

What to do about Non-Payment of Dues



Nothing is more frustrating than going through all of the trouble and taking the time necessary to attract a man to the Fraternity, only to see that he appears to have lost interest and is about to be suspended for nonpayment of dues.

This is happening all-too-frequently to our Lodges and we, as the leaders of the Craft, need to know (1) what the cause of this is and (2) what to do about it.

What can we learn from American Express?

Imagine for a moment you worked for Visa or American Express and you were in charge of membership development. Consider what you would do if one of your co-workers told you that you had lost 25% of your recent members because they had refused to pay their annual dues or had stopped using the card for purchases or travel? You'd be concerned and do something about it.

You can be sure your membership development person would write a letter, call on the phone, offer incentives or even waive the annual fee. Because without this member, American Express cannot survive.

As the leader it's your job to care

Members in our Lodges - in your Lodge - are no different from card-carrying American Express members. If they don't receive the benefits of membership, they'll stop paying their dues.

Only our job is much easier. We know why men join and what they expect.

Why men join

They join expecting to meet new friends, enjoy the company of other men and be involved with their family and in the community. When this occurs, they say their membership has value. When this is missing, they say their membership has lost its value. We know what happens when something has lost its value.

Creating value is your job

Changing the direction of suspensions, increasing membership interest and improving member satisfaction is your job as the leader. You and your team have the responsibility and the duty to take this job seriously.

Begin by contacting each member

Most men become Masons because of some contact or association with another member. Many will respond to your call or from the recommending Mason if either or both of you show some interest in him and his reasons for not renewing. A simple phone call is frequently enough. A letter is a good idea. Doing both is better yet. But doing nothing is a very wrong thing to do.

How to Help

Timing may be everything. If we wait until the last moment, there may be no convincing him of your interest in his returning to the active membership of your Lodge. By the same token, if you suspend a man at the same time he has lost his job or his home, you will not only not renew his interest, you will create bad will that can last a lifetime. So timing in this, as in life, can mean everything.

Man to man works best

We know of very few men who will categorically deny the request of a man who asks him for help. Consider asking your inactive, nearly-suspended member to help you personally with some important goal in your Lodge. Remember, he joined expecting to be asked to help. Provide him with this opportunity now and see if this does not make a difference.



Welcome to the "How can we help"

Sometimes, it's called the "look'a you." It goes like this. When you want to really show someone you are interested in his actions and his response (or her reaction as the case may be) try changing your narrative from a "look'a me to a look'a you."

It goes like this:

- ✦ How can we help you become more satisfied with your membership?
- ✦ What can we do to make your time in Lodge more meaningful?
- ✦ We'd like you to feel more involved. How can we help you achieve this?
- ✦ Tell me the reason why you have not met your financial obligations to the Lodge?
- ✦ You seemed to be so enthusiastic about joining, how can we help you rekindle that

When he knows he's about to be suspended

His response will either confirm one of the reasons we have discussed or give you his objection and the real reason he has not paid his dues. You need to be prepared for his objection and be able to handle it. For example, here are "objections" you might hear.

- ✦ Not enough time
- ✦ Too busy at work
- ✦ Found Lodge too boring
- ✦ Joined another club or organization
- ✦ Can't afford dues
- ✦ Meetings too long
- ✦ Don't know anyone any more
- ✦ Wife says it's a waste of time or money
- ✦ Just not interested



An objection is his signal that he needs to be convinced. Value is an important concept here. As members, we frequently say that we attend Lodge because we receive value for the time spent. Men who have become inactive say that participating and being a member has lost its value.

Your job is to determine how you can increase his sense of value by suggesting ways in which he can enjoy his membership. To do so, you have to keep in mind what things are important to him now and when he joined. Here are the things men typically value:

- ✦ Good fellowship with other men
- ✦ A role for their family as participants with him in Lodge events
- ✦ A role for the Lodge in the community which makes him proud
- ✦ Meetings that do not waste time
- ✦ Meetings that have variety
- ✦ Meetings and events that do not embarrass him

Conditions that are more difficult to overcome

Occasionally, Masons have a condition that prohibits their remaining active. A condition cannot be "explained" away easily. You may hear any of the following conditions:

- ✦ Poor health or bed ridden
- ✦ Lost a spouse and depressed
- ✦ Moved and no longer able to travel to Lodge
- ✦ Lost his driver's license
- ✦ In a nursing home
- ✦ In a nursing home
- ✦ Lost his job
- ✦ Became separated or divorced
- ✦ On welfare
- ✦ Filed for personal bankruptcy
- ✦ Living out of state
- ✦ Spouse no longer permits him to attend

Key Idea

Most men will pay their dues when and if someone calls and asks him to do so. Most men can afford the yearly amount and will pay the full amount if asked. Many men will have to ask their wives to write the check, so you may have to deal with this as well.