

Leaders Earn Their Respect – Equality and Gratitude

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In the first leadership series article I discussed the importance of relationship building as a key to leadership success. This second article describes why respect forms the foundation for strong relationships.

Everyone of a certain age remembers Aretha Franklin belting out her signature song, Respect (*“R-E-S-P-E-C-T; that is what you mean to me...”*). That was more than just a catchy line; it was a declaration that respect is a critical component of any relationship, whether it is between couples, parents and children, or members of a team.

A strong, functioning team needs a strong leader, but without mutual respect the team will never reach maximum synergy. This is especially true within volunteer organizations like Freemasonry where people are motivated not by money, but by an altruistic desire to help others. Without respect, accomplishing anything of substance is like sand-filled gears trying to power a machine. Team members will just walk away and we all know of instances where this has occurred; yet, it is easily avoidable.

One point of distinction to always remember is the difference between respect for the office one holds and respect for the individual. For example, when a judge enters a courtroom all are requested to rise. This is not out of personal respect for the judge, but rather for the position he or she holds. Applied to Freemasonry we should all, for example, respect the position of Master. That is quite different than respect for the man who sits in the East. The Master, like all Masonic leaders, should gain personal respect. Respect for both the position and the person is a powerful combination for success.

So how do we gain respect as leaders within Freemasonry? There are many ways, which I will expand upon in future articles, but here are just two to consider.

EQUALITY

One best practice for earning respect is to meet everyone on the level, even outside of lodge. Isn't this what we learned in the first degree? Too often we let position or perceived authority get in the way of viewing others as our equals. Even the Master, who earned his way to the East, must return to the ranks of the brethren. As a wise person once said, *“Be nice to*

people on the way up; you'll meet them on the way down".

Our tone of voice, word selection, and body language speak volumes about how we view others. This is especially true in the public arena of open lodge. No one likes to feel embarrassed or unappreciated. When we convey the impression we are above others we erode the very respect we are trying to earn. Some would say an attitude of superiority demotivates people. In reality it does not. Instead, it is a powerful motivator for members to just walk out the door in search of a more positive way to spend their valuable time.

GRATITUDE

A second consideration for earning respect as Masonic leaders is to practice genuine gratitude. Do any of us achieve a leadership position strictly through our own efforts? I think we would all agree the answer is "no". Success is the offspring of a collective effort by many, including our own. But as leaders we must subordinate our own achievements to those of others.

Another way of looking at this is to think about who should get the credit for success – you or the team? The answer is best stated by Ronald Reagan, who said, *"There is no limit to the amount of good you can do if you don't care who gets the credit"*; wise advice from our 40th U. S. President. Volunteers who truly give of themselves do not do so for the credit they may receive. But, with that said, sincere gratitude and acknowledgement of their work reinforces their self-worth and reflects well on the leader. Remember, it is not about you; acknowledging this will result in limitless success for all.

SUMMARY

In conclusion, we can all become more effective leaders by genuinely and actively gaining respect. There are many ways to do so, but here are two ways: treat people as equals and express sincere gratitude for the accomplishment of others.

Next month we will look at a few more ways to earn respect from the brethren and thus improve your leadership effectiveness.

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