

# **Grand Lodge of Nebraska**



## **Membership Retention Manual**

Reviewed and Revised by the Membership Committee of the  
Grand Lodge of Nebraska

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## **Introduction**

Membership is, and will always be, the lifeblood of Nebraska Masonry. Without the men who are the Cornerstone of our Fraternity, Masonry will become like the empty hall in the tale of Beowulf, where Grendel comes and takes all the men away leaving no one to take care of the task of improving one's self and community.

It is now the time for our Lodge Officers and every member to put their armor on and go into battle to save our great organization. For us to win this battle we must have a plan and goals to maximize the efforts that are in this Manual. This Manual is not an answer to all the membership problems in your Lodge, but without a plan and goals, we will fail to strengthen our Fraternity. Your plans should be tailored to fit the needs of your Lodge, include a Mentoring Plan and be laid out for a minimum of five years.

The responsibility of the Grand Lodge and its officers is to help every Lodge and its officers to develop a plan, measure and achieve the Lodge goals. Each Lodge should look upon the Grand Lodge and its officers as a resource in your planning.

## **What is Retention?**

The purpose of the Lodge Retention Program is to reach out to the Brethren who do not attend Lodge regularly and effectively communicate with new members.

Based on exhaustive research, it appears the typical Mason becomes inactive quickly, in about four years. This is particularly true if he does not see an advantage to attending Lodge or continuing to pay his dues. Our three biggest contributors to membership decline are deaths, demits, and suspension for non-payment of dues. Obviously, we cannot control the number of deaths, but we can address the issue of demits and suspensions for non-payment of dues. Start now to retain every Brother in your Lodge.

## **Ten Proven Commandments for Ensuring an Active Lodge**

- 1. Communicate with every member of the Lodge**
  - Call in-state and out-of-state members regularly
  - Send regular update emails
  - Send birthday and holiday cards
  - Officers should be aware of sickness or distress
  - Know who is not doing well and needs help
  - Send flowers and cards for funerals
  - Send a newsletter, trestleboard, etc. to members to keep them advised on Lodge activities
  
- 2. Have an active Masonic widows program**
  - Visit Masonic widows regularly
  - Send holiday cards and/or flowers
  - Invite them to special Ladies night as guest of the Lodge
  - Provide assistance as needed
  
- 3. Greet every member at every meeting**
  - Have candidates serve as greeters at the Lodge door
  - Shake every member's hand every meeting
  - Introduce Masonic visitors and those helping with the meeting
  - Thank the officers and Past Masters for their help and support
  
- 4. Understand the needs of your members**
  - Ask what programs the members want
  - Survey the members and respond to their feedback
  - Adjust your plan according to your member's desires
  
- 5. Get to know your members' families**
  - Have activities that bring families to Lodge
  - Be involved in community activities that include family members
  - Know when special events are happening in a member's family
  - Recognize spouses' and children's birthdays, graduations, awards, and prizes
  
- 6. Ask your members to take an active role in the Lodge**
  - Create jobs to enroll as many members as possible
  - Keep them active and involved
  - Make everyone feel needed and appreciated
  
- 7. Plan your work – Work your Plan**
  - Make winning Grand Lodge Awards a goal
  - Three- to Five-Year Lodge Plan is best
  - Involve all officers in planning process
  - Each officer has a part to play in the Five-Year Plan
  
- 8. Show your appreciation to your members**
  - Certificates of Appreciation
  - Recognition dinners
  - Honored guest at Table Lodges

**9. Be proud of your Lodge**

- Take an active role
- Don't get discouraged when things don't change quickly
- Be an innovator with drive to see a project to its conclusion

**10. Be the catalyst for your Lodge**

- Be enthusiastic, energetic and committed
- Be a creative leader that brings excitement to your Lodge

## The Lodge Retention Program

The Lodge Retention Program outlines a five-step program to address issues related to membership retention in your Lodge. The program requires the “buy in” of the Lodge Officers and the membership. If your Lodge doesn’t have an issue or problem with membership retention, congratulations! This program still may help keep your Lodge active and vital. However, if you think your Lodge has sparse sideliners, or you are having problems filling the officer line, you could probably benefit from using at least some of the processes and ideas contained in this program.

