier to clean up, it is supposed to be a act, this defies it.

Is your Masonic Center clean and presentable? Is it a place where you can feel proud to take visitors? How about language used by your members? Some of the profanity used in some of our temples betrays the image. Masonry is supposed to present to the world.

The key to class is details. Pay attention to them, and give everyone a feel of pride.

Education: Are there opportunities to improve oneself? This has been one of the major motivating factors to a man becoming a Mason.

We are living in a time when once again people are seeking self improvement. A man's income potential can, and well, depend upon his skills. Freemasonry has offered opportunities for leadership and character development. This has been accomplished through the teaching of the ritual as well as association with good men.

Every lodge needs a good library. There should be an education officer that can give shorts on various aspects of freemasonry.

Give a member an opportunity for advancement and he will usually take it. That will only help to attract new members, but also retain them.

INTERNAL BICKERING: There's always going to be the same. After all, our lodges and York Rite Bodies are composed of human beings. The question: is the bickering becoming destructive?

In our lodges and York Rite Bodies that have split into "armed camps", new members are often "triangled" into being an unwitting member of one of the factors. Everyone wants the new member, because it's one more vote for their pet project or to help them in their peeves.

New members, unless they like to fight, will quickly withdraw from such organizations. They have to put up with this type of behavior at work. They don't want to belong to something that will be simply another fight.

If your lodge or York Rite Body suffers from this kind of internal bickering, identify the problems, camps and players. How can the group begin to come together again? How can various personalities find ways to work together in the spirit of cooperation?

This can be a very difficult task. It requires tact and diplomacy as the persons who confront the faction leaders work to help them see beyond the petty problems. Time, patience and perseverance can overcome the concerns. If no effort is made to reduce the problems, death will not necessarily eliminate it. These people rise up and disciples who carry on the warfare after their beloved mentor has died. Only by dealing with the problem in a brotherly fashion can it overcome to a point of healing.

Some tips including listening, speaking one on one, learning the history of the conflict, and trying to help brothers to get beyond it. It is like being a marriage counselor.

On a similar note are the small minded generals who want to be the big fish in the small pond. All must go through them or they become offended. How they deal with the alleged "slights" will vary among the different individuals. Some will explode and others sabotage the project. Often they do not realize that their conduct is destructive to others. They need someone to help them to see a better or different way. Masonry is about people working together for a common good.

Communication: How well does your lodge or York Right Body communicate with its members? What are the official and unofficial channels to get things done?

New members, especially, need to be contacted by members of your body on a regular and timely basis. Contacting them should not be a last minute thought. How well does your group do in keeping everyone informed?

Unwritten rules: What are some of the unwritten rules that "everyone knows"? These unwritten rules should be shared with new members as they are being mentored, so that they will be aware. Make a list! This might take sometime as they are so ingrained into us that we don't often realize that they exist.

Lack of Fellowship: Are there opportunities for fellowship amongst the members? Some activities include going some place for coffee before and after meetings, dinners, activities and events for the family and more. What ways can people that belong to the York Rite Body, reach out to new members? How can it be improved?

Feelings of embarrassment and humiliation: Are people truly embarrassed for their mistakes? There's good natured fun and there is just plain meanness? We must always seek to build up our members with positive reinforcement and not to put them down.

Lack of direction: Where is your York Rite Body heading? Does it have any direction, other than surviving another month? If it does not, the Body needs to do some long-range planning. It must develop a vision of where it wants to be 5, 10, and 25 years down the road. How does it relate to the community? How about its members? Getting and retaining members depends heavily upon what kind of direction your Body is heading in.

Lack of Purpose: This goes along with the above entry. If they don't seem to have any purpose in the direction they are heading, don't be surprised if your members don't come out. Give them a job and keep them busy.

Useless projects: What kind of projects does your Body do? Do they build up the organization, or simply waste time and do nothing for the community or your members? List the projects your body does annually, and what they accomplish in learning from the experience, including any fundraising projects. You may be surprised that a few are actually money-losers.

What to do with the information: This depends on whether this is a committee doing it or just one of the Members who needs to share it.

If you are part of a committee, work closely with the officers of that body and show them your finding (be careful Not to name individuals). Discuss it over a cup of coffee in a relaxing area. If it is presented to a York Rite Body, it needs to be fine-tuned so that it has a recommendation of a plan of action. If it is presented to the Chapter, Council and/or the Commandery, don't use names of individuals. That will only defeat the purpose and may even fan the flames for real trouble. Remember, the purpose of this exercise is to improve the York Rite Body, not to destroy it.

If this project is being done by an individual, have others think of other ways you can bring the brothers together for the future of the Body. A small group that is committed to improving the organization can go a long way to achieving its goals by working together and then spreading out to do the same at other lodges.

Problems must be addressed in the spirit of brotherhood. To accomplish you must work together in harmony.

