



Independent Order of Odd Fellows  
Dedicated Members for Change

September 22, 2013

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

This article is written for Lodges that WANT to grow. Those Lodges that don't care about adding new members and keeping them engaged can stop reading now.

I am often asked, "Our Lodge has stagnated. What can we do to help our Lodge grow?" This article will answer that question.

First of all, understand that this is not rocket science. It's just simple math. To grow, a Lodge must add more new members each year than it loses members each year through death or withdrawal. Put in business terms, your business must bring in more income than it pays out in expenses - or you don't make a profit and (eventually) if that continues you will go out of business. Bottom line: You need to bring in new members. But equally important, once the new members have come into your Lodge, they need to be engaged so that they stick around. To bring in new members and to keep them interested, I have talked about "the three-legged stool". If a stool has three strong legs, it will support the body. But if the stool is missing a leg, or has a weak leg, the stool will eventually topple. So what do the three legs represent? They represent (1) the rich history, customs and ritual of our ancient order; (2) good fellowship activities within the Lodge for the benefit of the members and applicants; and (3) reaching out into the community to do good works. Too many Lodges emphasize (1), but don't really do much, if anything, about (2) and (3).

I assure you that if your Lodge emphasizes all three elements listed above, you will be stronger and you will grow.

So, in an effort to help you, here are 20 examples of things you and your Lodge can plan and implement to effectuate (2) and (3) above. Note that these are just examples - not an exhaustive list - to get your juices flowing. You may very well have other and better ideas that work for your Lodge. And, frankly, the suggestions should not come from me - they need to come from your members. You need to do things your MEMBERS want to do. Further, don't bite off more than you can chew. If you implement one or two or three new ideas each year, you are doing well. This is a process that builds year-after-year, not all at once. Here are some thoughts:

1. A Lodge Bowling Night - carpool to a nearby bowling alley.



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2. A Lodge hike - start easy at first - on a local scenic trail.
3. An Oktoberfest (or "Oddtoberfest"), complete with sausages, music and beer, for the Lodge members and guests, or even opened up to the community.
4. Adopt a local group home of foster kids, and provide birthday gifts and other support (e.g. painting and minor repairs) for the home.
5. A music night at the Lodge. Invite local musicians to play and open it up to the community.
6. Odd Poetry. Members of your Lodge might enjoy reading their own poetry or poems by noted poets. Even cowboy poetry is encouraged.
7. Start a wine tasting club, alternating monthly at the homes of your Lodge members.
8. Organize a community project to paint a mural in town, perhaps on your Lodge Hall.
9. Volunteer Lodge members to help deliver "meals on wheels".
10. A Halloween Party at the Lodge, complete with costumes and prizes - and some music for dancing and/or listening.
11. Plant some trees in the community.
12. Organize a downtown clean up day for the community.
13. Plan a Bunko Night at the Lodge.
14. Game Night at the Lodge - checkers, chess, scrabble, charades, you name it.
15. Texas Hold 'em Poker Night at the Lodge.
16. Co-host a spaghetti feed at the Lodge with a local charity, as a fundraiser for that charity.
17. Rent a bus for Lodge members and guests and go visit some wineries.
18. Bring in good local speakers once each month for a speaker's series at the Lodge - invite the



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community.

19. Plan and implement a "Breakfast with Santa" at the Lodge for the local children and their families.

20. Plan a local fundraiser at the Lodge (or other community building) to raise money for a needed piece of equipment for your fire department, police department, or local hospital.

This is just a sampling of possibilities. YOU can come up with many more, I am sure. The point is, we can't keep repeating the past in the same old way and expect anything to be different. We have to take a new a different tack to the future. And that new and different tack involves reaching out to the community and reaching in to the members.

What have we got to lose?

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Dave Rosenberg, Grand Warden