The five steps are:

1. Understand the Scope of the Problem
2. Know the Strengths and Weaknesses of Your Lodge
3. Develop a Five-Year Plan for your Lodge
4. Work the Plan
5. Measure and Evaluate Success

A key concept in this plan is to know what your membership wants in their Lodge and then give it to them. There is a well-known line spoken in the movie “Field of Dreams” – “If you build it, they will come.” So, if you build a strong and active Lodge membership, sparse sideliners should cease to be a problem. Be ready to adjust to changing demographics – the Lodge mentality should not be a “we have always done it this way” approach.

### Step 1: Understand the Scope of the Problem

#### Methods to Assess the Condition of Your Lodge

Brainstorm with the Brethren. Include everyone who is willing to offer opinions. Every Brother needs to feel wanted and a necessary part of the solution. Encourage Brothers to buy into the concept of improving the Lodge. Be sure to include the points of view and ideas of all. Complete discussions and meetings with different segments of the Lodge membership. Then compare and combine ideas.

Consult with your Lodge officers. Lodge Officers offer a perspective of those who run the Lodge. Encourage creative thinking in new directions.

Consult your Past Masters. Past Masters offer experience and leadership. Avoid derailing ideas via the “we never did it this way before” model.

Conduct telephone interviews. Form a committee of Officers, Past Masters, and volunteers to telephone the Brethren and ask pre-set questions to obtain the information that you desire. Decide what demographic of your membership you wish to survey (e.g., inactive Brothers who have not been to Lodge in a specified amount of time, or newly raised Brothers who have stopped or never attended Lodge).

#### Surveys

There are many types of surveys available to fit your needs. Decide what you want to ask and choose your questions accordingly. The survey should not be too long or tedious. Do not allow the respondent to lose interest in the task at hand.

#### Survey Contact Methods

**Face-to-face interviews.** Personal contact is the most appreciated and open means of communication. Body language can answer many questions. You may find that those Brethren who have been away for a while may or may not want to talk and you may have difficulty keeping the conversation on track. Keep to

the points at hand without seeming disinterested in what your Brother has to say. You need a group of questioners to interview the respondents, because the process is very time-consuming.

**Phone.** Telephone your demographic to present the survey and obtain instantaneous responses. Be aware that the responses may not be as open as those in writing might be. You may find that those Brethren who have been away for a while may or may not want to talk and you may have difficulty staying on topic. As above, keep to the points at hand without seeming disinterested in what your Brother has to say. You need a group of questioners to make these calls because this process can be time-consuming.

**Mail.** Mail the surveys to the chosen demographic with instructions to mail the responses back. Set a deadline for the responses and stand firm by the deadline. Telephone follow-up should be a standard process.

**E-mail.** Like a mail survey, but limited to those with e-mail access. Telephone follow-up should be a standard process.

There are many surveys available on the Grand Lodge of Nebraska website. Be sure to use these to assist you in an evaluation.

### **Evaluating the Results of Your Survey**

Evaluation forms allow you to categorize and analyze all the data collected in an easy-to-understand format. This can be done in several different ways:

- Pie Charts
- Percentages
- Sum of certain responses

When evaluating written data, consider all data in full, such as comments made by Brethren regarding specific issues. A separate sheet should be used to categorize them properly, such as:

- Severity of complaint – is it important or frivolous?
- Commonness of problem – how many Brethren feel the same way?
- Difficulty of solution – can it be fixed and how hard would it be to fix?

## **Step 2: Know the Strengths and Weaknesses of Your Lodge**

### **Analysis Tools**

The simplest way to go about understanding your Lodge and its capabilities is to analyze its strengths, weaknesses, and available resources. The resources available to your Lodge may be physical (e.g., the Lodge building), financial, or human (i.e., the members) in nature.

### **SWOT Analysis**

One of the most popular ways in which businesses assess their current status, as well as the opportunities or obstacles which lie ahead, is by identifying Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats, or SWOT for short. This business tool can be applied to many situations, including the status of your Lodge. There are many books available on the subject should you or your Lodge brethren wish to learn more.

Creating a SWOT might seem simple, but it can get complicated, because a SWOT can be as broad or as narrow as you need it to be for a given situation. For example, you could do a SWOT based on the overall state of the Lodge facilities, or you could narrow it down to look at how difficult trying to implement a single event would be.

