



Independent Order of Odd Fellows  
Dedicated Members for Change

October 8, 2013

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

One of the important goals of Grand Master Rick Boyles is to foster congeniality in our Lodges. That, and other "secrets of a successful Lodge" are included in the Grand Master's article, which I have attached. Please read Rick's latest thoughts on the positive future of our Order in California. I think you will find it thought-provoking and informative.

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Dave Rosenberg, Grand Warden

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### A Few Ways to Turbo-Charge Membership

Sometimes, members tell me that articles are often written that talk about the dire state of affairs in the Odd Fellows, but that little or nothing is given to help the growth of our membership. There is no silver bullet that will catapult your lodge to the ranks of the successful, but a study of the successful lodges will illuminate some of their characteristic traits that may help to draw new members:

- 1) Diversity. We have to remember that the outside world tends to be much more diverse than our lodges. One of the traits of successful lodges is that they tend to be more diverse, and more accepting of original personalities. To me, it almost seems contrary to our name that although we call ourselves "Odd Fellows", the joke is that many of us are over 50 years old white men and women and it is time to realize that there is more to be seen and experienced than listening to the same dialogue from all of us who pretty much look alike. It's a big wonderful world out there with many who could emulate Friendship, Love and Truth.
- 2) Happiness. This seems like a silly statement, but I have seen many lodges where the members are fighting with each other. Either we learn to get along or we die. There is no middle ground. To the outside world, many of the things we fight over would appear trivial. We need to see them for what they truly are – stumbling blocks to growth.
- 3) Politeness. Also, this seems silly. Many of us like to kid each other, and those of us who are close friends find no offense whatsoever, but sometimes it crosses over into rudeness. We need to remember that each of us has feelings and we need to make sure we are respectful to each other. Oddly enough, diverse lodges tend to be more polite, perhaps because they recognize that there are inherent differences in each human being.



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- 4) Events and Committees. Many of the successful lodges have active committees which work into active events. By active events, I am referring to events which cater to outside prospective members and tend to draw people to their lodges.
- 5) Loosen the purse-strings. This may seem controversial for the Grand Master to suggest this, but remember that none of us can take it with us. How does that saying go? “You never see a brinks truck following a hearse”, so remember, that while your lodge may seem affluent, it is near destitution if your lodge is low on members. While it may seem great that you have a large bank account, it serves little or no purpose if you have trouble making a quorum. If your lodge has money, consider events that may encourage outside involvement. Often times it is startling how cheap they may be. In fact, I have seen many lodges that spend thousands on their own private dinners, but are reluctant to spend more than fifty dollars on outside events. Think about it.
- 6) Vote on everything. Many lodges which are troubled keep much of their business hidden from their general membership. If you have trustees, have them make regular reports to the lodge. The lodge should be not only informed of decisions but also (gasp!) have the power to overturn them. The biggest complaint I have from lodges in trouble is that some members keep things private from other members.
- 7) Trumpet our name. There is nothing wrong with our name and nothing wrong with our rituals. Successful lodges have no trouble in attracting members even though we call ourselves Odd Fellows. As I have mentioned before, if the Clampers (E. Clampus Vitus) have no problems in drawing members, why should we? While I agree that we should update rituals and perhaps streamline some things, I don't think that people leave the order due to rituals or our name, but perhaps they don't like the boring way in which we read them.
- 8) Care for those we are tasked with caring for. This is almost obvious. If we truly are in favor of Friendship, Love and Truth, than all whom we are tasked to care for, should feel warmth within our midst. If this is an order founded on the greatest of ideals we should ensure that our actions stay true to our ideals.
- 9) Laughter is the best medicine. Successful lodges have a good time. Some of the worst lodges perform the ritual in a perfunctory, robotic manner, and don't realize that by doing this they actually lose the true spirit of the ritual. Let's realize that fun should be endemic to our order and let's try to infuse everything we do with a sense of fun.
- 10) No one is in charge. Also something controversial for the Grand Master to say but what I mean by that is that no one person has the corner on logic, no one person should be left to discipline others by the rationale of his or her personal beliefs. The Grand Master may be empowered by the code, but he or she is empowered by the order in full so in effect I feel that the order is in charge and the Grand Master serves as the populace themselves dictate. One person in an empowered position blends into the next person in an



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empowered position and so on, so it does not make for one person to be more empowered than the other. Often times I go to a lodge where the Noble Grand is dictating to the lodge. This is not the Noble Grand's charge. The Noble Grand is more like an emcee than anything else, and it would be preferable if the Noble Grand told jokes rather than to dictate his own special view of Odd Fellowship. The key to growth is to realize that no one has all the answers, and growth is dependent on our own freedom to speak and do things equally. Again, if the lodge dictates one route, and the Noble Grand dictates another, the lodge wins.

- 11) Lighten up and be equal. All of us are created equal. Sometimes new members seem to have all the answers. They don't. Sometimes the old members seem to have all the answers. They don't. In fact, there are no concrete answers. The true answer for your own lodge is that it works for your lodge in particular. Let's realize that all of us are unique, all of us want to be successful, all of us want to be happy and content within our lodges.

These are just a few of the items I have seen in successful lodges. I could easily study successful lodges and come up with other examples. Let's be happy together and realize that we are unique as we are independent and growth will come with our own ability to see and embrace the world in full.

In Friendship, Love and Truth, Rick Boyles, Grand Master.