

Masonic Leadership

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Patton R. Hart is a Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky and serves as President of the Masonic Renewal Committee. Masonic Leadership should be focused on as the means and tools to enhance the revitalization of Freemasonry for our fraternity. The Masonic Renewal Committee has developed a Leaders Resource Guide as an important resource to succeed in delivering quality leadership. Go to our web site www.masonicrenewal.org to review and download the resource guide.

Many of you have served or will serve your Masonic lodge in a particular leadership role. Each of us is given the opportunity to serve and lead with the awesome responsibility to make a difference for our lodge and our Masonic fraternity. Instead it is often easy to take the easy road to go along with the status quo and let someone else set the pace or take the lead for the lodge.

Masonry has made an impact upon our lives or we wouldn't be involved. We care about our gentle fraternity. Each of us can never forget that we are Masons because we have the responsibility to live and to conduct our lives according to the tenets of Freemasonry. We are in a value-based organization that sets us apart from other men and other worthwhile organizations in today's society.

With the problems that we are encountering today with our Masonic fraternity, one important area that we need to build upon is the development of solid Masonic leadership. If an organization is to continue, it must develop our leaders of today. I believe leadership is a quality that can be taught. Our leaders in our lodges must take a closer view about the needs of our members and our fraternity. It is easy to become complacent in our thoughts and actions. We often resist change and are reluctant to upset the ways things have been done in the past. We must remember that change isn't good when we change just for the sake of changing. However, we must consider change as something that is new or different when it will be beneficial for the members and the organization. You have often heard negative comments to a new idea or a different approach in doing something. We need to generate a culture that is receptive to new approaches and ideas by thinking with innovative and creative imagination. Creating an environment that instills enthusiasm and excitement with interesting programs for our lodges will enable us to think and plan big.

How are we going to move forward or motivate men to action within our fraternity? We can accomplish it through effective Masonic leadership. We must establish goals that will enable our lodges and fraternity to move forward with a sense of excitement and a renewed purpose. We are challenged to move men's hearts in a favorable manner and the willingness to take bold steps with a new vision. We must ask ourselves where do we want to be in five (5) years? How are we going to get there? What will be necessary to accomplish our goals? How are we going to mobilize our resources and talents to make a

difference for our fraternity in the years ahead? These are important questions that deserve our earnest attention and can also establish our vision for the future. Vision isn't forecasting the future; it is creating the future by taking action in the present.

It all revolves around leadership. When we think of a leader, a leader takes the initiative to get the job done. A leader is one who plans, organizes, controls and implements. We also need to reflect upon the various principles of leadership: planning, goal setting, organizing, personnel, communicating and controlling. One of the most important ingredients of a leader is the planning or visioning that he does. The characteristics of a true leader are the abilities to have a vision of the future and the will to make it happen. But the good leader must have the right vision in order to succeed in a favorable manner. Our Masonic leaders must possess the essential skills to make things happen. As leaders, we must have courage and conviction to lead.

Let me offer each letter of the word leadership in defining it. **L** stands for love by loving the people and the organization. We must be people-oriented, connect with others and be willing to help others. Our people as members must be our top priority because they can make it happen and will follow our lead. **E** can exemplify education and as leaders it is important to educate or mentor those whom he leads. We can look at how important mentoring can be to our organization because the willingness to mentor others is an act of caring and nurturing. It is essential that we provide sufficient education so learning can be an investment and the fruits of our labors. **A** can be attributed to accountability because we need to be accessible and responsible for our actions. As leaders, we are setting the example for others to follow and emulate. It should be a privilege, not a right, to lead others. We should always have a sense of humility as we serve and represent others in our leadership role. It is necessary to learn the art of being a gracious leader. **D** can represent direction as it is essential that an effective leader directs the organization in a positive manner. The leader must also have the desire for him and the organization to succeed so growth can be experienced. **E** can be example through behavior that is beyond reproach and setting a standard for fairness and honesty. **R** is respect that a leader earns from those he leads. If a leader or the office that he is holding isn't respected, the organization will suffer and lose credibility. The important qualities of being respectful and truthful are essential to maintain a good working relationship with the officers and members of your lodge. We must know how to care and realize the importance of making our members feel valued and appreciated by recognizing their good deeds and contributions to the organization. Recognition can go a long way for members to show their respect. In the military, officers are taught to take care of the needs of their troops before caring for themselves. We as leaders should never forget the people who helped them along the way to success. **S** can represent showing the way for the organization. As officers, it is essential to exhibit your station with pride and excellence to the best of your abilities. **H** is important for honesty. As leaders you must be honest and forthright with your actions and decisions. You must be fair and impartial in your performance of your duties in serving the organization. Any leader who wants to do the right thing should set high standards and above all be honest in your service to others. **I** is representative of inspiring those around him to excel and motivate them to reach for excellence. We can only persuade others to work with us in accomplishing our

goals. By inspiring others, together each accomplishes more and we can succeed as a team. **P** is for planning and is an important characteristic of leadership. Remember the seven p's to planning. We must always plan ahead because prior proper planning prevents pitiful, poor performance. Thus, plan the future so it will be a future of which we will all be proud.

Each letter of the word leadership has been spelled out as food for thought in enhancing our skills to be good and effective leaders. In closing, leadership isn't easy. It offers many challenges but affords us with opportunities. Let us strive to implement these leadership traits as we serve our lodges and our Masonic fraternity. Learn from the past, live in the present and build for a better future by exhibiting effective leadership so we can make a difference for Freemasonry.