



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

August 9, 2013

TAKE A MOMENT TO TAKE THIS SELF-TEST

By Dave Rosenberg, Grand Warden

Magazines, newspapers and books today are full of all sorts of “self-tests” which gauge your personality, your interests, your love-life, etc., etc. So why not a self-test to gauge your view of your own Lodge?

In this regard, I want to ask each of you a question, and I encourage each of you to take just five minutes to answer the question. The question is: Can you state 10 reasons to be a member of your Lodge? Seems simple enough. But it’s an important question and the answer will tell you a lot about your Lodge – or at least your view and perception of your Lodge. And even more importantly, the view or perception prospective members have of your Lodge.

But before you take this self-test, there are two important parameters (rules, if you will) that need to be established. These parameters are critical to assuring that this is a review of your LODGE, and not a review of the Order. So, the first parameter is that the “10 reasons” you give must be focused on your LODGE, not on Odd Fellowship. So, for example, for purposes of this test, you can’t give reasons like: “Odd Fellowship has a long and distinguished history” or “the Grand Lodge runs two wonderful retirement communities in Napa and Saratoga”. No, the answers must relate to your own Lodge experience for this test to have meaning. Second, you have to be brutally honest in your answers. This is a self-test. No one else is going to see it or grade it. The test is for YOU. So, for example, if you give the following as reasons “I really enjoy the company of my Lodge brothers and sisters” or “we take care of brothers and sisters who are sick and in distress”, those are really great answers, but please make sure that they are true and honest answers for you.

To show you how this all works, let me give you two examples from hypothetical and fictional Lodges. Let’s call them “Zenith Lodge” and “Nadir Lodge”.

A member of Zenith Lodge has listed the following reasons to be a member of his/her Lodge: We support a local school with donations of backpacks every year, we have a monthly potluck where we invite prospective new members, my Lodge schedules a wine-tasting trip once or twice each year, we plant a tree in the community once each month, my Lodge conducts its own 3-degree ceremony live, when I had an operation my Lodge sent me flowers and helped me with dinners for a week, we have a yearly Halloween party that I really enjoy, we do poker night at the Lodge once each month, my Lodge planned and put on a spaghetti feed to help raise money for our volunteer fire department, we did a community clean-up project, we all went bowling last week and that was fun, my Lodge is going to host a guest speaker on homelessness and open the Lodge to the public on this important topic.



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A member of Nadir Lodge has listed the following reasons to be a member of his/her Lodge: We do a monthly potluck before our meetings, I like to see my Lodge brothers and sisters once each month.

Now, if we analyze both of these member's comments, two things are clear. First, it is impossible to say that the member of one Lodge is happier than the member of the other Lodge. While the member of Zenith Lodge lists far more reasons than does the member of Nadir Lodge, one cannot say that one or the other is less satisfied with his or her Lodge experience. But, second, from the perspective of a potential new member or applicant to those Lodges, it is apparent that a prospective member of Zenith Lodge – particularly a younger member in his/her 20's, 30's or 40's – will find the experience at Zenith Lodge to be much more diverse and appealing than Nadir Lodge. Simply put, if you were interested in possibly joining Odd Fellowship, which of these two Lodges would you rather join?

And one more thing. If you have developed your list of reasons to be a member of your Lodge, and you list 10 or more reasons, I would suggest that not only are you satisfied with your Lodge, but there is a high likelihood that you will be able to successfully recruit members to join (and stay engaged) as members of your Lodge. Alternatively, if you have difficulty listing 10 reasons to be a member of your own Lodge, perhaps it is time to re-evaluate the activities of your Lodge. Is your Lodge a place that will attract new members and that will retain existing members? And finally, if you have difficulty listing even 2 or 3 reasons to be a member of your Lodge, I would submit that your Lodge is in serious trouble. If YOU can't articulate reasons to be a member of your own Lodge, then how in the world will you (or your Lodge mates) encourage new members to join?

So, the bottom line purpose of our little self-test is to test the ability of your Lodge to grow. I hope this self-test has helped you in your own self-evaluation of your Lodge's viability to attract the new, young members which are the life-blood of our Order. Remember, it's all about membership, membership, membership. If we don't grow our membership, we will continue to shrink as we have done for the past three generations. It's time – overdue time, in fact – to reverse that trend.