

To Set the Craft at Work-
A Primer for Lodge Masters



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Wisconsin Lodges

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***Jobs To Give The Brethren
To Keep Them Active And Engaged
And Keep The Lodge Healthy And Productive***

Introduction

In the Lodge, there is no such thing as a sidliner. There are only active and inactive Masons. To keep a Brother active you need to ensure that he has some responsibility in the Lodge: a job, a function, a role to play so that he feels he is a necessary part of the Lodge.

As the Worshipful Master, it is your responsibility to provide every Brother with a job in the Lodge. The old standby of asking every new Mason to be a Steward or to join the Line should be avoided. Not every Brother wants to be a Steward. Indeed, for some, this is totally unrelated to why they wanted to become a Mason and will be unwelcome. Similarly, many new Masons do not have the time to become an elected Lodge officer, and do not feel ready or qualified to accept this responsibility. But these new Brethren are enthusiastic and they want to get involved. The good news is that there **is** a job for every Mason, new or old that will be appealing, and will capitalize on his strengths and interests. Your challenge is to find a function that is appropriate for each Brother that is consistent with his interests, skills, and available time.

Giving each Brother a job is not only necessary for member retention; it is necessary to the health and strength of the Lodge, and to your success as Worshipful Master. What you will be able to accomplish for your Lodge and for Freemasonry will depend in no small part on the size of the pool of Brethren you can call upon. It is important

Set forth below are just a few of the categories of jobs you can give your members. Consider this list as a starting point, then think about the goals and objectives you have set, and what you hope to achieve during the year. Next seek out Brethren who can help you to reach these goals by taking on some of the responsibility.

I. Ritual

For a number of new Masons, the ritual is an important attraction. They love the ritual and want to see it performed. But they may not step forward and volunteer to participate, and they may not take the initiative to learn a part. They need to be asked. It is not sufficient to suggest that they take a part in one of the degrees. You need to be very specific. Tell him: "I need you to learn "x" part which has "y" lines, and I need you to be ready at "z" date." You should also explain to the Brother why it is important to the Lodge that he learns that particular part, for example, so the Lodge can perform a particular degree without outside help. Note, even if your Lodge does not have a candidate, it is still important to keep proficient in the ritual, and you should exemplify the degrees each year at a stated or called communication.

When you add together all of the parts in the three degrees, and the lectures, the charges, and the funeral service, there are forty-eight parts. Therefore, if you encourage your members to learn a specific part of our ritual you can have forty-eight Brethren actively engaged in activities needed by the Lodge. Some of these parts are short, others are more lengthy; some are totally unwritten, and others are mostly written. The point is that you can select a part that is within the capabilities of virtually every Brother.

II. Masonic Education

Many of the Brethren joined Freemasonry because they were interested in the Fraternity, its history and traditions, its philosophy and values. They want to know more about Masonic symbolism, famous Masons, and some of our charitable endeavors.

You can capitalize on this interest by approaching a number of the Brethren and asking them to prepare a brief paper on some aspect of Freemasonry to present at a stated communication. Remember not to neglect the inactive Brethren who may be waiting for an invitation to become more active. Tell them you only want a five-minute presentation and give them a set date when you want them to be on the program. If all you are asking for is a five-minute talk you can easily fit two such talks into your schedule at each stated communication. If you do this, you will be able to give twenty-four Brethren a useful function each year.

Some Brethren will be self-starters and able to come up with a virtually endless number of topics, others will have “writer’s block” and need your help in generating ideas. You can help these Brethren by getting a supply of good books on Freemasonry and looking in the index or table of contents for topics to suggest. You can get additional topic ideas from the many “Short Talk” bulletins published by the Masonic Service Association, and from the many good Masonic websites.

The benefits of enlisting the Brethren to prepare these five-minute talks are many. First, the Brother preparing the talk will learn more about Freemasonry by reading the book or chapter you may have pointed out, by finding other books, or by doing research on the Internet. Second, his efforts will improve your meetings. Third, there is a benefit for all the Brethren. They will leave each meeting knowing more about Freemasonry than when they arrived, and they will be more motivated to attend the next meeting.

