



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

January 5, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

From time to time I hear from Odd Fellows who tell me that they want to bring new members into their Lodge, but they don't know HOW to do it.

Fair enough. If the spirit is willing, that's half the battle. The other half is about the method.

Accordingly, today's DMC article is all about a proven method of bringing new members into a Lodge. I am going to relate to you the method that I use. I do so because this method has proven, time and again, to be successful for me and for my Lodge. In March of 2014, I will have been a member of this Order for 10 years. In that time, I have sponsored and brought into my Lodge well over 100 new members. This averages over 10 new members per year. In past years, I have been recognized by Sovereign Grand Lodge as #1 in North America for new members initiated into IOOF. I mention all this not to toot my horn, but only to assure you that I have bona fides when I talk about the method for bringing new members into our fraternity.

So, without further ado, here is the "method" that has worked for me, and I believe will work for you:

1. **Be aware.** It all begins with awareness. At bottom, you have to be aware - at all times - of the possibility that the person you are speaking with is a potential new member. This person could be a neighbor, a business associate, the plumber that fixes your sink, the fellow who sells you a car, etc. If you remain aware, and you find that the person you are speaking to might be a potential new member of your Lodge, then you can - in the course of your conversation - start talking about Odd Fellowship and about your Lodge. I also find that the best times to talk about these things is if you are engaged in a Lodge community project or a Lodge function open to the public. Obviously, if your Lodge does not engage in community projects or functions open to the public, you lose out on an important venue for recruitment. And as I have said many times, bringing in new members is a task for all of us - and that means YOU. Don't just depend on "the other guy" to bring in that new member. YOU have to do your share as well. Simply put: If each of us brought in one new member each year, our Order would have absolutely no problem in diminishing membership.

2. **Be ready.** I always have application forms with me, or at least close by (e.g. in the glove box of my car) in case a person I am speaking with desires to take the next step. I always take their e-mail address so I can send them more information. I keep on my computer a form e-mail that I can send to potential new members (which I tweak each time, targeted to the person to whom I



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am writing). This form e-mail tells the person about the Order, about my Lodge, about the activities we engage in, and about the process of joining. If your Lodge has a good website, all the better - you can refer them to the website for more information about your Lodge. Again, if your Lodge has no community or Lodge activities, and no website, you lose significant tools for recruiting.

3. **Be active.** I want to be very frank on this point. All your efforts to "be aware" and to "be ready" will be next to useless, I'm afraid, if your Lodge is not active. Virtually no one joins Odd Fellowship in this day and age because the Order supports arthritis research, or because we have a float in the Rose Bowl Parade, or because we have a secret grip, password and signs. People in the 21st Century don't want to join a Lodge because the men wear tuxedos and the women wear long dresses with corsages. People in the 21st Century, particularly young people, are interested in joining a Lodge because it provides a fun social network for them and because the Lodge engages in good and important community and works. If your Lodge is, essentially, a moribund group of septuagenarians and octogenarians that simply holds closed and secret meetings with a monthly potluck featuring overcooked spaghetti and lime jello - well, no one really wants to join such an organization. So, kick your Lodge into another gear if you really want to grow. My personal efforts in my first three years of membership in my Lodge were to re-focus my Lodge on social activities for Lodge members and outreach into our community with projects meant to help people and the environment. And I found that every time we had a function and every time we engaged in a community project, there were community members who wanted to learn more about the Lodge and ultimately, were interested in joining.

4. **Be patient.** This process of reforming a Lodge takes time. It doesn't happen overnight. So you must learn some patience. And that patience applies to potential new members as well. Some Lodges immediately initiate new applicants. I find that this is generally, a mistake. New applicants get initiated and then wonder what in the world they got themselves into. Sometimes, they attend one meeting and then are not seen again. And sometimes, they turn out to be weak members. Remember, it's not just quantity that we seek. It's quality. My Lodge does it differently. We make new applicants go through a six-month "pledge period" before we vote on their application. During this time, they learn about us and we learn about them. We have a significant number of events and social meetings that the pledges attend. It's a helpful process for them, and for the Lodge. Many don't make it through the process. But the ones who do are better members for it.

And here's an important reminder for those of you really interested in growing your Lodge: Grand Instructor Peter Sellars and Past Grand Master Don Lang will be conducting a Members' Seminar in Santa Nella on January 25-26. A significant portion of the seminar will be dedicated



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to membership development, including techniques, methods and hints to bringing in new members. If you want to learn more about recruiting members into your Lodge - come to the seminar! Attendance at this seminar is not just for officers - all members are invited. I will be there, as well - so I look forward to seeing you. To sign up for the seminar, contact Peter at ioofsf@earthlink.net or Don at donlang@sbcglobal.net.

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