



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

June 26, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

Today, we have a thought provoking article by Junior Past Grand Master Rick Boyles, one of the founders of this "think tank" we call DMC. The subject today relates to our "perception" and the public's "perception" of Odd Fellowship. This is obviously an important subject to Lodges which hope to recruit new members from that public. Perception is defined as the process by which we use our senses to understand and appreciate things.

So, we explore today two very significant questions: How do we perceive our own Lodge? More importantly, how does the public perceive our Lodge?

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Dave Rosenberg
Deputy Grand Master

Is Perception Reality?

How we perceive reality can confound us. In fact, often times we delude ourselves into paths of perception irrelevant to how the world around us perceives us. The way a fraternal lodge appears to an outsider may be opposite to how a member perceives it. An outsider sees a tired older building, generally in the oldest part of town, often unlit, with little or no identifying marks; closed and shuttered, and perceives it as foreboding. A member, however, attends this same building, one or two hours in every month, and perceives it as an active environment. Which perception is wrong? In my mind, neither perception is incorrect. The melding of the perceptions is that in fact this lodge building is active 1/150th of the time while the overwhelming expanse of time it is as inactive as the outsider views it.

An active lodge therefore is a lodge that is perceived as being more active more often. Successful lodges seem less foreboding and are generally open more often than unsuccessful ones. Those of us who grapple with a lodge's failure are unsure about how to grow a lodge, but perhaps this perception is incorrect, or, to be more exact, less than entirely accurate. A lodge that is failing, even though it seems like it falls within the parameters of only a few active members is not failing because of a few members but because of the make-up of the lodge in total. A lodge that is shuttered most of the time eventually ends up being shuttered all of the time. In fact, this is almost a physical and psychological certainty. Often times in my



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years as an elective officer, I was stunned to hear a member in a lodge claim personal liability for the failure of their lodge. Was this that one member's fault? Absolutely not, but by virtue of the loss of most of the lodge's other members, the one or few remaining members felt at fault. Lodges fail not because of one member but because of all of them. Those who no longer attend made the move of abandonment first. In other words, those who left made a clear decision to leave, and for reasons they evidently felt were important. So then, the leaving member begins to unite with the outsider in their perception of the lodge, once active, now abandoned, as being foreboding, shuttered and failing.

If one were to research perception, one would see that our perceptions are unique to all of us. However, our primary goal as an individual lodge member should be to shape the outsider's perception of our building, and our lodge. Many of our most vibrant lodges have such active personalities that they are perceived far differently than the inactive ones. Also, even though they may be guided by one or more pivotal members, they eventually cease to resemble one member and end up resembling the general attitude of all the members. In the future, in order to retain relevance within our own communities, we must alter the communities' perceptions of us. We can't expect to survive if our doors are locked and our lights are turned off 95% of the time. We need to embrace the public. If we are to grow, we need to alter their perceptions of us. Otherwise, their perceptions will soon enough become reality.

In Friendship, Love, & Truth, Rick Boyles

Deputy Grand Master