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MASONIC EDUCATION SERIES

36 Ways to



Improve Attendance In Your Lodge

36 WAYS TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE IN YOUR LODGE

The key to good attendance is simple: You must give your members a reason to WANT to come to your lodge.

Boring meetings is the single greatest reason 85% of the Masons don't attend lodge regularly. Look around the lodge tonight. How many members are present? How many total members are in the lodge? If those present represent 40% - 45% - 50% or more of your membership CONGRATULATIONS! Your lodge is doing something right! If not, a little work may be in order.

The following pages list items that may help bring a few members back to the lodge, but none of them will work if it's kept a secret. You've got to let your members know what you're doing. And, don't be shy ... let them know why you're doing it. Put what you're doing in your newsletter. If you don't have a newsletter you've just discovered your First Way to Improve Attendance In Your Lodge.

You can't operate in a vacuum. Your members WANT to know what is going on in the lodge. If you don't have a REGULAR newsletter the only time many members will hear from you is when you want money either for dues or for your annual campaign. Oooh ... that's not very welcoming.

A phone committee can work wonders, but only if it's done regularly!

1 First Meeting In April

Every member must feel that your lodge is “his” lodge. He must feel welcome and important. Like the song says, “he wants to go where everybody knows his name.” These things aren’t only important. They are vital to a well-attended lodge.

1

Make information about new members available to everyone who regularly attends lodge. Include his occupation, hobbies, interests, and reasons for joining. Record this information in a file and make it accessible to members of the lodge so when he visits they will have something to talk about.

2

Assign someone to greet each member as he enters the lodge. Make certain that he understands that it is his job to make each person feel welcome. He also introduces new members to the others in the lodge. Tonight is a great night to assign someone as a greeter at the next session.

3

The Worshipful Master and officers should be the welcoming committee.” and be sure to shake hands with each member to the lodge. If you don’t know a new member’s name now is a good time to learn it.

1

First Meeting In April (Cont.)

People are more than just a name. It is important that we learn something about “what makes our brothers tick” before we can actually know him.

Use Masonic Education time to “educate” yourself about your brothers. Is everyone in the lodge tonight married? Do you for how long? Do you know his wife’s name? What does he do for a living?

4

Make introductions during lodge warm and personal. Every man likes to hear his name and every man wants to think people are about him and what he does. This is the first key to new friendships.

5

Include the names of new members in the newsletter. You might also consider a “Bio” of an occasional older member. Include something about him, his interests, his family and other information.

6

Insist that those who regularly attend lodge share ideas of things they would like to do, programs they would like to see, and items they would like to include. Tonight is a good night to begin asking about those things. Do it and don’t take “I can’t think of anything” for an answer.

2 Second Meeting In April

You cannot build attendance by boring people. A member only leaves the warmth and comfort of his home to come to lodge if that meeting promises to be interesting and enjoyable. Just opening, doing a little business and closing will not bring people to your lodge. It's a sure way to keep them away.

7

Begin meetings on time and increase the overall pace. There is no reason that the questions asked by the Worshipful Master to the Junior and Senior Warden should be dragged out. If someone doesn't know their part it's past time to learn it. A crisp well-done opening and closing take less time and tends to be very impressive.

8

The Secretary has much to do with the pace of the meeting. If there are no petitions the Worshipful Master should be informed before the meeting and shouldn't ask if there are any to be read. If there is to be no voting, it shouldn't be asked. The same with reports. If there will be no report on the Orphanage or on the Home the Master should know these things before the meeting and not ask for them.

9

People do like to know what is going on in their fraternity. Regular reports on Oxford Orphanage and the Masonic & Eastern Star Home let the members know how their money is being spent. Insist that the chairmen of these committees keep you informed.

2 Second Meeting In April (Cont.)

Every lodge meeting should be an “Event”. In the ideal lodge a member looks forward to the next meeting because he knows it will be something to enjoy and he will gain from going.