The Fall festivals are almost over and we are now preparing for the remaining district wide festivals. The success of our first festival was excellent in that we knighted 34 new knights. In Crestview we knighted 8 new knights, with the other three festivals to follow. We can then begin planning for our Spring festivals. Let's continue our efforts and begin the process of bringing new brothers into our bodies. Allow them to take a seat and participate in the body. If all seats are filled, encourage them to get involved in the ritual work as part of a degree team, but let them know that they are needed at their lodge.

Note: If any York Rite Bodies planning a weekend festival, that is a short of time or slow class, please let me know, so I can put it in the newsletter. I will need the date, time, location and contact person.

Remember: Membership and Retention is everybody's business.

There is no substitute for an all-out campaign to strengthen and build our membership. Either we work together and build, learn and train or we die!

New Membership by District for 2019:

DISTRICT	LOCATION	#	DISTRICT	LOCATION	#
1	West Palm Beach		6	Cocoa	3
	Fort Lauderdale	2		Melbourne	
	Miami	4		Fort Pierce	3
	Florida Keys				
2	Manatee/Bradenton/Trinity	1	7	Jacksonville	
	Sarasota/Venice/Trinity	5		Fernandina	
	Everglades			St Augustine	
	Fort Myers			Palatka	
3	Tampa (Ivanhoe)		8	Lake City	
	St. Petersburg (Sunshine)			Middleburg	
	Clearwater (Springtime)			Gainesville	3
				Inverness (Ocala)	
4	Lakeland	2	9	Tallahassee	
	Plant City	1		Marianna	5
	Sebring (Highlands)	1		Panama City	
5	Daytona (Halifax)	3	10	Fort Walton Beach	2
	Lake Sumter	5		Crestview	4
	Sanford	2		Pensacola	9
	Orlando	18			
TOTAL		44	TOTAL		29

REGARDING THE GRAND ENCAMPMENT CONSTITUTION:

SECTION 233: Resignation

Any officer of the Grand Encampment of a Grand Commandery, of a Subordinate or of a Constituent Commandery may resign his office by filing a written resignation with the respective Grand Recorder or Recorder, save that the resignation of the Grand Recorder of the Grand Encampment shall be Filed with the Grand Master, of the Grand Recorder of a Grand Commandery with the Grand Commander, and of the Recorder of a Subordinate or Constituent shall not be effective until accepted by the Commandery

DECISIONS FROM THE GRAND MASTER:

A Commander has the right to resign but doing so does not complete his term of office and therefore does not become a Past Commander, and is entitled to be uniformed as such. (1916, p. 121, No. 18, Smith)

AS YOU SEE ON THE TABLE BELOW, WE HAVE BROUGHT IN VERY FEW NEW KNIGHTS. THIS IS BECAUSE THE COMMANDERY RECORDER OR FESTIVAL COORDINATOR DOES NOT REPORT THE NUMBERS KNIGHTED. IF YOU WANT YOUR NEW MEMBERSHIP TO COUNT, IT IS INCUMBANT OF YOU TO CONTACT SK HENRY ADAMS.

A REMINDER: GRAND ENCAMPMENT RULES STATE THAT NEW SIR KNIGHTS NEED TO BE PLACED IN MMS WITHIN 15 DAYS.

New Membership by York Rite Body 2019:

DISTRICT	DATE	LOCATION	KNIGHTED
1	3/30/19	Ft Pierce	0
2	3/30/19	Tampa	0
3			
4	3/30/19	Ft Pierce, Sebring (1)	1
5	3/16/19 7/28/19	Orlando(4), Lake Sumter (1) Orlando(14), Daytona(3), Lake Sumter(4), Sanford(2), Lakeland(2) Plant City(1), Cocoa(3), Gainesville(3), Miami(1), Bradenton(1)	5 34
6	3/30/19	Ft Pierce (3), Ft Laud. (2), Miami (3), Sarasota (5)	13
7			
8			
9	9/09/19	Crestview (4), Pensacola (2), Tallahassee (2)	8
10	3/23/19	Ft Walton Beach (2), Pensacola (1), Marianna (3)	6

TOTAL 2019 KNIGHTINGS	67
TOTAL 2018 KNIGHTINGS	101

If any of the above dates are incorrect OR if you have dates or numbers that should be changed, please let me know. Also, as soon as your area determines the dates for the Fall Festival, PLEASE let me know so they may be included.

Fraternally,

Henry A. Adams

HENRY A. ADAMS, PGC, KYGCH, KCT
Chairman, Grand York Rite Membership Program
Chairman, Grand Encampment Membership Committee

"Every Christian Mason Should Be A Knight Templar"

Some excerpts, from Guidelines for Membership, published by the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States, reprint from Aug 2009, intro. and Grand Commandery of Florida, Beaderstadt, Jon L. " Making Your YRB a New Member Friendly". 2005, pg 459-64, and from the Grand Commanders Handbook given to the Grand Line Officers. Membership Development, Grand Encampment, 2003-2006

Hm Ph: 321 726-6971

Cell: 321-795-8316

Fax: 321-951-968

Email: hadams1@aol.com