

SECTION 9

COMMUNICATIONS



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SECTION 9 – COMMUNICATIONS

9.1 PERSONAL TOUCH COMMUNICATIONS

9.1.1 Introduction

Communicating in its many facets is generally the duty essentially assigned to the Secretary of the lodge. The intent of this bulletin is to outline a basic approach to these exchanges and the expression of ideas.

With the advent of computers the Internet and email, many of the friendly and personal touches such as a handshake or a smile are being neglected. Masonry has always stressed hand-to-hand approach and now it is time to extend this to the letters and communiques issued by the lodge.

The areas covered in the attached outline are not complete or definitive in any way; they are just the starting point of a redesigned approach to the essential communications of the lodge. The Worshipful Master, secretary and committees are free to adapt, ignore or improve on the ideas stated but it is considered by the issuing committee that this a minimum approach that needs to be used by all lodges in an effort to reach in a more Masonic manner the recipients of the communication.

9.1.2 Vehicles of Communication

MEMBERSHIP MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE(S)

Consisting of the following; Telephoning Committee, Corresponding Committee, Visiting Committee, Mentors Committee

A mandate and description of the activities of these committees would necessarily differ with the expectations of each lodge and their by-laws.

TELEPHONING COMMITTEES

Look at the members of the committee. Look at the people to be contacted by phone Match them – don't just take from #17 to #25.

Have regular meetings of the committee and set guidelines and "expected result", report outlines.

Have a minimum written report from each call – even if it is, "He didn't want to talk."

CORRESPONDING COMMITTEE

One of the complaints of a secretary is that he is overburdened with this type of communication. So this committee must take up the slack and become a working committee. Certain letters are the responsibility of the secretary; these are probably covered in the "job description" on his accepting the position. Other letters and written communications are surely the responsibility of the respective committees.

Typical letter formats should be found in the lodge information manual; keeping in mind friendliness and informality should be obvious but not over emphasized.

VISITING COMMITTEE

This is a difficult committee to which belong. There is a heavy time involvement and so most of the members will be from the older/retired section of the lodge. Travel and therefore cost is a concern.

Matching the visitor with those being visited becomes a major factor. There should be some common ground for conversation to be easy. A handbook of Q's and A's would be a worthwhile project, as would a discussion group at the beginning of a season, to go through the handbook – a decided benefit to newer members.

Arrangements for the visit should be made in advance; first, to make sure the visit is wanted and second, to ask if there is some particular brother they would like to see.

A note or card would be appropriate to remind the brother of the visit. (Also to let the family know he is not forgotten)

Personal delivery of the summons is often a good "in" for the visit.

Questions and concerns of the visited brother should be reported to the Worshipful Master and/or to open lodge.

MENTORS COMMITTEE

This committee is well written up by Grand lodge – the disc with complete instructions is available from the Grand Secretary's office. Many lodges do not make sufficient use of this medium – the Worshipful Master should make sure his Mentors Program is working – the chairman of this group is the key to future activity from the lodge members.

9.1.3 List of “Ways and Means”

The following is a list" of ways and means for making the communications within the lodge more personal in approach and thus more effective and fruitful. For reference purposes and the convenience of the user, the list has been compiled with reference to the status of the member being contacted.

Communication with an: Enquirer / Applicant / Candidate / New Mason / Improving Mason/_Sponsors and/or Mentors

After the initial inquiry Into Masonry	Mason who had first contact; Personal visit with use of pamphlets, videos and audiotape.
First "official" visit by sponsors	Personal visit by Masons (2); Getting to know you session Application form / Q & A.
Acceptance of application	Secretary- letter or/and phone call A sponsor could hand deliver.
Visit of Inquiry	W. M's committee (3) Study question sheet before visit Chairman to contact the man so that family can be present
After Ballot	Letter from W.M./secretary Hand delivered by sponsors.
Sponsors to check on time & candidate	Mentor program activated
Before each Degree	Contact by secretary and/or sponsors for First Degree & Senior Warden for others
After each Degree	Immediate contact by Sponsors and/or Mentors. Use Mentor "Lecture" and assign work to be done. <u>Practice – Practice - Practice</u>

At this stage; the candidate should be invited to other lodges where the degree He has just completed is being done. For these visits and other special events, the new Brother should be informed of protocol required (dress and otherwise).

9.1.4 Communication With:

Indisposed Mason (Short Time/Long Time)

Short Time: Sponsors/W.M./Sec./S&V

- Get Well card from W.M.
- Phone calls from close friends and S & V.
- Hand delivery of card/summons by S & V.

Note: A card passed around the lodge although well meant is not personal. A better way should be for the members present to be specifically asked to approach the secretary's desk after lodge to sign the card and make personal remarks on it.

Long Time: W.M./S&V/Sponsors Frequent travelling partners

- Get Well card may not be appropriate; a personal message in a lodge note card may be more acceptable. The card with expressions of concern could/should be delivered by hand by a close brother to the indisposed member.
- Delivery of the current summons is also an appropriate reason for a visit — happenings in the lodge and the district (with any photos) should be thought out before the visit so that there are areas of common discussion.

Non-Attending Members

Some homework first:

- Look at the attendance book and find out the last time in lodge & how many times in the last year
- Age/health/family concerns
- Any previous contacts
- Any problems with other lodge members
- Any problems with dues or lodge "systems"

Now: Letters Won't Cut It

A letter is not a feasible approach to this brother's problem. If he ignores the invitation in the summons he is not responsive to the written form.

Direct contact by phone asking permission to visit is a good first step. The visit should be as casual as possible — a case of finding how he is, what he thinks — then, what can be done to see him back in lodge. More than one visit may be necessary to get him feeling "safe" enough to unburden his feelings and thoughts.

Ask Him:

- Does he receive the summons? Does he read the summons?
- Is he in contact with any of his brothers?
- When is his birthday? Send him a personalized card
- Has he any questions about his fellow Masons?

Members Deserving Recognition

Recognition of accomplishments both in and out of lodge can be an historical moment if done with taste. A letter, plaque or framed certificate to be presented in lodge or during

the banquet hour, which ever is appropriate with lots of personal greetings and handshakes where time permits. (The W.M. should make sure there is enough time)

Place a notification in the lodge summons so that all brethren are aware of the occasion. Letters sent with the summons to the secretaries of the district lodges inviting their brethren to attend. A letter from the W.M. after the fact is perhaps good manners.

Members Being Demitted, Suspended or Renewed

Apart from, or additional to, the usual certificate as shown in the Book of Constitution, a letter asking for a visitation is suitable. It's a must for those seeking to demit especially if dues are a questionable item. Alternatives should be given other than demission.

Both those seeking demission and those being suspended for reason, should be shown that there may at some time in the future, and after due consideration or other factors, an opportunity to regain their status by applying to the secretary of the lodge in writing.

In each case the member should be able to show the certificate issued and proclaim his serious intentions. The Worshipful Master and sponsors should be closely involved with these situations.

9.1.5 Conclusion

Most people can write decent letters and have conversations on the telephone — however they must be meaningful and well thought out to have a chance of getting the results intended. Some leadership from a brother with experience in this field should be sought — perhaps a workshop (at the lodge level) for all the Personal Management Committees could be arranged.

NOTHING HAPPENS WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE A PLAN!