



RITE NOTES

What Drives People Away

15 March 2024

Companions and Sir Knights,

Ever wonder why people 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 or negative 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. Some how they felt threatened. They were made to feel uncomfortable unwelcome. This, too, can be overcome through mentoring, as well as being aware of potential problems within your York Rite Body.

So, what does "turn people off" to your York Rite Body. Here is a list of problems that plague organizations. Take inventory as you read this list 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.

Example: A new Worshipful Master may be trying to rebuild a stagnant lodge or York Rite Body, and decides to try some new things. The "Old Guard" in the Chapter, Council or Commandery, which is happy with the way things are, may feel threatened. The officer line supports the Master, but this group is distressed. A new member offers a potential ally to defeat the Master and to re-shift the balance of power.

What happens? The new member, unless he also has an axe to grind, decides to leave. The internal politics is just too deep to get involved in. Instead of brotherly love, he discovers more cloak 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".

Wrong. The new member doesn't know them. And when he does cross these boundaries, it's like stepping into a big pile of dog doo barefoot. It raises quite a stink. He is suddenly criticized for his breach of conduct, and chastised on the spot. Again, a real need for mentoring.

It can be anything from walking between the alter and the east to doing something in the kitchen that is: Sister Bessie's job."

Mentoring is a large part of helping a person to feel part of the organization, as well as to feel accepted. New members must be given some slack, and told, in the friendliest manner, when they've violated unwritten rules. Remember, they are new here. How should they know what they're not supposed to do unless someone explains it to them?

Some of our traditions may need to be challenged, especially if they no longer serve any good purpose. If you can't explain "why it's done", then maybe it's time has passed.

Useless Meetings--There sure seem 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. You can tell they're useless. Everyone arrives just at the beginning of the meeting, they try to get it over with quickly, and right away go home. There's no fellowship or sense of purpose, except to perform some obligation.

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. Even a short, five minutes, 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 with other members, they will drop out to seek that that connection elsewhere.

Offer quality time following the meetings to eat, play cards, etc. Why not open the building early on our schedule meetings so members can gather for a friendly game? 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 or her place within the organization.

People make mistakes. At work, it can cost us our job. 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 be willing to volunteer for something new.

Remember, we are all human.

Lack of Direction--Do you know where your York Right Body is going? Many are headed toward oblivion, because they don't know where they are going. There are no plans, no future. Without good planning, most organizations will cease to exist.

A new member will quickly sense if the lodge or York Rite Body is going anywhere, or is he just wasting his time. As mentioned earlier, time is a valuable commodity, especially for a new generation. They are not about to waste it on something that does not bring them something of value.

Lack of Purpose--Why do we exist as an organization? 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 its members.

Useless Projects--Some projects are totally useless. Why do we do them? Because we have done them for years!

One lodge held an annual Beef Stew Dinner. Great beef stew, but the crowd kept getting smaller each year. We would make more beef stew than we could possibly eat. It actually lost money. It took a lot of work to finally end it, as it was difficult to fight tradition. What was billed as the lodge's annual fund-raiser, was actually the yearly fund-loser!

Sacred cows make great gourmet burgers. We must regularly look at what to do to see if the project is still relevant. New members will not want to devote their time and energy to simple upholding useless traditions.

Unless you live in Amish country, annual inspections of carriages are probably a big waste of time. (I think you get the picture).

Lack of Class-- Most people join fraternities to better themselves. If the organization lacks class, they may be inclined to go elsewhere.

Look around you lodge room. What kind of shape is your regalia in? What shape is the furniture in? Is the paint falling off the ceiling? Is your ritual work presented in an honorable fashion, or do you stumble while reading the ritual book? All these things will impact which members stay.

There is no substitute for an all-out campaign to strengthen and build our membership.

Membership and Retention is everyone's business.

EXCERPTS FROM THE GRAND CHAPTER OF FLORIDA

ARTICLE XXII Concurrent Masonic Laws

The Constitution and Regulations of "The Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons shall govern in all matters so far as practical and when not in conflict with the spirit and plain intent of the Constitution and Regulations and Landmarks established by this Grand Chapter

Note: If any York Rite Bodies plan weekend festivals, Short of Time or Slow Classes, please let me know, with the date, time, location and contact person, for the Spring and Fall of 2024 and I will put it in the next newsletter, and on the website. Remember, Membership and Retention is everyone's business.

**There is no substitute for an all-out campaign to strengthen and build our membership.
Of Florida"**

Membership by District for 2024:

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

REMINDER: MASONIC MEMBERSHIP SOLUTIONS (MMS) RULES STATE THAT NEW COMPANIONS AND SIR KNIGHTS NEED TO BE PLACED IN MMS WITHIN 15 DAYS. If this is not done, the magazine will not be sent automatically. The Secretary will have to contact Grand Encampment.

MMS IS NOW ON GOOGLE CHROME

New Membership by York Rite Body 2024:

DIST	DATE	LOCATION	KNIGHTED
1			
2			
3	8 & 16 Mar 5 & 12 Oct	Tampa	5
4			
5			
6	8-9 Mar	Ft Pierce (3), Ft Lauderdale (2), Orlando (1), WPB (4)	10
7	10 & 17 Feb	Palatka (1), Sanford (9), Daytona (2)	12
8			
9			
10	22 June, 6 Jul, Aug 17	Pensacola	
TOTAL 2024 KNIGHTINGS			27
TOTAL 2023 KNIGHTINGS			126

Also, as soon as your area determines the dates for the Spring Festival, **PLEASE** let me know so they may be included.

Fraternally,

Henry A. Adams
HENRY A. ADAMS, KYGCH

"Every Christian Mason Should Be A Knight Templar"

Some excerpts, from the Grand Commanders Handbook, published by the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States, reprint from Aug 2009, intro. and Grand Commandery of Florida, Baderstadt, Jon L. " Making Members" pp 73-75, and from the Grand Commanders Handbook given to the Grand Line Officers. Membership Development, Grand Encampment, 2003-2006

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