10

There is absolutely no substitution for planning. A good leader and good officer cares more about his lodge than to be satisfied with an informal gathering just before the meeting. He has planned a good meeting. Possibly he has invited a speaker or at least prepared a program and a presenter. To him, each night is special and he knows attendance only comes from offering your members a good “product.”

11

Older members and younger members have different expectations. Programs should satisfy both. While a program about retirement planning may be more enjoyable to the older member, the younger member will benefit also. Likewise, a program about vacation planning may not be as interesting to the older member, but older members take vacations too.

12

Whatever kind of program you present, make it the best it can possibly be. Absolutely nothing works better than quality programs to increase attendance. Every man likes to think the time he has invested in going to the lodge is worthwhile.

3 First Meeting In May

Planning cannot be overemphasized. Planning is vital to the successful lodge. A well-planned meeting forces everyone to consider the needs of all of the members. And, considering those needs will be shown by improved interest and attendance.

13

“Planning for a Perfect Evening” suggests every lodge make something special happen at stated communications at least six times each year. These meetings should be planned at least six months in advance so you can have your choice of speakers or guests

14

Your lodge and your community is a goldmine of interesting speakers. People love to talk about what they do for a living and this can be a source of excellent speakers. But, don't surprise them. Give them time to prepare a presentation. If the person doesn't like public speaking have someone else in the lodge work with them to prepare something. A ten or fifteen minute presentation is plenty.

15

Don't forget about your District Deputy Grand Master the Grand Lodge officers. Most can give you an interesting presentation and would enjoy visiting with the people in your lodge.

3

First Meeting In May (Cont.)

Getting the word out has much to do with attendance. “Out of sight, out of mind” is an old cliché with meaning. We are supposed to be an organization of closely knit brothers. Getting a bit “closer knit” can do wonders for your membership.

16

Almost every lodge is there at the death of a brother, but are they there when the brother gets sick or loses a relative. These can be very trying times for a brother and a card or a phone call can mean a world of difference. But, to make this effective it can't depend on chance. Assign someone to regularly check the sick list at the hospital and read ALL the obituaries noticing especially the living relatives.

17

Have you ever seen a large picture of an ostrich egg or something in the paper that made you ask why it was there? I was there to fill space because there was no news or advertising to fill the space. Take advantage of this opportunity. Whenever you have a special event either invite the newspaper or send in a picture. Let the paper decide whether to use it or not.

18

Compete with another lodge for the best percentage growth in attendance. Make the contest fun, let the losing lodge serve a meal to the winner or put on a special degree.

4 Second Meeting In May

One of the most effective tools in building lodge attendance is a good phone committee. Not only is it a good way to insure the new Mason is made to feel a part of the fraternity, it is also an excellent method of revitalizing the older Mason.

A good phone committee can accomplish several things:

19

Calling every new Mason who has been raised within the past few years reminds that Mason that his lodge and his brothers are interested in him. If he hasn't attended in a while this is a good time to find out why. If there is a problem now is an ideal time to handle it.

20

Don't be shy. Tell them you are calling and will be calling with the intent to increase interest in the lodge. If you are sincere most brothers will tell you why they have quit attending and will want to see that you are successful in your efforts. Some may offer to help and call a few of their friends. In any event, you will have contacted a brother.

21

Take the time to look through the minutes and see when was the last time the member attended lodge. Time slips by quickly for all of us. It's not unusual for a brother to think it's only been a few months and it's really been several years since he attended.

4

Second Meeting In May (Cont.)

The time you spend on the phone with a brother can totally revitalize you and the brother. He appreciates the fact you care enough to call and now is a wonderful time to find out more about him.

22

Ask questions during your conversation to find out what has happened to his interest in Masonry. Ask open ended questions like “If there were one thing we could do to get you back interested in the lodge what would it be?” Most of the time there will be no complaints except that the meetings are boring or something to that effect. Assure him you are working on making the meetings something he will find interesting.

