

# **The General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons International**



## **Membership Development Booklet**

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Of Royal Arch Masons  
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# Introduction

York Rite Masonry has a wonderful story to tell and a tremendous history to share. Unfortunately, somewhere along the line, we decided that the story would tell itself and that we need do no more than exist and they would join. “Kinda” like the baseball movie where it was said, “Build it and they will come”. Well, that style of thinking only works in Hollywood. In real life, membership takes a concerted effort and must be worked like your garden. Our goal is to provide the tools with which to work the garden where the crops will be new members who share the enthusiasm of York Rite Masonry that we do.

At the February 2004 Finance Meeting in Monroe, North Carolina, we discovered that if the York Rite Bodies continue to lose members at the rate we are now losing them, York Rite in North Carolina will be a thing of the past in 2018. That is 14 years. This is a sobering fact and calls us all to action.

No York Rite Body can rest on its past laurels and/or accomplishments. We are living in a different world today where TIME is the essential ingredient for the younger man. He has to know that trading his time from one item to another will bring him dividends. The organization for which he gives up time at home with his family must be a vibrant, well-oiled machine and must be something for which he will gladly say, “I belong”.

It is imperative that every York Rite Mason take a personal interest in our growth. The invitation to become a York Rite Mason should come from York Rite Masons themselves. We need to be active in our Blue Lodges and speak often of York Rite. We must lead by example. We should be the ones who initiate the invitation to our Blue Lodge Brothers. A campaign will be successful only because each of us is willing to be a positive and proactive contributor to each and every step of the program.

It is no longer valid to say, “But we have always done it that way”, or “We have never done it that way”. The whole scheme of life has changed and we have to adapt to the fast paced age in which we live. Let it be said

here that we must never sacrifice any of our principles, but we must change our methods if we intend to attract new recruits and grow.

There is a sense of urgency about all this. Remember the 14 years stated above. In these times of boundless choice, men must be continually “sold” on the discretionary items in life. It is, therefore, imperative that we modernize our thinking in recruiting members for the York Rite. Now is the time to promote a membership effort that reaches recruits, current members, and those members we may have opportunity to “re-up”.

*“We have come up thus far to help, aid, and assist in the building of our city and the House of the Lord, without the hope of fee or reward.”*

It is the intention of this program and your Membership committee to promote a carefully planned, energetic, and dignified campaign that will strengthen and build our ranks. The future of Royal Arch Masonry is in our hands.

## **The 3 R's of Membership**

### **Recruitment – Recognition – Retention**

The three R's of any campaign are recruitment, recognition, and retention. They are the foundation upon which any campaign must be built.

*RECRUITMENT:* The lifeline of any organization is built upon new members. Without a new base of membership, we cannot reach the heights that our wonderful York Rite so richly deserves. We intend to present a workable, viable recruitment program that is a time tested tool that works.

*RECOGNITION:* Many of our Companions accomplish awards worthy of being recognized at our monthly Convocations. Make a concerted effort to learn both the recipient and the award. Then insure that this individual attends your next Convocation and have a knowledgeable member make a presentation to him West of the Altar. Folks love hearing their names. Find a way to accommodate this phenomenon.

*RETENTION:* Often, the only thing a wavering brother needs is encouragement. We can turn the tide of NPD's with a friendly call or visit, informing the member of the importance of his remaining with the York Rite. A phone tree can do wonders in keeping members informed and teaching them that the York Rite has value for them.

Each York Rite body needs to appoint a Membership Chairman, and give him a committee consisting of a Chairman for Recruitment, a Chairman for Recognition, and a Chairman for Retention. This team needs to consist of men who are active and will WORK. List this team among your committees on your annual listings. Make it a priority.

## *Selecting the Membership Team*

Essential to the success of any membership program is the selection of its chairman. He must be a man who possesses people skills and who is willing to assume the helm. He must have the time, possess organizational, planning, and sales abilities and have the respect of his peers. The position of Membership Chairman is, in the long run, the most critical decision your Chapter will make. His selection, as well as his acceptance, should be based upon the most vital question of, “Can he lead us to success in our membership drive?”

Second only to this selection will be the one of the membership team members who should hold the positions of Recruitment Chairman, Recognition Chairman, and Retention Chairman. These hand picked men will compose the team that will lead the efforts of the Bodies. Select men who will follow their leader, but who possess the skills and dedication to step out on their own in their area of expertise. These men must be of a mind bent to understand that membership is a never-ending process.

Before the work of the team begins, much planning must be done. The team must determine the names, numbers, and locations of the Blue Lodges served by their Chapter. They must know the meeting night of each Lodge, its Secretary and Master.

