



THE PRACTICING FREEMASON

How to Get Everything You Want

There's a thing called the Eighty/Twenty Rule, which states that twenty percent of the people do eighty percent of the work. No organization can escape this societal law, not even a masonic lodge, and this causes no end of resentment. Those who work, resent those who watch. Those who watch, abdicate their granted authority to those who work. This is an imbalance which causes disharmony in a lodge.

Of course, lodges have sustained this disharmony for centuries, but there are still permanent effects. When the only brother who cooks for lodge stays at home, dinner fellowship falls apart. When one of the three or so brothers who consistently show up to clean the building decides to go fishing instead, the others get disheartened. The building starts getting cluttered. Maintenance goes by the board, and the business discussions turn from charity and relief, to keeping the lights on, and repairing the air conditioning. The costs stack up, and meetings become a chore no one looks forward to.

But this isn't to put any blame or shame on the 80%. They're not bad people. They're not lazy. They're your brothers. The fact is, most any of them, if asked to do something, would do it. Freemasons like working together. We like helping our brothers. The problem is covert contracts.

A covert contract is just like a regular contract, except it only exists in your head, and the other party doesn't know it exist. Apart from that, it's basically the same. For example: I'm in the kitchen after a lodge dinner, scrubbing dishes. The rest of you are laughing and talking in the other room. When I picked up the dishtowel, I signed a contract with you in my head that, as no one brother should bear this burden alone, and brothers help each other, you will come into the kitchen and help. After all,

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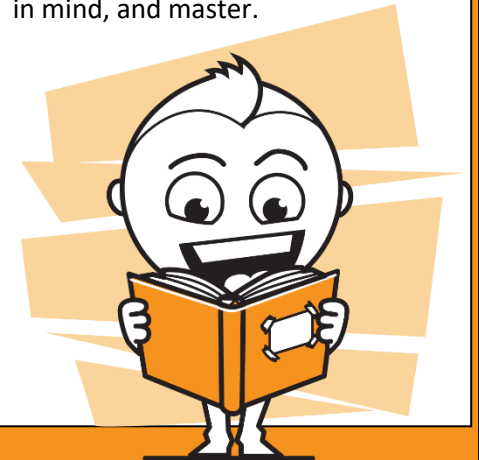
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newsletter of lodge education.
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Book Clubbin'

*The best thing I've read all
month...*

The title of this month's education is derived from Derek Sivers' book, *Anything You Want*. I think this is a must-read for any incoming master who needs to decide which fundraisers and projects to back, and how to lead a team with successful results. Rules like "It's either Hell Yes, or a No" and "Delegate, but don't Abdicate" are easy and effective concepts to keep in mind, and master.





The Traveling Man

Steal this idea...

This is from my lodge, but I hear we stole it from Wayzata Lodge No. 205 AF&AM in Wayzata, MN. Hand out mason jars, and the brethren bring 'em back full of loose change. We call it *A Mason's Mason*, and use it to raise money for our Brotherly Relief Fund, because there's nothing worse than voting yourself some dead people's money. Everyone should have skin in the game, and some sweat equity to spend.

You can keep the jars small, say one pint, so you see them return to lodge more frequently accompanied by much rejoicing, and a visual reminder to all the brothers to give freely, or you can give out progressively larger jars as brothers turn them in for an extra challenge. And when they bring them back, give the brother a token of reward.

Achievement Unlocked!

masons take obligations to help, aid, and assist each other. You are in breach of contract.

On the other hand, you're drinking coffee in the other room, and you don't want to get in anyone's way. Too many cooks in the kitchen spoil the broth, they say, so you signed a contract that lets you wait in reserve. After all, masons take obligations to help, but only when applied to, and no one is applying to you, so from your point of view, I am in breach of contract for not asking.

I resent you for being a lazy, no good, mooch, and you resent me for being passive aggressive, and we're both miserable.

But, be honest...aren't we kind of happy about it too? Because we both feel so justifiably indignant?

That's why we sometimes act this way. Because all human beings want is to think of themselves as good men, and we're conditioned to think injustice only afflicts the innocent, and all innocent people are good, right? And this is very faulty reasoning, but it feels right to so many of us, and it's a convenient shortcut to our goal.

But that's not why we're masons. Masonry isn't the belief that we're the judge of our own rectitude, or that right and wrong behavior is learned from the deep recesses of our heart. The process of freemasonry hinges on the belief that our goodness can be measured in our actions, and our measuring stick is the character of other good men of virtue, as best judged by the continued acceptance of the masonic lodge. It's counter-intuitive by today's standard and deemed an old-fashioned throwback to honor cultures. But if you could be a good, virtuous angel all by yourself, why did you ever join? Because here we're part of a team.

Improve your lodge by depending on each other. And that means asking each other for help. Brothers, ask your lodge for help. Masters, ask your brethren for help. And most importantly, name names. Whenever possible, ask a person face to face.

"Mark, can you dry dishes?"

"Rob, can you meet me here this Saturday to clean out the rec room? If that doesn't work, tell me when you can do it, and I'll be there."

It's important for the 80% to remember to ask others if they can help, and how, and to be as specific as possible, but the onus is generally going to be on the man doing the work and seeking the help. Because ambiguity is the enemy in this. Never give anyone an opportunity to shrug off a need. Asking "Is there anyone who can help with the fair booth this weekend?" is not the same as "We need five guys for the fair booth this weekend? Brian? John? Tony? Can I count on you?"



The First Art

Words mean things...

People disagree so much because we often have different definitions for the same words. Solution? Learn the correct words!

Goodness - The quality of being morally virtuous. Being good is about practicing virtues. It's an act.

Kindness - The quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate.

Niceness - The quality of pleasantness.

Attentiveness - assiduously attending to the comfort or wishes of others.

You can do good things without being kind, nice, or attentive. You can be attentive and nice, without doing any acts of goodness.

As a mason, we tend to put goodness above everything, but we should really be shooting for kindness. No matter your intentions or internal motivations, if you approach life in a friendly, generous, considerate manner, you can't help but do good.

It isn't shaming or guilt, it's confrontation. That word has a bad association today, but confrontation is not about rudeness, or aggressiveness, any more than it's about passive aggressiveness. It's about meeting your responsibilities, which isn't just the chores of lodge; it's meeting your brother on the level, acting on the plumb, and parting on the square. And that can't be done passive aggressively. It requires guts.

Matt Gallagher
Practical Freemasonry

Coffee Talk

I'll even give you a topic...

In keeping with the general theme, have a chat about confrontation.

- What does "whisper good council" mean? Why whisper and not shout?
- What "covert contracts" have you made at lodge?
- What would each of you do if asked a favor directly, by name?
- What have you wanted that you haven't gotten at lodge?





MORE PRACTICAL FREEMASONRY



What Can Freemasonry Do for You?

A great place to start for any mason, new or old! This whiteboard presentation isn't just another explanation of what freemasonry is, but what it can do for you, specifically!

Freemasonry: 10 Signs You're Doing It Wrong!

Every mason makes mistakes, and most of us make at least ten of them every lodge night. How many of these are you guilty of?



The Five Orders of Architecture: The Epochs of Your Life

Ever wonder what the heck these things are supposed to mean to you? Watch and find out!

Practical Alchemy: What is Alchemical Gold?

Esoterics can be a bit...esoteric. But they don't have to be! If you've ever thought about dipping your toe into alchemy, start here!



Finally, a Humble Pitch...

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AND IF YOU'RE NOT WILLING TO MAINTAIN YOUR HONOR, WHAT ARE YOU EVEN DOING HERE?