



Ideas That Work



Please Forward to Other Leaders in Your Lodge

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Spring...A time of Renewal

Now that we've all adjusted to the new weather and are cleaning up our lawns and gardens, it's time to clean up our Lodges and our activities! Plan a Lodge Clean Up Day and give both the inside and the outside of you Lodge a good spring cleaning. As Spring is a time of renewal for nature, so

should it be a time of renewal for our Lodges. So we will look as some ways to renew our Lodges and our membership. We will also continue our look at how to establish a web site for your Lodge and some other fun things!

Lodges and Web sites

Now that you have an idea of what your web site is about and what you want to name it (domain name), it's time to find a Host for your web site.

Web site hosts are companies that provide a very special kind of computing space where your web site will live. These host computers are connected to the Internet and allow the whole world to find you based on the name (domain name) you gave your web site. You can even buy your domain name from the hosting company. You'll access this space from your web browser. It's a horribly complicated business so here is all you need to know. Big room, lots of black boxes. Stop there, that's enough geek speak for now. (If you really want to know how it works, look at the resources page for more information.)

Go to Google and type in "Web Site Hosting". On any given day you will get about 1.4 million hits! Wow! So how in the world are you going to pick out who to have host your site from that! Click on a few

sites and you'll be bombarded with offers that range from free to really, really expensive. You'll be buried in geek speak up to your ears. The amount of visual "noise" on most of these sites makes it nearly impossible to figure out what you are getting for your money.

Fortunately, it's not as hard as it seems if you just keep one thing in mind. In Real Estate they say the 3 things that are most important are, Location, Location, Location. Everything else can be changed, remodeled etc. In Web Site Hosting it's Support, Support, Support!

Everyone will end up calling the support line at some time. Being able to get through, get an answer you can understand and a person you can understand is vital to having a good web host. The only way to figure this out is to call the support number of several hosting companies. See how long it takes to get your call answered. Do they speak professionally in a clear understandable voice? Are they willing to

help you with "beginner" problems or do they just point you back to their website? Support is so important that you should spend your most effort finding good support. Don't be fooled into thinking that the big names or biggest, flashiest web host has the best service. Often times, these are the worst due to the volume of calls they are taking.

Let me tell you a quick story about how I learned the value of support. Early on in my Web career, I was in the process of choosing my first web site hosting company. I did my research, found a name I wanted, knew what the site should be about and was ready to buy space and put up a site. I made one near fatal mistake. I chose the hosting company based on their marketing, I swallowed the bait. But they looked so good. They had big color ads in one of the PC magazines, bright smiling faces of happy people and those low prices! Plus they seemed to give you so many free things for your money. So like a moth to the flame, I signed up to host my site with this company. That's when the

nightmare began. First I couldn't log into my account, then the domain name didn't work, this was followed by the "free" software not being compatible with my PC. On and on it went. I called Customer Support. After a nearly 20 minutes hold time, I was connected to a call center in Southeast Asia to a person who wasn't really interested. We struggled with each other for a while, then finally gave up. I found another Hosting company and moved my account. I simply couldn't afford the bad service and neither can you.

So now that you've found a company with decent support, it's time to pick a plan! All hosting companies will offer several different plans. These plans will cost differently based on the size of hosting space you want, and other features. This is where we have to delve into the world of geek speak for just a bit.

(If you can't wait for the entire series, send me an e mail and I'll send you the e book)

Masonic Renewal Resources

The Grand Lodge of Michigan has established a renewal program that is very well thought out and just filled to the brim with great ideas and resources that will work in any Lodge. Point your browser at <http://renewal.gl-mi.org/>. There you will find explanation of their two main programs, Beacon Project and Acacia+. While both of

these programs were developed for Michigan, the concepts can certainly be scaled down for your Lodge. The best part of the web site is the Resource Library. Inside this part of the web site is a wealth of downloadable documents on Leadership, Membership development and activities for the Lodge! Give a look today!

Greater Public Awareness

The following article is a report of a task force of the Masonic Information Center. Use the points in this article to create thought and discussion on how your Lodge can create great public awareness.