The team will then want to establish an “Ambassador” program for each Blue Lodge and then carefully pick the proper Ambassador for each Lodge. An annual meeting of the Ambassadors is a must. Dates of Festivals, picnics, awards presentations, etc., should be covered in this meeting, as well as providing each Ambassador with a roster of each York Rite member in his Lodge.

Realizing that membership is an on-going process, the team will want to be in contact with its Ambassadors (via e-mail) on a regular basis. All information brought to the attention of the Blue Lodge concerning the York Rite rests within the hands of the Ambassadors.

The primary ingredient in the recipe for a successful membership team is the establishment of an organizational structure with clearly defined areas of responsibility and an obvious reporting system.

## *Organized Planning for Membership Training*

A membership campaign requires careful planning before it is launched. Any York Rite Body that rushes into a membership program without a careful, deliberate, detailed, and well thought out plan is apt to fail.

The **FIRST** consideration you will want to do is evaluate your situation.

How many members do you now have?

Of that number, how many are active?

How many Blue Lodges do you serve?

How many members do they have?

How many of your members are willing to share in the workload?

Can you do all the Ritual – or do you need help?

Would a new member be excited about what you do?

You will want to evaluate your own situation prior to asking Blue Lodge members to join your Bodies. But most of all, you must be willing to hear everything your members have to say – positive or negative. Sometimes the truth hurts, but we can only begin from where we are, and not from where we think we are. (remember – statistics tell us we only have 14 years remaining before the good ship York Rite sinks)

You must make a plan and then follow the plan. It does not matter which way the wind blows when the ship has lost its sail. Your plan must be accepted by the loyal and dependable members of your York Rite Bodies, otherwise no one will work the plan. The plan must be placed into the hands of those who will give it the time and effort until conclusion, YOUR membership Team.

A word about goals. Goals must be high enough to be challenging, but low enough to achieve. Be sure to set you goals for new members at an acceptable rate. And do set a goal. Give it a number. IE: We will attain 17 new members in the year 2004. Set goals for new members. Church statistics inform us that it takes far more effort to get a fallen member back

into the fold than it is to gain a new member. So, strive for the new members.

Take the time to do the preparation work. Make sure all players are on the same page and singing the same tune. The few hours spent in preparation will save untold hours of effort. Athletes practice hours to play minutes. They prepare. Planning will spell the difference between success and failure.

We can bring the York Rite back to the prominence it has enjoyed in the past. With less than fifteen (15) percent of Blue Lodge Members belonging to the York Rite, we have untold opportunities in the Blue Lodges.

*“The fields are great to harvest, but the laborers are few.”*

## *Recruiting Master Masons to the York Rite*

The Recruitment Chairman should notify, by mail, each Blue Lodge within the jurisdiction of that York Rite Body in October of each year, that the York Rite will be willing to attend a Blue Lodge meeting and present an educational program on the York Rite of Freemasonry – in costume. These last two words – in costume – are most important.

After a Blue Lodge has arranged for a program, three knowledgeable and active York Rite members should be selected to attend the Lodge and present the York Rite story in five (5) parts and in costume. This means that the Chapter man should wear a red coat, the Council man should wear a purple coat, and the Commandery man should wear his uniform without chapeau and sword. The program should be presented as follows:

1. **Introduction** – This part short and sweet to inform the Blue Lodge how the program will be presented and to assure them the program will take no longer than twenty (20) minutes.
2. **Chapter** - The first part should cover the Chapter. It must be presented by a Royal Arch Mason (red coat and chapter jewelry – including apron and jewel). He should cover Mark Master, Past Master, Most Excellent Master, Royal Arch Mason and R.A.R.A. This part of the program should not dwell simply on ritual, but should place emphasis on the understanding that without the Royal Arch, a Mason's education is incomplete.
3. **Council** – The second part should cover the Council. The companion should be dressed in purple and wearing his apron and jewel. He should cover Royal and Select Master and mention the Super Excellent Master. He should close with Cryptic Masons Medical Research.
4. **Commandery** – The third part should cover the Commandery. The presenter should wear a full uniform and a Blue Lodge apron. He should cover the Orders of the Commandery and finish with Knight Templar Eye Foundation.
5. **Conclusion** – A question and answer session should follow and should always conclude with a big thank you

to the Master and the Lodge for allowing a York Rite program to be presented in their Lodge.

It is always appropriate to leave the Blue Lodge Secretary with a packet of information on the York Rite, with – of course – several petitions for his members. Always remember to be enthusiastic and personable.

