

Step Guide10: Retaining our Members

This document describes Step 10 of the Members' Pathway. It describes a series of positive activities a Lodge can undertake to help a new member to grow in his satisfaction, enjoyment and commitment, and preventive activities, to respond to any signs of dissatisfaction. An Introduction to the Members' Pathway explains the Pathway and how this Step fits within its framework.

Why do we need to focus on Retention?

The degree ceremonies are only the beginning of a process of learning and involvement in Freemasonry that it is hoped will last for many years for each member. How a Lodge looks after and nurtures a member will determine whether his membership will be long and happy and the extent to which he will be involved in the Lodge and committed as a Freemason. A major cause of dissatisfaction and resignation arises from people issues such as personality clashes, decisions or the way they are made, being overlooked or not being treated as one feels one ought. Any resignation following a lengthy membership is a sad loss to the Lodge. Most that arise from dissatisfaction are avoidable through careful management of the Lodge and its people issues. Understanding and looking after the interests of each member as an individual, with his own needs and characteristics, balanced against the needs of all members and the Lodge itself, can often avoid such dissatisfaction and minimise resignations.

Guidance for Lodges

Build a Lodge culture with a nurturing approach, or "continued mentoring" (see below), that considers the needs of all members and treats all members as they would wish to be treated themselves. Find ways to involve every member in the life of the Lodge, through formal or informal roles and contributions suited to them, to increase their sense of belonging, interest and commitment. Such Lodges tend to work in harmony and retain members. Indeed by their conduct the senior members set the tone of the Lodge and other members follow their example. Seniority brings with it a responsibility to lead by example, to set high standards of behaviour and to demonstrate the essential characteristics of a Freemason; kindness, tolerance and courtesy. Be alert to un-Masonic conduct, inappropriate behaviour and discouraging or negative exchanges, all of which undermine the interest and confidence of members and the harmony and health of the Lodge. Seek the advice or assistance of the Lodge's Visiting or another respected Freemason if, as a Lodge, you are unable to manage the un-Masonic conduct of any of your senior members.

Plan meetings to be enjoyable, interesting and informative, with a good atmosphere and good ritual, to meet the expectations of members and to assist their self-improvement. Ensure administrative business and activities are well prepared and conducted in the minimum time required. Working members are accustomed to business meetings being well prepared, conducted efficiently, free of distractions or irrelevance. They expect the same of Lodge business. Encourage members to deliver ritual to the best of their ability, to create a good and meaningful experience for candidates, members and visitors. Except on occasions when protocol dictates (such as official visits by rulers) encourage those members not in office to sit in different places with different people in the Lodge Room and at the Festive Board. Review Lodge traditions to confirm whether they are still relevant and serve the Lodge well. Be willing to change or evolve any traditions that are counterproductive to the future health of the Lodge. Consider new approaches that enhance meetings without losing dignity or those Lodge traditions that are worth keeping. Aim for meetings that are attractive and worthwhile, that add value to members' lives and help to maintain their interest and

commitment, and so improve attendance and retention. Monitor attendance to identify early signs of dissatisfaction or difficulty. Agree as a Lodge how to respond and who will take action. Maintain contact with those members who are not able to attend as often as they would like, to retain their interest, support and – ultimately – their membership.

Continued Mentoring

Implementing a planned approach to Masonic mentoring has been shown to reduce resignations. Continue with “light touch” mentoring for members as they meet new challenges (e.g. progressive office, learning ritual, election as Master, being a Past Master, administrative roles, Provincial rank). Engage with the local Mentoring initiatives offered by the Province and ensure that the Lodge Mentor, Personal Mentors and sponsors all attend mentoring workshops. Invite the Provincial Mentor to address the Lodge on mentoring, its approaches and good practice. Identify the members of the Lodge who are best qualified to be Lodge Mentor. The Lodge Mentor is a co-ordinator for the mentoring process, not the mentor to everyone else. Subject to their being effective in their role, try to create consistency and continuity by keeping a Lodge Mentor in position for three to five years. The Lodge Mentor selects Personal Mentors suited to each new member, in consultation with his sponsors (see Role profile for Personal Mentors), and co-ordinates and supports their work.

Encourage Personal Mentors to be assiduous in their activities and support them in their role. Only accept the role as a Personal Mentor if you can devote time to the members you are assigned. As a Personal Mentor, build good relationships to become a good friend and trusted counsellor. Recognise the individuality of members and, as their interests evolve, encourage them to develop their own strengths and individual contributions to the Lodge and elsewhere. Protect members you support from undue pressure to accept any role or office or deliver any ritual before they are ready, or to join the progression to become Master when they don't wish. Value all strengths and contributions, and not just the traditional Masonic roles and offices, so that all members have the opportunity to play a part in the life of the Lodge irrespective of their rank or status. Continue to review a member's need for information as he develops, the personal contact he wants and the level of support that he needs to help him to achieve his potential within Freemasonry. As a Lodge, monitor and keep a record of mentoring activities and their impact. Review the success of Mentoring and general Lodge health by monitoring attendance and levels of involvement, as well as members' sense of belonging and levels of satisfaction. Members who are happy with their Lodge, and who are comfortable and satisfied as Freemasons, will tend to attract visitors and new members.

Other Orders and Degrees

All Master Masons are encouraged to complete their journey in “pure Antient Masonry” by being Exalted into the Royal Arch. The timing of their joining should suit their own understanding of the Craft, personal circumstances and emerging interest in Freemasonry. Research shows that members of the Royal Arch remain active Freemasons for longer than those who do not complete that journey. It also indicates that a good proportion of those then go on to join other Orders and Degrees. This suggests that the Royal Arch, and membership of other Orders, can enhance interest and help retain lasting memberships of the Craft. Personal Mentors have a key role in helping members decide when it is appropriate for them to join the Royal Arch and in protecting them from over enthusiastic if well-intentioned recruiters.