When creating a SWOT, you need to consider many different areas. At the same time, it's important to keep each area organized. For example, if you are dealing with putting on a special fundraising dinner, the assessment may proceed along the following lines.

## Objective: Conduct a Fundraising Dinner

### Strengths:

- \*We have Brethren who enjoy cooking.
- \*Brethren who can help with catering.
- \*A lot of Brethren came to these dinners when we had them before.

### Weaknesses:

- \*Budget – How many people can we feed for a reasonable price?
- \*Physical space – How many people can we fit comfortably in the Lodge hall?

### Opportunities:

- \*Can we entice Brethren to return to Lodge? with this dinner?
- \*Can we give someone an opportunity to do something they have always wanted to do?

### Threats:

- \*What if the building is rented out?
- \*Do we have the financial resources?
- \*Do we have the manpower?

This is a small example, and it may seem that it is too simple. However, when you can itemize your details, you are far less likely to be surprised should a problem arise. You will have prepared for it in advance of making any commitments. To be fair, SWOT is practical when done on a large scale, and especially in conjunction with a five-year plan.

### Developing a Skills List

One of the best things you can do for your Lodge is to develop a skills list. You can start with the information you gather from the surveys, but you can also simply call or sit down with your Brethren and ask them! Also note that a skills list is not necessarily limited to someone's occupation – an engineer may like to cook, but no one has asked him to help with help with dinner. By knowing what your Brethren can do, you can help them to get involved in the activities of your Lodge.

A skills list serves many purposes:

- You know what resources are available.
- You know who would be more willing to help with a particular event or idea.
- You know what your Brethren do for work and their hobbies.
- You can share resources with other Lodges in your building or area who may not have that resource.
- You can introduce Brethren to candidates with similar skills and interests.
- You can point a Brother toward another Brother who has a resource he needs.

You can organize your skills list any way you want, but a few things are essential:

- Name
- Lodge (if the list is going to be used in a larger area than a single Lodge)
- Skill(s)
- Contact information
- Where the person is willing to work (i.e., distance from home or types of jobs, or only for their Lodge, or for a particular Lodges)
- If a fee is required, and how much

Note: With the last statement in mind, it is important neither to overuse nor under-appreciate those Brethren who have useful skills, or they will eventually stop helping. It is important also to get permission from the Brethren on your Skills List if you are planning to share the list among multiple Lodges. Also, in fairness, most Brethren who earn their living in a trade should be paid a fee if they are asked to do a long-term task, such as roofing, plumbing, or electrical work in the Lodge.

### **Step 3: Develop a Five-Year Plan for your Lodge**

The importance of planning for future success cannot be overestimated.

#### **Create a Mission Statement**

To ensure everyone in your Lodge is operating on the same page, so to speak, it is essential to formulate a Lodge Mission Statement. For example:

(your Lodge name) is a fraternity of Masons with a mission to:

- Promote the tenets of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth.
- Improve the individual character, leadership, and spirit of your Brethren through relevant programs.
- Inspire men to support the principles of the organization.
- Promote family and community values.
- Strengthen and promote Symbolic Masonry and its worldwide brotherhood.
- Serve mankind through the impact of its extensive charitable outreach.

What does your Lodge have as its mission? An ideal Mission Statement should include reference to what your Lodge is specifically known for, or does best. If your Lodge has a Mission Statement review it. If it does not represent your Lodge, update the Mission Statement.

#### **Set Measurable and Meaningful Goals**

A Lodge may aspire to several goals. As you formulate your mission, start thinking about just what it is you and your fellow Lodge members are trying to accomplish through the active duties and projects of the Lodge. Here are some examples:

- Understand the makeup of our Lodge and what the Brethren desire.
- Be attractive to Masonic Brethren.
- Build closer working relationships with your Grand Lodge and other Masonic appendant bodies.
- Be an organization that is managed effectively.
- Be led by men with effective leadership skills.
- Be recognized as a fraternal organization committed to philanthropy and community service.
- Be active in the community at large.
- Be endorsed by the member's families.
- Develop and implement an aggressive retention program that reduces attrition, and improves attendance and encourages Officers.
- Develop groups to assist Brethren in encouraging involvement and retention.
- Conduct critical review of meeting and Lodge functions.
- Determine a percentage retention figure and establish it as a goal to maintain.

