



LOI Officer Training

Running Effective Open Houses

Membership Development Committee
- R.W. Scott T. Jareo, Chairman



We typically have Two Open Houses

Square & Compasses Day

Held in the Fall, typically October
Lines up candidates for spring degrees

Spring Open House

Held in the early Spring
Lines up candidates for fall degrees

What is an Open House?

It's a chance to show the public that your lodge is still an important part of the community, and that Freemasonry continues to be an important organization in men's lives.

In 2005 the Grand lodge of Masons in Massachusetts along with the Membership Development Committee established an Open House Program

All of the Lodge Buildings in Massachusetts are open from 9:00 am – 3:00pm

The Grand Master expects that **all** Lodges that meet in a given building are represented on these days

The Master , Wardens, Ambassadors and other members of every Lodge should be present to greet the public and new potential candidates and answer any questions

There should be one to three spokesmen (preferably Masonic Ambassadors) available to discuss masonry and give Lodge tours.

We only have one chance to make a **first impression**.....put your best people at the door.

Dress code for the day is at the discretion of the Lodge, however, it is the recommendation of this committee that jacket and tie be worn with the Master of the Lodge in Tuxedo and Regalia. Freemasonry is special with



WHY DO WE HAVE OPEN HOUSES?

- To raise awareness of who the Freemasons are and what they do
- To promote membership
- To reach out into our communities and remind them that we are still here
- To **share** the wonderful gift of Freemasonry
- Lodges may have as many open houses as they want!
- Lodges who put in the effort will see positive results.....Lodges who do not put in much work will see little results

These are a few reasons why we have open houses, but the real reason that we keep having them is because they continue to work. Maybe this isn't true in your particular lodge, maybe it's because you have not planned for this day and are just 'waiting' for things to happen. But across the jurisdiction we continue to receive feedback that these events are making a difference to membership in our lodges. Many lodges have reached the point of counting on these events, but it is not enough to just 'have' them. You have to 'use' them effectively.

Lodges are welcome to have other open house events if they choose. We have the two scheduled Open Houses in Spring and in the Fall to take advantage of the money that our Grand Lodge spends on advertising.

The success of an open house program depends entirely upon you. We will attempt over the course of this program to provide you with ideas and information that you can use, but ultimately the success of the day will rely entirely upon the efforts of the members of your lodge.



WHAT ARE YOUR LODGES GOALS ?

- Membership
- Awareness
- Community Outreach
- Charity



These events are NOT about generating applications. We are not 'Selling' Freemasonry. We are providing an opportunity for good men to find out more about our organization and how it might make a difference in their lives. Membership is our life blood, but we want quality vs. quantity, we are not looking to bring in men just to have them leave again after taking degrees. We are NOT recruiting.

So, What are your lodges goals? It all starts by envisioning where you want your lodge to ultimately be, and then deciding how you are going to get there....

Planning an Open House

“By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.”

Benjamin Franklin



Open House Facts

Two dozen donuts and the Ben Franklin DVD does not guarantee you will get potential applicants in the door

- The most active lodges in the state:

- Use their Ambassadors to run their Open Houses
- They have a plan
- They market early
- They use cooperative programs
- They communicate who they are and what they do

- The least active lodges:

- Don't have a plan
- Complain Open Houses don't work

Here are some notes based upon actual feedback that the membership committee receives from lodges after these open house events. We really do read this information and really do find it interesting and helpful to understand. It should also not be surprising that this pattern has been consistent for some time now. Lodges that make an effort, continue to find success with these events. Try to do something that will attract an audience to your building!



Different Events lodges have used

- myChip
- Pancake breakfast
- Speakers
- Tours
- Touch a Truck
- Flea Markets
- Bake Sale
- CPR
- Pumpkin Sale
- Blood Drives
- Car Wash
- Historic Society
- Police Safety Seminar
- Firefighter event
- Paper Shredder
- Carnival

Different types of events call for different levels of planning. It's not enough just to come up with a great event, you need time and resources to put it into action and make it work.

