



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

July 27, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

The common (and obvious) question I am asked by potential new members is: "Why should I join your Lodge?" I imagine you get the same sort of question, in some form, from folks you recruit to join your Lodge. If you are not prepared to answer this basic question, then you are not prepared to bring new members into your Lodge.

It's a simple question, and a fair one. Most people are pretty busy. They have family commitments. They may have job commitments. They have avocations and hobbies. They are members of other organizations. And, for their available time, they certainly have the option of considering and joining a multitude of other clubs, groups, committees, boards, and lodges. Why, indeed, should they choose to dedicate a portion of their valuable time to Odd Fellows?

Let me be brutally frank. Ultimately, if you can't answer the question of "Why should I join your Lodge?" you will not be able to bring in new members to your Lodge. You have to give folks a reason. They won't join your Lodge just because you ask them and you have a bright, shiny face.

Because I was asked that question so many times, I endeavored, a few years ago (November 24, 2011, to be exact), to jot down the reasons why someone might join my Lodge. When I was done compiling my list, I had recorded fully 100 reasons to join the Lodge. (You will actually find this list on my Lodge website at www.davislodge.org.) And as a result of compiling this list, I realized that my efforts at recruiting new members was - at this point in time - completely facilitated because my Lodge was active and involved. At its most basic lever, it works out to be a mutually advantageous equation: An active Lodge brings in new members, and new members make an active Lodge. It is symbiotic.

Look. I don't ask or expect all of you to compile a list of 100 reasons. But I will suggest to you that if you are unable to compile even a small list of 10 answers to the question "Why should I join your Lodge?" you may be able to convince your retired uncle Henry to join, but you will be unsuccessful in growing your Lodge from the general public. If the only reasons that you can come up with are that you hold a monthly meeting and potluck, that your Lodge contributes \$250 per year to the local boy scout troop, and that your Lodge is repairing the roof and fixing the chairlift - it's unlikely that those reasons will resonate with young men and women in this century. No one is going to beat down your door to apply.

When you compile your list, the best reasons are the reasons that show an active Lodge and a fun



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Lodge. The list of things that a Lodge can do to be an active community and social center are virtually endless - let your collective Lodge members' imaginations be your guide. By way of example only, Lodges can engage in downtown clean-ups, tree plantings, volunteering at the local food bank or homeless shelter, reading to elementary school children at school, co-hosting an event at the Lodge Hall to benefit a local charity, schedule a community meal, schedule an Oktoberfest for Lodge members and their families, go bowling, take a hike on a nearby trail, visit a winery, etc., etc.

I have attended meetings of some Lodges where the entire meeting lasted 20 minutes and (other than the ritual opening and closing) all the Lodge members did was read the minutes of the last meeting, report on funds in the bank, approve payment of two utility bills, and report on a member who was ill. The meeting had no committee reports, no old business, no new business, no announcements and no good-of-the-order. These sorts of Lodge meetings are at one level, boring and moribund. But more significantly, they show a Lodge that is tired. We want active young men and women to join our Lodges. And those young men and women of today are busy and have many choices to fill the hours of their "available" time. Why would they join a tired Odd Fellows Lodge?

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Deputy Grand Master