#### **Specify Your Objectives**

A Lodge may eventually have several specific objectives it wishes to accomplish, such as:

- Develop and implement a member improvement program.
- Provide ongoing and regular feedback to all the Brethren.
- Conduct "Focus" groups to assist our Brethren in achieving success and determining ways of increasing participation.
- Sponsor and coordinate programs of interest to your Brethren and their families.
- Understand the social and ethical needs of your members' families in today's society and how this relates to and affects the individual Mason.
- Increase a long-term sense of commitment to the Fraternity.
- Establish widows and family-friendly programs.
- Increase youth awareness and interest in the Fraternity through DeMolay, Rainbow, and Job's Daughters and similar groups.
- Use a Masonic Mentoring program.

- Assure timely implementation of retention initiatives.
- Explore areas of mutual interest with your Brethren.
- Build and strengthen partnerships with other Lodges for mutual programs.
- Improve interactive communication within the Lodge.
- Expand the use of men with effective leadership skills, who can assume positions of responsibility within the Lodge.
- Identify and recruit support from leaders in the community.
- Increase the involvement of your Brethren in charitable programs.
- Enhance and expand relationships with Masonic appendant bodies.

An integral part of developing your Five-Year Plan will be to identify the objectives your Lodge wishes to accomplish. That process will require engagement with your members if it's to be successful. This is where effective Lodge management is critical.

### **Effective Lodge Management: Consensus Building**

The purpose of this section is to examine the various techniques of Lodge management that exist and to determine which approach to leadership is best suited to the modern-day Lodge. The goal is to determine how to best develop and implement a successful management scheme in the Lodge.

“Brethren, such is the nature of our constitution that, as some must of necessity rule and teach, so others must, of course, learn to submit and obey.” As noted in the preceding quotation from the Charge to the Brethren in the Installation Ceremony certain members must take a leadership role for each individual Lodge to survive and flourish. How this Lodge management is conducted can have a profound effect on the success of the Lodge.

### **Management Styles**

Lodge management can run the gamut from totally autocratic to fully democratic. The successful formula probably lies somewhere in between. Perhaps you will identify the style that is employed by your Lodge. Maybe you will be pleased with what you find, but be prepared because you may identify problems with your Lodge's management style. If you do recognize problems, perhaps this Section will enable you to identify solutions to those problems.

Changes are occurring daily all around us. We cannot drag our feet in an attempt to stop the changes. We must adapt to those changes so that we will survive. Freemasonry, therefore, must also change to keep up with the evolution of society. In this manner, not only will Freemasonry survive in the new century, it will flourish. The key is to recognize that Freemasonry cannot stand still in this fast-paced world. It must be at the forefront of change, not in those areas which are inviolable, but in Lodge management.

### **Preparation**

Preparation is essential for a successful meeting. Be prepared before the meeting starts. A logical approach as listed below will enable you to achieve your objectives.

- Start and end on time.
- Everyone is entitled to an opinion.
- Encourage participation. Controversy is accepted, but it should be controlled and sincere.
- The better the planning, the better the meeting. Write out your agenda on paper so you can focus on the goal. This will also keep you on track.
- Practice before you get in front of the group.

### **Ask Questions**

The technique of asking questions is an art that everyone should master. You should ask questions to open a discussion, keep interest alive, get participants involved, advance the discussion, develop the topic, gain acceptance, or to get action. To handle questions:

- Allow people to talk and develop answers.
- Do not restrict yes or no responses.

- Allow expression of opinions, thoughts and ideas.
- Qualify a person's thinking.
- Use open-ended questions.
- Open questions usually begin with Whom? What? Where? When? Why? And How?

