



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

May 28, 2013

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

Brother Louie Sarmiento is the spark plug in developing Odd Fellowship in the Philippines. He is young, enthusiastic, full of energy, a true Odd Fellow in spirit and action, and a Dedicated Member for Change. Below are some of Louie's thoughts on how Lodges can grow and can be successful. Again, each Lodge must find it's own way to the future. But the themes Louie expresses have two commonalities with themes others have expressed: (1) Reach out to your community and do good works in your town - local charitable works are good for the community, but are also important to the members of your Lodge, and (2) Have some fun in your Lodge - after all, we are a fraternal order and Lodges must be places of good fellowship where members can have a good time.

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Dave Rosenberg

Hello brother Dave,

Thanks for including me in the e-mails of DMC group. It is very interesting to read insights and ideas from various dedicated members regarding how to grow and develop our Order to fit in the 21st Century. Not to toot any horn as I am not an "I" person but I just want to share this experience. Since 2010, I have visited more or less 60 'strong' and 'weak' Odd Fellow and Rebekah lodges from different jurisdictions in the United States and Philippines. During my visits, I interviewed various leaders and members in person and asked them what made them stay active in the Odd Fellows and what they think can make IOOF strong and relevant in the current era. I also had the opportunity to exchange conversations in person, via e-mail and [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com) with members from U.S., United Kingdom, Canada, Norway, Denmark, Cuba and so on. In addition, being a member of another fraternal organization and other clubs, I tried to observe the characteristics of what makes a certain group strong. As a result of my inquiry and observation, I was able to write this article below probably a couple of years ago. And believe it or not, I still keep on updating it up until today as I continue to visit lodges and have conversations with other members. These tips are a result of observing a number of strong Odd Fellows, Rebekahs, Masonic, Moose, Elks and Pythias Lodges as well as college fraternities, sororities and clubs. Please do share my article below to our DMC brothers and sisters.

Thanks



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TIPS FOR A STRONG ODD FELLOWS LODGE

By Brother Louie Blake Sarmiento, PG

NUMBER ONE: Strong Recruitment. You are either growing or you are shrinking. As a lodge, try organizing open houses, membership drives and sending special invitation letters to prospective members. If your recruitment is strong, that means that outsiders believe in what you are doing. Put importance of the mentoring process - educate new members about the history, purpose and what makes the fraternity important and relevant in their lives and their communities. Perform the initiation ceremonies in a respectable and impressive manner that members will understand its relevance. Make them feel welcome and comfortable in the lodge hall and make sure that the majority of the new members will stay as members. Remember, you don't judge the strength of your lodge by the number of members listed in the members' register but by how many members actually attend in your lodge meetings and events. This is one of the strongest signs that you have a strong lodge.

NUMBER TWO: Lively Social Life. Nobody wants to continue their membership in a lodge that is always serious and rigid - your lodge needs to know how to have fun and enjoy! Is your lodge providing the social outlet that the brothers and sisters expect? This is much more than lodge meetings, initiation ceremonies and dinners. This should go beyond inside the lodge room. Go on a camping, a road trip, movie nights and so on. Organize social activities that invite people from the community - both members and non-members alike. To be able to attract new and younger members, a lodge should organize activities that are "cool" not too "old-school". Strong lodges have countless events that ensure the morale of their members stay high.

NUMBER THREE: Active Community Service. Strong lodges are active in community service because they want to make a difference, not because they are forced to participate. Make the community service events fun, and the brothers and sisters, as well as community members who can be potential members, will want to show up to do their part.

NUMBER FOUR: Create Leaders. Does your lodge develop new leaders or you just allow younger and newer members to just sit beside and feel useless? Does your lodge have the same people leading the lodge for how many years or do you have new set of officers every year? Every new member should be trained to be a leader from the very start they have become members - give them responsibility, elect and appoint them in lodge positions and do not be afraid to step back while supporting them behind the scenes. Seniority is not good, mentoring is better. The easiest way to see if your lodge is producing leaders is by seeing that younger and newer members take on roles and leadership positions in the lodge AND in the community. Strong Lodges have leaders who are also leaders of their city or town, not just in the lodge room.



