

PREPERATION FOR LEADERSHIP AND THE WORSHIPFUL MASTER

Leadership can be defined and attributes of leaders can be enumerated, however, to fully understand what makes a good leader, many different aspects must be explored. Circumstances as well as timing contribute to how a leader is determined. A well educated person may have the knowledge to be a leader in peace time but in a war, the military trained leader is the better equipped person for the job. After the war, the educated person with good business sense would be the best choice. Whether we consider governments, businesses or any other organizations, the best leader must be trained and have experience for the particular group to be led. Leaders are both born as such and/or trained to lead. This training comes in many modes. The military leader is created in the different academies in this country such as West Point, Annapolis, The Air Force Academy and the Coast Guard Academy. Then, these educated leaders get their experience by training for war for years. Some people are natural born leaders. They have an aura about them that when they enter a room, they are accorded the respect and deference that their confidence demands. These leaders exude power and presence of command. Most people recognize these traits at once and are willing to follow these people. However, natural leaders are few and far between. Most people usually are willing to follow a leader as long as they feel the security and confidence the leader imparts. In the business world, leaders often take entry level jobs and based on their ability and successes, climb the ladder to the head leadership position. Of course, successful leaders should possess the intelligence to lead, as well as appearance, charisma, speaking ability, the ability to enthuse, to inspire, to delegate, to listen and understand, to communicate and be understood, BUT the most important asset for a great leader is the quality of independence. Independence sets the leader apart from other people. The true leader has an outward manifestation almost like a swagger that he will lead himself first and inspire others to follow him and accomplish deeds in spite of themselves. Successful leaders surround themselves with successful people thereby enhancing the groups' efforts for success. The leader takes those with lesser abilities and intellects and inspires and exhorts them to excel in minor roles thereby aiding in success.

Freemasonry needs good and successful leaders however with the hierarchy in the Lodge and the annual change in leadership, the chances for good and effective leadership is, at best, minimal. The success of Lodges usually is cyclical with more downs than ups due to the methods heretofore implemented for training officers. What is needed is in-depth, one on one, instruction of all officers and members so as to strengthen the entire line of officers for each succeeding year ensuring continuity of good leadership and success in drawing a better group of men into our ranks. This can be instituted in each lodge with an education course on leadership detailing all the aspects of leading and managing a Lodge. Being a leader in a Blue Lodge is the same as running a small corporation or municipality but without the power of hiring and firing personnel. You must work with the members of the Lodge and do the best you can with them.

Let us prepare an officer for the special position of Worshipful Master. As we all know, the hierarchy in a Blue Lodge is such as every other chair or office is a position where there are less demands or responsibilities for that particular officer, thereby providing the time and opportunity to prepare for the next office which has a more demanding role. It was brilliant of our forerunners to set up this system where officers can actually learn on the job with the help of mentors. We should start with the actual preparation of Worshipful Master when a man is Senior Deacon. When a person has accepted the appointment of Sr. Deacon, He should have made his decision that he is going to continue to the East.

First, he should take a calendar for the year he will be in the East and start filling his meeting dates listing rehearsals special functions that are traditional for his Lodge - such as Table Lodge, Widows Night, Service Award Night, and Official Visit of the District Deputy etc...Make allowances for Degree Nights and remember that the Master can always call for an Emergent Communication in the event of a conflict. Any free nights should be filled in with interesting Speakers on subjects that are important to the members as Masons as well as in their personal life. Education Nights should take up at least three meetings during the year. Setting this up early will take the fear out of planning the year for the potential Master and then he can work out the details with his officers. The Master should plan all the activities and ascertain what Charities the Lodge will support. He should also personally contact every member that he plans to appoint as an Officer and make certain that each one understands what duties and responsibilities of his position will require. The leader/Master should appoint Chairmen of Committees the men who have either experience and/or the ability to handle the task. Too many times these positions are filled by inexperienced or the wrong choice leading to poor quality and unsuccessful programs. The Master MUST call a meeting of all the officers either at Lodge or at his home and give each one a printed schedule of the year with a plan for programs, charities and responsibilities. He should ask if there is any objection or suggestions and address them at once and let them know after addressing any objections that there can be no objections later in the year. The best time to have this meeting is late August as this will not conflict with the demands of the Lodge business and will allow the officers an easier time for attending this meeting. If the Master wishes an Open Installation, he must have the approval of the membership which is acquired by a motion and vote on the floor. He must select competent men to be the Installing Master, Marshal and Chaplain as not to embarrass the Lodge. He must set up the collation for his night and if regular meeting times and/or dates are changed, he must obtain a dispensation.

The Master MUST remember to use tact and diplomacy in all his dealings with the Officers and all the members. He Must establish early on a good rapport with the Lodge Secretary. The Secretary is the most important Officer for the Master and can make the year a smooth ride or the Masters worst nightmare. Advise him that you wish to work with him to make his job easy, so agree with him before the year begins exactly what chores you will do and what chores he wants to do during the year. The Master should be in charge of the Trestleboard and let the Secretary fill in the dates of programs and thy Lodge business that is in his domain. The good leader leads by example and is prepared for the Lodges business every meeting. When there is disagreement in the

Lodge. AND there will be at times, the Master must take charge and use all his diplomatic skills to solve the problem and move on. If he has antagonists in the Lodge, he should make every effort to cultivate the potential trouble-maker into an ally thereby avoiding problems before they begin. This is the sign of a very good leader. Since the success of the Lodge is paramount, the Master must always keep in mind that there may be times when he must make decisions that he himself does not like BUT keeps the Lodge and membership on an even keel.

The Master should always use praise for his Officers as they will respond favorably with kindness instead of rebuke. Never, never admonish anyone in public. If it is necessary, do it privately. You will keep friends instead of guaranteeing an enemy. Be like the Boy Scout and always be prepared. This requires organization and communication with your Officers. There should be no surprises. Ask your Chairmen and Candidate Instructors for updates thereby keeping current with their progress or lack of it. Maintain an open door policy for everyone. Listen to their ideas and give them the impression that they are important even if you can't use their input. Be very explicit if communicating to the Officers and members and ascertain that they understand your meaning and intent. That will obviate misunderstanding and avoid problems.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

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