If you integrate this idea into your advance planning, you can tell all twenty-four Brethren about the full set of topics, and when each Brother is scheduled to speak on each topic. You may be able to generate enough interest that many of the speakers will decide to attend all of the meetings to hear the short talks the other Brethren will be presenting. Masonic education can provide additional avenues for greater involvement by your members.

Here are a few additional ideas that can occupy thirty more of the Brethren.

- Appoint an LEO.
- Appoint three Brothers to give a short talk during the break in each of our three degrees.
- Appoint a Brother to read a section from the Book of Constitutions at each stated communication.
- Appoint a knowledgeable Brother to start a Masonic study group.
- Appoint twelve Brothers and ask each of them to go through ten of the questions and answers (Q & As) from the candidate alternate method EA/FC/MM degree booklets at a stated communication. Over the course of the year, you will have covered one hundred twenty questions, a little more than half of the Q & As in the three booklets. In less than two years, you can cover the entire set of Q & As.
- Appoint twelve Brothers to be responsible for one longer talk at Lodge — or for reading the monthly talk provided by the Grand Lodge Committee on Masonic Education.

When you add together all of these opportunities to participate in the educational program in your Lodge, you can have forty-eight Brethren actively engaged on tasks that will help to make your Lodge meetings more interesting and exciting.

III. Communication

There was a time when everyone in America knew quite a lot about Freemasonry, understood our values, and looked with great favor on our many charitable endeavors. Today, fewer Americans know much about us, and we need to re-educate them about who we are and what we do. There is much that each Lodge can do to enhance its reputation in the community and improve public perception of Freemasonry. To accomplish this important task, you need to delegate responsibility to a number of the Brethren to develop and implement an effective external communications program. This allows you to offer important jobs to qualified Brethren. Here are some ideas for your consideration:

- Appoint a Brother to develop an external communications plan to present to a Lodge officer's meeting or to the Lodge.
- Appoint a Brother to write press releases to be sent to the local newspapers and/or 20-, 30-, and 60-second public service radio spots to publicize Lodge projects such as Child ID or blood drives.
- Appoint a Brother to run a "Bring a Friend Night."
- Appoint a Brother to select a candidate for the Community Builders Award.

- Appoint a Brother to maintain contact with the Boy and Girl Scouts to set up the Lodge presentation of the Grand Lodge Certificate for Eagle Scouts and Girl Scout Gold Award winners.
- Appoint a Brother to take pictures at Lodge events and write a paragraph to send to the *Masonic Journal*.
- Appoint a Brother to maintain and develop the Lodge website and/or Facebook page.

An internal communications program is no less important to the health of the Lodge. It is important that you inform the Brethren of Lodge events well in advance so they can put them on the calendar. It is important that you stay in touch with all of the Brethren on a regular basis. You need to strengthen the bonds with the Brethren, and they need to know that their Lodge cares about them. It is important that you maintain regular contact with the widows to determine if they are well or if they need help from the Lodge.

Implementing an effective internal communications program will also allow you to offer important jobs to qualified Brethren. Here are some more ideas for your consideration.

- Appoint a couple of Brothers to help write the monthly newsletter.
- Appoint ten active Brethren to form a Lodge telephone committee. They would be asked to call one of the ten Brothers on their list each night, speaking for no more than five minutes, asking after his health and his family, and updating him on Lodge activities. Expending only five minutes a day, a telephone committee member will be able to speak with each Brother on his list once every two weeks (ten days), and your ten active members will be able to stay in regular contact with one hundred of the Brethren.
- Appoint a Brother to set up a widows committee made up of older Brethren who may not get to Lodge, and have each of them call one or two of the widows each day to check that they are all right. They would report back to the Lodge when there is a problem, and provide a general report on the widows before each stated communication.
- Appoint a Brother to be liaison (other than the Junior Warden) to each of the youth groups sponsored by the Lodge, have him attend at least two of their meetings each year, and be responsible for having them come to Lodge once each year to put on a program.
- Appoint a Brother to be liaison to each of the other organizations meeting at the Lodge: the Order of the Eastern Star, the Royal Arch, etc. This Brother should attend their public activities and make reciprocal invitations. It may be possible for those groups to put on a lodge program.

- One additional idea is to appoint a Brother at the beginning of your year to be your historian. Ask him to keep a record of the accomplishments and other highlights of the Masonic year, put it in narrative form, and present it to you and the Lodge at the end of the year. If the Lodge will do this every year, it will be very easy to write an interesting history of your Lodge. This will also make pursuit of awards such as the Lodge Excellence Award or the Masonic Service Association's Twain Award much easier.