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NUMBER FIVE: Strong Finances. This is probably the truest internal reflection on the strength of your lodge. The brothers and sisters in a strong lodge will want to pay their dues, because they realize that the fraternity provides great value to them. With good finances, comes good activities and events that all members could enjoy and find fulfillment.

NUMBER SIX: Clean and Well-maintained Lodge Hall. The Lodge Hall is a reflection of how strong the fraternity is. This is a lodge's most prized possession. Strong Lodges take great pride in their Lodge Hall or Building's appearance. Let your lodge be of service to its members and community. Make your lodge a place where community people and members will feel welcome and comfortable - a place where people could spend their free time and enjoy each others' company in the name of friendship, love and truth.

NUMBER SEVEN: Active Senior and New Members' Involvement. When older members disappear, the lodge will lose its wisdom and knowledge. When younger members disappear, the lodge will lose its hope for the future and the possibility of innovation. Oftentimes, the lodge blames members who leave for being the problem but it is actually the lodge that is the problem. The fraternity must cater to all its members, not just the ideas of older members and not just the ideas of the younger ones. After holding the top position in the lodge, encourage senior or older members to still stay involved and supportive to the younger ones. Have programs in place that the older and younger brothers want to be a part of, and as a result, the most experienced brothers remain active in the fraternity while the younger ones will also stay. Strong Lodges should put importance in listening to the opinions and suggestions of both new and senior members.

NUMBER EIGHT: Positive Reward System. Strong lodges should show appreciation and recognition to their members. It could be better to organize an awarding ceremony every year - give away awards of recognition or prizes to the most active member every year, the member who arrives the earliest in every meeting and so on. These may just be small certificates or tokens but this shows that you give importance to brothers and sisters who make good contributions to your lodge. It increases the morale of the lodge.

NUMBER NINE: Educate the Public. One big problem with a lot of lodges is they do a lot of good things but no one knows about it. This may be good because it shows that the lodge is not after recognition for the good things they do. However, this is also bad because no one will really know what we really do and people can misinterpret our purpose as a fraternity. Also, several lodges existed for over hundreds of years in their community but no one knows that they still exist. Do not be too secretive. Do not hide what good things you do. Educate the public of the existence of our fraternity. Place our three links logo outside every lodge building. Be proud to tell the world that you are a member of the Odd Fellows. Wear Odd Fellows T-shirts, jackets, sweaters, caps, watches and so on bearing the name 'Odd Fellows' with the three links emblem on it. Wear your Odd Fellows pin at work or at school. Place the Odd Fellows emblem or sticker



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on your car or motorcycle. Let your lodge participate in public parades and community events. Bring streamers with our logo and name. Invite people for an open house at your lodge hall at least once a year. Create a decent and attractive website for your lodge, have someone write an article about your lodge in the local or national newspaper, post photos and videos on the internet of your lodge activities and projects. Take advantage of technology, social media and the internet. When you post something good about your lodge on the internet, you are not just helping your lodge - you are actually also helping lodges across the world. Whatever good photos, articles or videos about the fraternity that you post on the internet can actually reach thousands of miles and millions of people. The best thing about it is it is for free.

NUMBER TEN: Strong Risk Management. The biggest problem of most lodges is when internal issues and problems occur such as conflicts and misunderstandings between members. Depending on how effective the risk management is, conflicts and misunderstandings can either make up or break up a lodge leading to its demise. Conflicts and misunderstandings are usually one of the reasons why some members decide to stop attending lodge meetings and events and quit the fraternity. Of course, nobody wants to be a part of a chaotic and troublesome lodge, right? Nobody wants to stay in a lodge wherein members are hating, raising each others' voice and cursing at each other. So, this is something that strong lodges should realize - put a solid risk management plan in place to prevent this from happening. Strong lodges should put more importance on relationships and friendships than finances, position, rules and individual pride. Put the principles of "Friendship, Love and Truth" above everything else.