23

If there has been illness or a problem in the family you and your brothers need to know. It is not unusual for a brother to leave Masonry simply because his brothers ignored him during a sickness or a hospital stay and they knew nothing about it! But, is there an excuse for not knowing your brother is in the hospital?

24

Above all, don't sound like a telemarketer when you call. You are a brother who is concerned about your brother. If you are in a hurry make your calls another time. When you are finished make a notecard about the call with information you can use later or on the next call.

5 First Meeting In June

Serving a good meal can play a part in increasing attendance, but it is far from the only part. Just as the lodge meeting itself should be an event, so should the meal. Do something special at every meal. Then follow it up with a special meeting.

25

Don't scrimp on the meal. Although people will always complain about the price of a meal, most would rather pay a dollar or so more for a good one. Would you pay a dollar more for a nice cut of beef instead of a hamburger? People do it every day. The quality of the meal should come first

26

Most of our members are more health conscious in their eating today. Heavy gravies, fat beef and lots of mashed potatoes are not as healthy as chicken and fish. Fresh vegetables are lower in sodium than canned ones. Some members have to watch what they eat and will avoid meals with items they aren't supposed to eat.

27

Ask some of the younger members to suggest some meals. They may even want to help prepare them. This is a good way to get a brother involved in the activities of the lodge. Try new foods. Every meal doesn't need to be the same.

5

First Meeting in June (Cont.)

Occasionally it is fun to leave the lodge and schedule a meal for the lodge at a local restaurant. This can be one of your “special” evenings. It can be done on a meeting night or any night that’s convenient.

28

Occasionally invite the wives in for the meal. This can be another one of your “special” nights. It needn’t be formal, just pay a little attention to the details. You can also give a program for the ladies while the men “retire to the lodge room”.

29

A lodge picnic can be a fun outing. Invite the wives, the kids, and even the neighbors. The family spirit is good for the lodge and allows the brothers to learn more about each other. Plan activities during the picnic that encourages people to work and play together. The rewards are numerous.

30

Lodge “field trips” inspire the members. Why not make a trip to the Orphanage or to the Masonic & Eastern Star Home.? Join together on a Saturday and visit points of interest throughout the state. The locations don’t necessarily have to be Masonic, but it does add something extra.

6

Second Meeting in June

An occasional “Planning Meeting” can inspire members everyone in the lodge if it’s done right. Be sure to make a special effort to involve those who are not normally a part of the planning process. Even if they don’t say anything they will feel a part of their lodge. This can go a long way.

31

Everyone has skills. Everyone has talents. Everyone has interests. Try to find out the skills, talents and interests of the members. Make them feel like their involvement is expected. Create a list of these items and use it in your planning. The more you can direct your lodge programs toward member interests, the more attendance you will have.

32

Be sure to listen to the members, don’t just act like you are listening. Follow some of the suggestions. They may just work. If they don’t, what have you lost? Remember, the lodge belongs to ALL the members and there is no such thing as an unimportant member.

33

When you develop your plan... follow it! Don’t put it off. DO IT! Lodges suffer from indecision and inactivity. They thrive on planning and activity, but even the best plan is no good until it is implemented.

6

Second Meeting In June (Cont.)

Why is “evaluating your lodge” in the last place in this book? Simply because some Masons who have heard the first thirty-three suggestions are saying that it won’t work in their lodge or we have never done it before. If any two statements ever appear on the gravestone of Masonry it will be “It won’t Work” and “We’ve Never Done It Before.”

34

Two or three people offer to help the Secretary review the minutes for the last ten years and make a list of who attended the lodge and when. From these lists isolate the members who haven’t attended in the past 10 years, 5 years, and 1 year. You will be surprised. And, it may jump-start your planning.

35

Do you *seriously* have regular programs in your lodge or is it just hit or miss? Is there something scheduled for your first meeting night in September? What about next meeting night? What was planned for tonight other than opening, reading the minutes, this program and closing? Do you believe it’s really enough to keep all your members interested?

36

Answer this question honestly. Are you doing everything you can do to make your lodge the best it can be?