When you add together all of these opportunities to participate in the internal and external communications program that is so important to the Lodge, you can have upwards of twenty-three tasks that you can offer to the Brethren.

IV. Lodge Administration and Maintenance

Keeping the Lodge open and working requires the cooperation of a number of Brethren. In addition, a good deal of effort is required to keep the Lodge building presentable so it makes a good impression in the community, is attractive to visitors and guests, and is an inviting place for the Brethren to attend. Here again are many responsibilities you give to your members that are important to the well being of the Lodge.

Lodge Administration

- Appoint a Brother to head a committee or be a committee member.
- Appoint twelve Brethren, each of whom is to be responsible for helping you plan a meeting.
- Appoint a Brother to assist the Stewards in preparing the candidate
- Appoint a Brother to assist the Deacons in preparing the Lodge before the meeting and putting the regalia away at the end of the meeting.
- Appoint a Brother to take charge of washing the aprons and candidate clothing and keeping the Lodge equipment in good repair.
- Appoint Brethren to serve as one of the appointed officers.
- Appoint a Brother to be the Assistant Secretary and one to be the Assistant Treasurer. These appointments not only help the Secretary and Treasurer, they also help the Brethren appointed to better understand the operation of the Lodge.
- Appoint one or more of the Brethren to drive older members to and from the Lodge, so those who can't drive at night can attend.
- Appoint one or more of the Brethren to drive older members or widows to Lodge picnics, medical appointments, etc.

Lodge Maintenance

- Appoint a Brother to do an annual survey of the Lodge systems: heating and air conditioning, the roof, the gutters, the lights, windows and doors, etc., and report back to the Lodge and Trustees.
- Appoint a Brother to come up with an annual prioritized improvement plan for the Lodge, i.e., painting, cleaning, redoing upholstery, and maintaining the altar and its furniture.
- Appoint a Brother to be in charge of each Lodge improvement project.
- Appoint a Brother to cut the grass.
- Appoint a Brother to be in charge of snow removal.
- Appoint a Brother to review the landscaping and suggest improvements.

V. Lodge Projects and Fund Raisers

Second only to good programs at stated communications is a set of Lodge projects for keeping the Brethren active and engaged. When a spouse or colleague asks what your Lodge is doing, and the Brother can talk about a Lodge project that he is enthusiastic about, it shows Freemasonry in a very positive light, and it generates enthusiasm for others to join. In addition, because Lodges dues and investments often do not cover expenses, fund raising activities are necessary to cover the shortfall. Fund raising is also a way of generating money for our charities.

Each year the Worshipful Master should survey the Brethren for suggestions about projects that will enable the Lodge to contribute to the betterment of the community in which it is located. From this list, the Brethren should be asked to select the two or three projects they are most interested in doing, and these should be the projects you undertake.

In the same way, the Worshipful Master should ask the Brethren to select from the myriad of fund raising ideas those that they want to support. There are only a few fund raising ideas, like gambling, that are not permitted. Virtually everything else from selling Christmas trees or sponsoring golf or tennis tournaments, to having a “yard sale” or a Lodge breakfast, lunch, or dinner that is open to the public is appropriate.

Each project allows you to offer some of the Brethren leadership opportunities and important roles to play.

- Appoint a Brother to be in charge of each project you select.
- Appoint both new and experienced Brethren to a committee that will plan each project, and engage the general Lodge membership in supporting it.

Conclusion

When you consider the ritual, educational, and communications programs, the Lodge administration and maintenance responsibilities, and the Lodge projects and fund raisers, you have over 150 separate opportunities to involve the Brethren in meaningful and important work in the Lodge – beyond serving as a Steward or becoming an elected Lodge officer. Most Lodges will not have 150 Brethren without jobs, but this list, which is by no means complete, should convince you that there **is** a job for every Mason, new or old that will be appealing, and will capitalize on his strengths and interests. It is essential that as Worshipful Master you ensure that every Brother have a job and a role to play in the Lodge. Remember this is necessary for member retention, necessary to the health and strength of the Lodge, and important to your success as Worshipful Master.