

Selecting A Line Officer

By Charles S. Anthony

Past Master of Paul Revere Lodge #321 St. Louis Park, Minnesota

These remarks will follow the established pattern of What? How? Who? and Why? It is impractical and unreasonable to expect that anyone can make a justifiable appointment in the line without first considering and satisfying these questions. We must all agree that capable appointments are one of the basic responsibilities accepted by Lodge Masters.

Let us first consider What?

The charges and responsibilities contained in the installation ceremony for each line officer and those responsibilities specifically defined by stations and places in the ritual of the several degrees are the foundation of our analysis of what each officer must do. Yet, brethren, these in themselves are completely inadequate to describe the responsibilities – or the what? – of the officers today. These must be expanded and detailed to include all responsibilities in keeping with the lodge practice and organization.

Officer responsibilities can be conveniently classified in three groups: Ritual, Fraternal, Administrative.

Ritual – Specific responsibilities – including the Lectures, Schools of Instruction – attendance, participation, Degree rehearsals.

Fraternal – Welfare and Relief, Charity, Masonic Home, Funeral Services.

Administrative- Petition Investigation, Cost Control, Committees – Program & Social, Grand Lodge, Planning and Organizing.

Each of you can add many more activities in each group in which your line officer must take either the lead or an active part. Brethren, the WHAT must be answered by a complete and detailed organization of responsibilities for each officer equal to the level of his office!

We must know What? before we can be sure. The Master-elect would do the lodge a grave injustice in making a line appointment without a specific organization plan of responsibilities and,

even more so, would do a greater injustice to the man of his choice in not laying before him complete details of the load he will assume if he accepts the appointment. The uninformed man will accept because of the honor associated with the title of Master; the informed man will accept because of the challenge of the responsibilities and a real desire to serve the Lodge.

Now, the HOW? of evaluating for an appointment. The element of evaluation suggested here are based upon the assumption that the appointed officer will eventually be elected as Master of his Lodge and must be considered in that light. They are – Acceptability, Leadership, Organization and Planning, Responsibility, and Judgment as related to people.

ACCEPTABILITY is defined as: The ability to get along with others and maintain their respect and confidence. This is the ability to establish a constructive contact with people and to elicit a ready response and desire to cooperate. The quality of making people feel that he is always thinking, speaking and acting in their best interests. The quality which results in the inclination on the part of others to want him included in any plans, activities, opinions, etc.

Leadership is defined as: Inspiring others to a greater unity of purpose. Leadership is the ability to inspire teamwork, with a high degree of morale, and direct it toward an objective. The ability to get others to do, willingly, what is to be done. Leadership evidences itself in many ways; by the frequency with which the leader originates or facilitates new ideas and practices, by the degree he encourages a pleasant group atmosphere, reduces conflicts between members, by the limited amount of domination in restricting the behavior of the individuals or the group in action, decision-making or expression of opinion and by his recognition and representation of the group.

Organization and Planning is defined as: The ability to arrange for the accomplishment of a project or program in an orderly and efficient manner. The ability to properly delegate responsibility. This also requires the proper selection and development of people who will assume the responsibilities delegated. The planning portion of this element involves the ability to look ahead and foresee the requirements of his responsibilities .

Responsibility is defined as: The willingness to assume and conscientiously discharge the obligations of an officer. It requires that an individual have a realistic appreciation of his obligations; it considers the manner in which he assumes and carries out these obligations.

Judgment as related to people: This is the ability to accurately evaluate the performance of others. The ability to select the right people when delegating authority and responsibility to make maximum use of their talents, qualifications, and abilities.

We can anticipate your question on these suggested elements because each implies proof through performance. Your question – How do we evaluate a new man for the line by these elements with the limited knowledge of the man being considered? It has been standard practice for the Master-elect to make public the appointment to the line prior to his installation which is the only practical

thing to do. Technically, he announces his new appointment after he has been installed as Master. Neither of these in themselves are satisfactory in a dynamic and organized line of officers. Certainly the elected line officers should be aware of the new choice as soon as the Senior Warden's decision is made and, just as important, all line officers should have some input on all candidates being considered even though it is not their decision.

The answer to your question will be the consideration of the third fact – Who?, and we offer another question for your consideration: As Master-elect, what appointment is your first and certainly your most critical to make? Obviously, it is the S.D.! From there you must progress downward according to rank until one officer's place is not filled. Granted, that selection of one of the Craft to the lowest place in line by the elements of evaluation suggested would be difficult but not impossible. The other appointments must be made in order of rank according to these elements or equivalent standards and only after a complete and thorough evaluation.

Let's take a look at the last factor – How? The progression of appointed officers through the several places is not usually required in the Grand Lodge Constitution or Regulations or any Lodge By-Law. It has been established through practice, and precedent is more difficult to change than written regulations. Let's face one fact squarely: In this progression system the most important offices are filled by appointments previously made by Masters who are now years removed from active line work. We have all experienced or witnessed the results of a poor choice progressing through the line. These remarks have been directed toward a suggested method to implement this progression system and eliminate the problems, headaches, and worries that are a natural result of selecting a man for the line.

This can be simply done by adding two very important factors to the responsibilities of the elected officers. They are Training and Appraisal. We have yet to see any definite plan or program that provides for specific instruction and training of the appointed officers; even more disappointing is the absence of any appraisal plan to measure performance.

The training program should be as specific as our present educational system, tailored to fit the progression and experience level of each officer. If we will recognize that we can only "learn by doing" our program will be developed on the precept of "guided experience."

Training program should include:

1. Ritual- Delivery, expression, meaning, etc., not only accuracy (Attendance at Schools of Instruction)
2. Lodge By-Laws
3. Grand Lodge Constitution, Regulations, etc.
4. Investigating Petitions – How'? Purpose of question?

5. Committee Activities
6. Secretary's job – Reports, Forms.
7. Treasurer's job – Investments, controls, etc.
8. Visitations – other Lodges; Masonic functions, lectures
9. Instructive reading – Masonic books, periodicals, papers
10. Attendance at Grand Lodge annual Communication and Area conferences

There are many others that should be added to this list in keeping with the individual Lodge practice.

Finally, we come to the most important phase of officer development – Performance Appraisal. We are not speaking of the general run-of-the-mill corrections or suggestions that are offered when necessary and are most often received with resentment. A true appraisal requires a complete evaluation of the performance of preassigned tasks in accordance with the responsibilities laid down in the organizational plan. Even this will not be adequate unless the results are discussed completely and openmindedly with the officer being appraised.

The appraisal should include:

1. The elements previously discussed
2. Soundness of decisions – Judgment
3. Constructive ideas
4. Is he self-starting?
5. Mental Alertness
6. Attitude- Interest – Participation
7. Personality – Disposition, Tact, Appearance, etc.
8. Overall proficiency

From a frank and complete discussion of the appraisal the appraiser will be able to determine the training or experience required by the officer and can set his program accordingly. The appraised will recognize and appreciate those areas in which he must concentrate more effort to attain the level of growth required as he progresses from year to year.

With a sound, well-developed, and complete organization of responsibilities and an effective training and appraisal plan, we can guarantee our Lodges exceptional officers and the "new" appointment, however selected, will respond with vigor to the task he has accepted.

Note: Wor. Bro. Anthony resides at 6501 Wilryan Ave., Edina, MN 55435

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