For example:

myChip

Need to plan ahead – need time in advance to have required equipment placed on reserve with adequate support personal lined up to process kids. Some of these events can process hundreds of children, you need to be prepared. If possible partner with others who have experience with this event

Pancake breakfasts

Open to community/get the word out – you need to advertise this well in advance through multiple sources to get a decent crowd. If this is something your lodge already does and has success with, it can be a good way to bring in people.

Touch a Truck

Reach out to friends/Brothers that Work or know someone in Police/Fire Dept. etc. Line this up well in advance. You need good outdoor space and plenty of resource on hand to staff for the day. These events can draw large crowds with many children.



Getting people onto the property

- Utilize the strengths of your lodge
 - Open outdoor space? - Use it!
 - Historic building?
 - Lodge tours
 - Showcase the lodge artifacts
- Family oriented programs
 - Kids = parents = prospective candidates!
- Community Workers
 - Police/Fire Department
 - Demonstrations or talks
- Scouting/Demolay
 - Host an event on your grounds
- Public Awareness/Safety Programs
- Local Historical Society

This slide highlights further some of the program ideas and why you might choose to use one type of event over another.



Advertising

- Banners
- Print Ads
- Flyers
- Social Media
- Community Calendar
- Local Cable TV
- Remember we cannot advertise:
 - “come down and join the fraternity.”
- We can say:
 - “come down and learn more about the fraternity.”

Banners

- Ideally double sided
- Good visibility outside of lodge
- Out at least 2 weeks before the Event/Open House

Print Ads

Local Paper - Less \$\$\$ than regional papers. The target audience is smaller but more concentrated

PR

- Local Paper
 - Establish a contact
 - No cost

Flyers

- Hang around town
- inexpensive

Social Media

- Facebook
 - Click Ads



Banner: Grand Lodge has already provided every lodge building with a banner and will provide a decal with the new Open House date to place on the banner. The decals will be distributed to through the District Deputies. If your lodge building's banner is missing, lost or in serious need of replacement please contact the Communications office at Grand Lodge for a replacement.

Get those banners out! Putting this sign up a day or two before the event is not enough, especially if you are in a building that does not get a lot of regular traffic passing by. If you are, you **MUST** find a way to augment the advertising, the banner alone is **NOT** enough.



Prepare Your Building for the Day

Do it before the Open House

- Welcome and inviting from the outside
- Clean inside so women and children feel comfortable
- Prepare Lodge room
- Have general information table
- Set aside a quiet area to talk more privately with interested visitors
- Separate area for food and drinks

Show some of the History of your Lodge.



Some visual ideas for lodge room or regalia setup. Artifacts if available should be used to stimulate interest in our rich history and to promote discussion.



Have Brothers Ready for the Day

- Who will set up, who will clean up?
- What shifts will they participate in?
- Have they been educated on what to say?
- Who is the greeter?
- What is the dress code?
 - Coat and tie recommended (tuxedo for the Master?)
 - It's how we represent ourselves as Masons

Engagement and Action

Now that we have them at the door...
What do we do with them?



What's your plan for Dealing with Attendees?

- What information do you want to share with potential applicants?
- Do you have a calendar of upcoming events the potential applicant can attend?
- Do you have an information sheet to fill out?
- Unless you have previously met the candidate
 - You should not have anyone filling out applications at an Open House.
 - This is not the time or the place.

For some of the public, the local Square and Compasses Day may be their only exposure to Freemasonry. For others, this could be a crucial introduction to the craft, that could influence their future in Freemasonry. In any case, they should feel welcome the moment they walk in the door, without feeling smothered.

Don't use the Open House as a pre-application meeting for someone who has just waked through the door. Take time to get to know the perspective candidate and follow up with him for a pre-app appointment. Making a connection with your members is the most important step we can take to keep these men active in our lodges.



How do we greet these men?