### **Starting the Lodge Retention Program**

- Meet with the Master and Wardens (if you aren't one already) and provide them an overview of the Lodge Retention Program.
- Form a small committee of two or three Brethren with whom you can easily work.
- Meet with your new committee and review the Retention Program with them. Do some brainstorming and give some thought to the condition of your Lodge. How has attendance been? What are your observations? You may want to include your Master in this meeting as well (assuming you are not the Master).
- At the earliest opportunity, speak to the Lodge and give an overview of the Retention Program to the Brethren. If time permits, put some questions to the floor, ask the Brethren what they like or dislike about their Lodge. If you are thinking of doing a survey, tell them. Ask for their suggestions and their feedback.
- Surveys – many Lodges have tried them with varying results. Only a small percentage of the surveys are returned. Give plenty of thought to what you hope to achieve and how you will get your Brethren to complete and return this survey. You may get some ideas or an explanation from some to the Brethren as to why don't attend.
- Document your plan in writing.
- Try to think of ONE thing you could do right away that might inspire someone to come back to Lodge ... then focus on that one idea. Do not start a lot of different projects at once.
- If possible, avoid being placed on other committees.
- Don't postpone the start-up of this important program. Like the Nike commercial says, "JUST DO IT!"

Deal with the facts only. It is difficult to deal with a problem with people misunderstanding each other, getting angry or upset, and taking things personally. People tend to see what they want to see. Out of a mass of detailed information, they tend to pick out and focus on those facts that confirm their perceptions and to disregard or misrepresent those that call their perceptions into question. Give each side a stake in the outcome by ensuring that they participate in the process. If they are not involved, they are hardly likely to approve or participate in the solution. Often, people will continue to hold out, not because the proposal is unacceptable, but simply because they want to avoid the feeling or appearance of backing down to the other side.

Proposals should be made that are consistent with their values. If the parties view themselves as adversaries in a personal confrontation, it is difficult to separate their relationship from the problem. A more effective way is for the parties to think for themselves.

Is a partner in a side-by-side search for an agreement advantageous to each and beneficial to the Lodge?

### **Focus on INTERESTS, not Positions**

List the facts. Since the parties' problem appears to be a conflict of positions, and since the goal is to achieve a position, they naturally tend to think and talk about positions – and in the process, often reach an impasse. The basic problem lies not in conflicting positions, but in the conflict between each side's needs, concerns and fears, that is, their interests. Interests motivate people. Their position is what they base their decision on, but their interests are what caused them to decide on a position. Looking to their interests instead of their positions makes it possible to develop a solution. Behind opposed positions lie shared and compatible interests as well as conflicting ones. Agreement is often possible because interests differ. Shared and differing interests coupled with complementary interests can serve as the building blocks for a wise agreement. A position is likely to be concrete and clear, unfortunately the interests underlying it may well be unexpressed, intangible and perhaps inconsistent.

The problem, then, is to identify those interests. One basic technique is for the leader/mediator to put himself “in the shoes” of each party. Examine each position they take, and ask himself “Why?” One useful way to uncover interests is first to identify the basic decision each party seeks, and then to determine why the other party has not made that decision.

What interests of theirs stand in the way? The purpose of mediating is to serve the best interests of the Lodge. The chance of that happening increases when there is communication between the parties. Each side may not know the other’s interests. If each side is to take the other party’s interest into account, the mediator must explain to them what those interests are. He must be specific. Concrete details not only make the description credible, they add impact. People tend to listen better if they feel that they have been understood. It also helps to acknowledge that their interests are part of the overall solution being sought.

### **Invent Options for Mutual Gain**

It may seem that there is no way to “split the pie” that leaves both parties satisfied. Often the solution appears to be an either/or choice that is either markedly favorable to one side or the other. As valuable as it is to have options, people involved in negotiation rarely sense the need for them.

There are four major obstacles that inhibit the inventing of an abundance of options:

1. Premature judgment – inventing options does not come naturally.
2. Searching for the single answer – in most people’s minds, inventing alternatives simply is not part of the negotiating process.
3. The assumption of a fixed “pie” – each side sees the situation as essentially “either/or”, either I get what is in dispute, or the other party does.
4. Thinking that “solving their problem is their problem” – each side is concerned with only its own immediate interests.

To invent creative options that deal with the facts, it is necessary to:

- Separate the act of inventing the options from the act of judging them, since judgment hinders imagination.
- Broaden the options on the table, rather than looking for a single answer.
- Search for mutual gains – shared interests help to produce agreement.
- Invent ways to make the decisions of each party easy – confront each side with a choice that is as painless as possible.