The task force observed that even at Masonry's membership's lowest point in 1941, Freemasonry still had 800,000 more members than today - its lowest level in at

least 80 years. This is not a cyclical trend. Other factors are at work.

Among the statements in the report are:

- Masonry's challenge is to focus on making Masonry relevant to our changing communities.
- Clearly, Masons are not satisfactorily addressing ways of keeping our

- members involved and enthusiastic about Masonry.
- We have failed to accept the fact that the world is a different place than it was in the 1940s and 1950s. Family time is squeezed into the evenings and very often the children have their own activities. The technology explosion has provided a source for entertainment/activity that competes with any organization requiring a time commitment. Freemasonry has done little to keep pace with change. Freemasons still grouse about any increase in dues or per capita. It is time to readjust our thinking and come to realize that both time and money are necessary factors in creating a quality organization.
 - Membership loss is not the major problem; it's a symptom of a larger problem: loss of Masonic identity as an observable part of life and lack of energy invested in Masonry. Masons must take ownership of an identity that distinguishes Masonry from other men's organizations. Masonry is a process of lifelong learning and discovery that delivers a way of living a principled life, observable in the simplest behaviors, whether at lodge, at home, or in the workplace.
 - Masonry is no longer identified as an elite organization. Within eye and ear range of the public, Masons have failed to perform what they profess; consequently, they have lost their significance within the context of community.
 - Current Masons do not understand the true meaning of our fraternity.
 - Public awareness of Masonry begins at a grassroots level. Masons must be visible in the community to demonstrate Masonic values in many aspects of their lives.
 - Freemasonry must be lodge-centered, giving members opportunities to express themselves through activities that improve the experience of the lodge and benefit the life of the community.
 - We need ways of recognizing success, encouraging creativity, and rewarding accomplishments. Small actions, kind words, and expressions of concern for others are just a few examples. Our work on Masonry's public image begins with work on ourselves.
 - Beginning at the lodge level, plan meaningful activities that put Masonic values into action. Consider how you and your lodge can make each and every activity uniquely Masonic.
 - Think carefully about how you invest your time, and we ask that you use your time on programs and actions that are uniquely Masonic. As we work together, we must ask each other how a program, a meeting, or an event improves and demonstrates our experience of being a Mason.

To read the full report, go to:

<http://www.msana.com/twainaward/abouttme.pdf>.

Masonic Relief

Last month we rolled out the online store of the Grand Lodge to support Masonic Relief (see article below). Response has been slow, probably due to the change in weather and a lesser need for a good coat. Well, let's get stuff in the store you can use around the Lodge or Home! Please send me your ideas for Masonic branded products you'd like to see in the Masonic Relief Store. Remember, 100% of the profits go to Masonic Relief. This makes it a great project for your Lodge as well. Send you ideas to me at tomshop1@me.com. And I'll do my best to get stuff in stock!

The Grand Master designated March as Masonic Relief Month in Nebraska but the need for Masonic Relief is an ongoing issue. The Grand Lodge maintains a fund for the relief of poor, distressed Master Masons, their widows and orphans and receives several applications per year for assistance. This fund has been seriously drained in the last 2 years and it's time to step up to the plate and fulfill our obligations. So how can we do that?

W. John Maxell (Grand Senior Steward) has put together a two-part program that is going to really boost our funds and provide our membership with a great opportunity to show their pride in Masonry! And the best part is how easy it is to do! Just go to the Grand Lodge web page (www.gln.org) and click on the Masonic Relief Banner. Then choose the item or items you want and use any major credit card or your PayPal account to order. It's safe, easy and supports our Masonic Relief effort.

Keep Sending In Those Activity Ideas

We know there are many, many more activities lodges have performed that have been successful. Don't be shy. Share them with us. Your lodge activity ideas may end up helping another lodge.

What may seem commonplace to you, because your lodge has held an event for many years, may be new to someone else. If it's working for your lodge, please send it to

us. Write a short summary and send it to: michelle@gln.org or mail it to the Grand Lodge Office at: 1240 No. 10th St., Lincoln, NE 68501-1852. If additional information is needed, we'll call.

This newsletter will be sent to you as often as we have ideas. It will take you only a few minutes, but it could help our fraternity across the state. Thanks for your help.