- Assign greeters
- Ask questions to understand individual motivation
- Listen!
 - Try to understand what brought this individual into your building
- Engage
- Be prepared to answer any questions
- Make them feel comfortable



Greeters

Whether the Lodge building hosting the Open House houses only one Lodge, or multiple Lodge, at least two Brethren should be stationed by the door, serving as a Greeting Committee. It would be best if one of these Brethren were the lead Lodge or District Ambassador. They should be well versed in the general structure of Grand Lodge, as well as knowledgeable about the different Lodges within the building (if applicable) as well as Lodges within the District.

Ask Questions

Questions and discussions should be conversational and sincere, so they don't feel interviewed or put on trial. A great question that can get them speaking is "What brings you in today?" This can help determine if they are only in for a building tour, if they are a Brother Mason from another Jurisdiction, or if they have specific questions about joining Freemasonry. If they live in one location, and work in another, be willing and prepared to talk about which Lodge location may be best for them. A great tool is an iPad or laptop to pull up the Lodge Locator on the Grand Lodge website, or the Ask A Freemason website to find a Lodge out of state.

Listen



Do Not...

- Ignore those entering the building
- Block the information table
- Have private conversations to the exclusion of visitors
- Ignore female visitors
 - They may not be potential members, but their fathers, husbands, uncles, grandfathers are or may be
- Forget to gather contact information!
- Forget to say 'Thank-you'

On more than one occasion, Brethren have been seen congregating in front of their Lodge information table, engaged in personal conversations amongst themselves. They did not appear welcoming or approachable to anyone that walked in the door. When a prospective candidate came near the table, they did not break ranks and say hello to the man. When a girl or woman walked in they also did not take the time to engage with them, since they assumed the event was only to recruit new members.

All these are drastic mistakes. Never forget you are someone's representation of Freemasonry. You could be their only exposure to Freemasonry. They could be a Brother's wife, mother, sister, daughter, granddaughter, aunt, uncle, father or coworker. Everyone that walks in the door should be welcomed. You could also consider implementing the 15/5 rule: Smile at them when they are 15 feet from you, say hello when they are 5 feet away.

It is very important that you remember to have some method of gathering basic contact information for the perspective candidate. This can be a simple sign in sheet at your information table for those interested in learning more about the craft. You need basic information such as name, telephone and email so that you can follow up with the candidate after the event. Be up front with them and ask them if it is OK if you give them a call in a few days to follow up and see if they have any further questions. Many good men have wandered into and out of our lodges without the lodge knowing how to reach out to them again.

Resources



Marketing Materials

- Grand Lodge provided Marketing Materials
 - <http://openhousefiles.massfreemasonry.net>
- Local Media Lists
- Develop your Lodge Informational Material
 - Who are you?
 - What's your History?
 - What do you do in your Community?
 - What are the requirements for membership?
- Grand Lodge also has numerous pamphlets and DVD's
 - Contact the supply office for current availability
 - Order early!

Before every Open House Grand Lodge provides a number of materials to aid and assist in the successful presentation of your Open House.

These material are available to download at <http://openhousefiles.massfreemasonry.net> and among other information include:

Publicity Information:

An outline of the Cooperative Advertising Program / reimbursement plan.

Print Advertisement:

An advertisement sample to submit to local print media

An 11" x 17" Open House Poster

Media List:

Having an up to date media list is very important to your process. It will help you to identify the correct person(s) to send your lodge advertising or press materials in your local community.

Grand Lodge has compiled a list of numerous media outlets all over Massachusetts



Advertising Expense Reimbursement

- ❖ Using Grand Lodge provided files
 - Up to \$225
- ❖ Using your own media
 - Up to \$200



Lodges can be reimbursed for expenses incurred while advertising the Open House. There are two scenarios.

The first is in cases where lodges use pre-produced print materials or cable/radio advertising, provide by the Grand Lodge, where you can include your own lodge name and contact information.