### **Insist on Using Objective Criteria**

The more often standards of fairness, efficiency, or merit are brought to bear on the problem, the more likely that a final course of action will be produced that is wise and fair. Approaching agreement through discussion of objective criteria also reduces the number of commitments that each side must make and then break as they move toward agreement. In positional bargaining, each party spends much of the time defending its position and attacking the other side’s position. The use of objective criteria tends to employ time more effectively talking about possible solutions. Objective criteria need to be independent of each side’s will and, to assure a mutual beneficial agreement, should also be logical and practical. When change appears necessary and differences in how to address the issue exist, the preceding methodology should be employed. To assist in reaching the proper conclusions, the following process should be considered:

Assemble the pertinent information from available sources, such as the Constitution and Bylaws of the Grand Lodge and Lodge Bylaws, experience and expert knowledge of Brethren, tradition and history to form a basis from which to begin, review past records, and consult with other Lodges and data sources within the Craft.

- Review the assembled facts with representatives of the Lodge.
- Establish a committee to devise a plan to bring about the appropriate change, chaired by a Brother possessing mediation skills. Committee members should be selected for their abilities in relation to the issue, and to represent the interests of the membership.

- Committee proposals and recommended action shall be reviewed by representatives of the membership prior to submission to the Lodge for discussion, modification and approval or rejection.
- Implement the agreed change, and review progress and results with the membership on a regular basis.

A good plan for each meeting should include the following elements:

- Establish your objective. It may simply be to have a successful meeting.
- Have an agenda.
- Set the goals necessary to achieve that objective.
- Perform the work of the evening with dignity and decorum to ensure a smooth-flowing meeting and to end at a reasonable hour.
- Define specific tasks.
- Organize the business portion so that it is accomplished efficiently.
- Ensure that all participants in the meeting are well-versed in their parts and know when to act.
- Try to foresee anything that could arise during the meeting.
- Time all segments and ensure that they are appropriate for discussion.

Assign responsibilities. You are the leader, set the strategy. Assign tasks to the Secretary, Wardens, other Officers and certain Brethren. Let each one know what is specifically expected of him and establish controls to evaluate performance. Your map is only of value if you check it from time to time to ensure that you are still on course.

### **Roles and Responsibilities in the Lodge**

Lodge management in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century requires widespread participation by the Brothers, under strong direction of the Master. In this environment, each Brother is afforded the opportunity of participating in the active duties of the Lodge, and thus is likely to feel a sense of belonging to the Lodge. The views of the Brethren are actively sought and considered, decisions are taken based on their input, and good management is guaranteed through a plan of succession under which officers fully participate in the management of the Lodge as they progress through the line.

In certain instances, we must inspire our Brethren to become more involved in Lodge activities, while in other instances, we must encourage them to share management of these Lodge activities with the new Brethren. To do this, of course, the Lodge must have activities. These activities should be the result of a carefully conceived plan, developed by the Master, with assistance from Lodge Officers and Past Masters that strives for an interesting balance between degree and social programs, and provides for optimum participation by Lodge Members.

## **Step 4: Work the Plan**

Where do you want to go? There are many ways to keep in touch with your Brethren. Be creative - plan variety and strive for an interesting balance between your degree and social programs. Degree work is the heart of our fraternity, and, if you are seriously pursuing new members in your Lodge, should be occupying a significant portion of your time. The best way to get your new Masons involved in the Lodge is to assign them a part in the degrees. One of the best ways to get an inactive brother back to Lodge is to ask him to do a specific part in the degrees. Even if you do not have candidates at a particular time, use practices to bring the Brethren together for a purpose. Conduct round-table proficiency sessions that include the candidate, his mentor, and as many brethren as want to join in. This greatly enforces the sense of membership that a candidate will have upon completing his degrees.

It is important that the Lodge Officers know their work and work the three degrees, even if you must borrow candidates from other Lodges, or participate in degrees at other Lodges.

If ritual work is not the new Brother's strong suit, consider having him help with/ chair a Lodge event, participate in a fundraiser, serve on a committee, etc. The possibilities are endless. The important thing is

to find the brother's talent and use it. Keeping him involved in the Lodge will help him grow as a Mason, and continue with that his life long masonic journey.

This responsibility having been addressed, consider other special programs such as:

- A Past Masters Night, honoring an active Past Master by allowing him to conduct a degree team of other Past Masters.
- Fraternal Visits by Lodges, either from within or outside your own Grand Jurisdiction with the visitors being allowed to participate in the work of the evening.
- Special programs of Masonic Education and/or Instruction.
- Special non-Masonic programs in the Lodge room for family and friends of members.
- An Awards Night for the presentation of long service and other pins and certificates.
- Social functions, such as the annual Ladies Night, Christmas Party, barbecue, special functions for Brothers and their families, and don't forget the widows of deceased Brethren.

