

MANAGING EVOLUTION AND CHANGE IN THE LODGE

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In my 2018 Cornwallis Lecture, "The future of Freemasonry: evolution and change", I offer the following step-by-step process that Lodges can follow to manage their own change process.

1. Create an open forum for discussion about the future of the Lodge and include all members and not just the Past Masters. The reason for this is to include all opinions, insights and ideas and not just those of more senior members. The newer members have a stake in the future of the Lodge and need to be heard and involved in considering its future. Their ideas and contributions may lack an understanding of Masonic conventions but equally they can be fresh and stimulating. Such a forum would be different from the formalities of a Lodge committee.
2. Ask all members to consider and identify the Lodge's strengths and weaknesses, as well as the potential opportunities and the threats that it faces. Give members some time to think this over, perhaps by issuing a questionnaire in advance of any meeting. Accept and consider all opinions, whether others agree or disagree with them.
3. Ask every member to list (1) what they like about the Lodge and what they wish to see continue, (2) what they don't like about the Lodge and what they wish to stop and (3) what they would like to see introduced. Think of these in turn as Green, Red and Amber actions.
4. Compile these opinions and actions together and discuss them in the open forum. Try to agree a way forward on the basis of consensus. Consensus takes time to achieve and normally means some people have to compromise. It is not about anyone getting what they want. It is about everyone agreeing on something that they can all support. In matters such as the future of a Lodge it is better than voting because in voting some members will be unhappy with the result and may not support or work towards its implementation. With consensus all members become committed. This agreed way forward then forms the Lodge's agenda for change.
5. Identify whether there are any special features about the Lodge that represent variations from other Lodges, and which might help to promote the Lodge to potential members and visitors. Special or distinctive features make the Lodge attractive to certain people. For example, daytime Lodges attract people who cannot attend in the evenings and affinity Lodges attract people who follow a particular shared interest.
6. Agree a shared vision of what you would like the Lodge to be like in five to ten years' time. This might include from where the Lodge draws its members, the atmosphere in the Lodge, distinctive practices in the temple and at the festive board, how it operates, numbers and special interests.
7. Agree a plan of action and specific steps that, over a period of time, will gradually change the Lodge to be closer to your vision and which address your agenda for change. Include time scales for the plan, moving at a pace that is acceptable to the Lodge. Make it clear in the plan who is to do what, by when.
8. Meet regularly, as a discussion forum, to review the plan and its progress, to check that the changes are working and that members are informed and engaged. Modify the plan if necessary. Try to involve many different members in delivering the plan.
9. Celebrate your successes as they occur and make sure that others outside the Lodge and inside are aware. It can help to keep a record of the changes and successes, which will remind people of the "distance you have travelled" and will form a valuable part of the Lodge's history.

For further information, as well as details of my talk from which the above came, and others, please contact me via my website, <https://prestonian2012.org.uk/>.

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