The Grand Lodge will pay the first \$50 and then for each additional dollar the lodge invests the Grand Lodge will match it one dollar to up to \$225 maximum reimbursement. If the lodge's advertising costs are \$400 or more the Grand Lodge reimbursement will reimburse the lodge \$225.

In the first scenario \$225 is the cap.

The second opportunity allows lodges to create and submit their own advertising plan using local media. Grand Lodge will match every dollar a lodge spends on advertising up to a maximum of \$200.

Lodges that meet in the same building are encourage to pool there resources and make requests for reimbursement for their share of the advertising expenses.

To receive the reimbursement, an invoice from the media outlet and a copy of the print ad or the cable / radio advertising schedule must be submitted to



Your local Resources

- Encourage members to bring a friend, family member, or associate
- Personal invitations to prominent people in the community
- Sponsor Coffee Hour at local Church/Temple prior to the Open House
- A personal referral is better than any media advertisement!

Your Lodge members ARE your best resource!

This simply cannot be said enough. The best way to bring members into our organization is still by recommending a good man that you know in your life. The Open House event is a great opportunity to bring that individual that you would like to see sitting next to you in lodge into your building. Invite them to meet you at your lodge, or better yet, swing by and pick them up and drive them to your lodge open house. Introduce them to the members or your lodge and share your enthusiasm for the craft. Your personal contact may be all that is needed.

Following Up

After our successful Open House...
What should we do?



Follow up with any potential Candidates.

- These men have taken the time to attend your Open House and may have many additional questions.....**Do Not Make Them Wait.**
- Each of the potential candidates should be contacted within the next week.
- Thank them again for attending your Open House and for their interest in the Craft.
- Send invitations to dinner at your lodge
- Send invitations to upcoming special events



This is critical for the success of your program. If you have worked hard and implemented a successful Open House day, you will have potential candidates who have come into your lodge. You should have gathered some basic contact info from them, and now you must actually use that information and reach out to these men. Many lodges fail at this step and leave interested men wondering why no one ever contacted them again. They've taken the initiative to walk into your building, it's your turn to reach out to them.



Communicate with your Local Media



Remember those local papers you contacted to advertise for your event?
Contact them again with follow up summary of the days events

Give the papers a press release stating how successful your Open House
was with a brief history of your Lodge.

People love to see their picture or the picture of someone that they know in
the paper.....And the newspaper people love to keep their customers happy.

Remember to obtain the names of the people in the photos along with their
consent.



Measure and Report your results

- Did you get enough people in the door?
- Did you get potential applicants?
- Was this well planned, or did the lodge take the path of least resistance/participation?
- What can be done differently next time to improve the plan?
- Compare notes with the other Lodges in your District
- Ask your District Deputy what he saw in his travels at the other buildings.
- Form a committee now to start to prepare for the next Open House!

This is a step that is often overlooked. As a lodge, you need to take a look at your event and determine your own success or failure criteria. This will differ by lodge and is dependent upon your lodge's goals for the day. Should you find the event did meet your expectations, don't accept failure as defeat. Honestly assess your performance for the day and use what you learned to improve the next time.

Each lodge as well as the DDGM's and other Grand Lodge officers are asked to submit feedback about what occurred on the day of the Open House. We really do read this information and make future decisions in part based upon it. This is your lodges chance to tell us what works, and where improvements can be made, so please send us your feedback.

Now is the time to start Planning for your next open house event. Use the feedback and lessons learned from your event to improve upon your event the next time.



Vince Lombardi
Green Bay Packers Coach
1959-1967

Success

“ The achievements of an organization are the results of the combined effort of each individual. ”

I would like to leave you with a final thought about our individual contributions to our group efforts. Membership is the life blood of our organization. Each of us has an obligation to replace ourselves in Freemasonry and to pass on the gift that we have received of membership in our organization to another deserving person. Take advantage of our Open House events as a vehicle in your lodge's ongoing membership initiatives. A well planned and well executed Open House event can have positive results on your community, your lodge and your membership.

The continued success of our organization depends upon you.