In preparing your long-range plan for the year, take full advantage of the expertise available. Just because you are the leader does not mean that you must carry the ball at each meeting. Use the resources of your own Lodge and do not forget to utilize the area talent available to you.

Remember, "All work and no play makes Johnny a dull boy" – It also makes him a bored Mason, one who could turn away to other pursuits of enjoyment, and he may be lost to the Lodge forever.

## **Step 5: Measure Success**

### **What Constitutes Effectiveness?**

Effectiveness can be defined as "the attainment of the desired or intended outcomes of your Lodge Retention Plan." What are the goals and objectives of your Plan? Are they vague or specific? The more specific your goals, the easier it will be for your Lodge to identify the desired outcomes, thereby determining what you need to measure and evaluate as the Plan is implemented.

### **How Is Effectiveness Measured?**

A well-designed and properly executed Plan identifies multiple goals, based on the assessment of Lodge needs. Multiple goals probably mean multiple effectiveness measures, but not necessarily. Lodges with more modest objectives may feel that a single measure, such as attendance at the monthly Communication, is a sufficient basis for assessing effectiveness. However, if your Lodge is interested in tracking multiple outcomes (e.g., sideline attendance, number of Brethren attending School of Instruction, number of non-Masonic guests attending open Lodge events), you will need to take that into account when developing your effectiveness assessments.

What goals were identified in your Lodge's plan? If the primary goal is to increase sideline attendance at the monthly communication, a logical way to assess your plan's effectiveness is to determine how many sideline attendees your Lodge had, on average, for the 3-6 months prior to plan implementation, and then track monthly attendance in the future. You can use the absolute numbers, or you could state the attendance as a percentage of total Lodge members. At any future time, you have the ability to calculate changes relative to the pre-Plan time period.

### **Measurement Methods**

#### **1. Establish Your Baseline: What Makes Sense?**

It's important to set an appropriate baseline against which to measure progress toward goals. If you do not have historical data, do not worry – you are better off moving ahead with your plan and collecting whatever data you can than doing nothing!

The time frame over which your baseline is determined may be important to consider. For example, if you want to track changes in sideline attendance over time, you may want to consider if there are seasonal variations (e.g., "snow birds" who are not around in the winter months), which should be taken into account.

In that case, it may make sense to develop a three- or six-month average against which to compare. Alternatively, you could compare the current month's attendance to the same month in previous years, much as department stores do to assess changes in sales.

## **2. Conduct Interim Assessments**

How Often? That's up to you. There are no firm rules to follow in this regard. Just beware of the "dieter's dilemma", where constant scale watching (or, in this case, attention to data) can be counter-productive. You may want to track some outcomes on a monthly basis, and others on a less frequent basis, such as quarterly.

## **3. Report Findings to Your Lodge**

It is essential that results be reported back to your Lodge Brethren in a timely fashion. Again, there are no firm guidelines for how often, or how detailed, these reports need to be. One strategy for reporting this information is via the Monthly Communication. This ensures that the information is delivered not just to those who attend Lodge, but also to everyone (even out-of-state Brothers and those who belong to neighboring Lodges who may receive courtesy copies of your Lodge's notice).

## **Summary**

As was noted in the introduction to this manual, the ideas presented here are not intended to be the be-all and end-all of membership retention. The fundamental premise of the program outlined here is simple:

- Identify the issues or problems facing your Lodge.
- Assess the means at your disposal (i.e., strengths and weaknesses) to address these issues.
- Develop a workable plan with measurable goals.
- Work the plan.
- Evaluate what worked (and what didn't), and the resulting progress toward goals.

We hope the ideas and concepts presented in these pages will help you formulate a strategy that works wonders in your Lodge. Best of luck as you and your Lodge embark on a successful future!

The Grand Lodge Membership Committee wants to thank the following groups for helping put together this Manual.

**Grand Lodge of Massachusetts Membership Committee**

**Grand Lodge of Virginia Membership Committee**

**Grand Lodge of Nebraska Membership Committee**