Other forms of communications with non-members include:

The personal (one on one) touch

Lead by example

Wear the appropriate “costume” whenever possible

Participate in parades

Hold open houses

Mail personal letters to newly made Master Masons

Have a specific honoree for your festivals

Form a speaker’s bureau from your gifted speakers and make the list available to Blue Lodges, Scottish Rite Valleys, and the Shrine

It is very important that our members know as much as possible about the Chapter. Having Masonic education, sharing knowledge on an informal basis, reading, and attendance do much to make our members literate. Want other justification? How about

We improve York Rite Masons in every walk of life through their work and study of our craft.

We stand for the noblest principles in the lives of men and the highest standards of conduct.

We let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify their Supreme Being.

We share character building through a liberal education that may be shared with one another.

We provide a rich sense of fellowship, freedom of mind, and an understanding of that which is right to live harmoniously with God and man.

We learn through participation in our Degrees, thereby advancing our understanding – up to and including the finding of the lost word.

We share our wonderful history and heritage through participation with other Companions.

We meet and learn to know some mighty fine men who otherwise might have remained at a perpetual distance.

# Membership Development is a Key

As you begin your campaign, there are a few thoughts you will want to consider. They include:

***This is not the York Rite of the 1960's:*** It is true that the numbers may not as large as they once were, but because of the actions of the Shrine a few years ago, the new members we now get are as sold out to the mission as we are and they are willing and ready to go to work when then complete the Degrees and Orders of the York Rite. They come in all ages and sizes. They bring with them new ideas and an opportunity to help us grow. They bring a most welcomed energy transfusion.

***Membership Value is critical:*** Our new members are busy people and they need to be convinced that the dollars they spend with us are returning a value to them in ways other than carrying another membership card. Our members are interested in family activities, guest speakers, community involvement, and an opportunity of being of service. They need to know that by committing their time and talents that they are making a positive contribution to a worthwhile organization. You will want to sell these men on the wonderful value to the Chapter.

***Becoming an internet Fraternity:*** More and more of our members are becoming "connected". Many of our Bodies are also on the internet. Rest assured that younger prospects check you out on the internet before they invest their hard earned money to become a part of this Body. Web sites promote our Bodies and our mission and are a big seller for younger men. This media improves communications, saves postage, and updates the York Rite in the eyes of the beholder. Being a "dot.com" fraternity can be a differentiating factor in gaining membership.

***Dangling the carrot:*** Many York Rite Bodies have instituted incentives to reward members who have excelled, be it top-line signing or contributions in other areas of our fraternity and the community. Consider incentives for these men who walk the extra mile, be they dues credit, gift certificates, or recognition in Chapter meetings. This program works. Give it a try.

**Festivals are reunions:**

A festival is both an opportunity to gain new members and renew acquaintances. Make sure that your entire membership knows of your Festivals and feel welcome to come and enjoy both the ritual and the fellowship. Be sure to establish an “organizing team” and charge them with the responsibility of insuring successful completion of your Festival. Publicize and promote.

**Promote – Promote – Promote:**

No program can ever be successful without promotion. Take every opportunity to promote the York Rite and its activities. Write articles, take pictures, publish them on the internet under your web site. No one can buy something he doesn’t know about.

**Perception is reality:**

Make no mistake about it, what others see in you is what they perceive to be the truth. Although you may know your Chapter inside and out, both ways ‘til Tuesday, but outsiders do not. Remember the old axiom that the chain is only as strong as its weakest link. Often insiders know very little also. With a minority of our members ever gracing the door of our meetings, what is the perception of those who do not? They are, after all, the vast majority. House cleaning begins at home. Are our inactive members our dissatisfied customers? We need to know what inspires the non-attenders. We need to contact these men and ask the hard questions. What are their recommendations? Yogi Berra once said that, “You hear a lot by listening”. Our product may need some tweaking to meet the needs of those inactive men. Perception issues can be managed. With the implementation of true management tools, we can see our Bodies through the eyes of others and can then take advantage of one of the greatest opportunities for customer satisfaction and growth.

## *Successful Recruiting = More Petitions*

Success results from hard work. It does not come easily nor does one fall into success through sheer luck. Goal attainment comes from approaching every project from a variety of ways – as opposed to putting all one’s eggs into one basket. Diverse and creative thinking is necessary for the Membership team if your Chapter is to gain in membership. A prepared and well-worked attack plan is necessary on all fronts for you to have a better chance at success. Effectiveness is the key. Plan your assault on various fronts. Have you considered?

Mailing each member of your York Rite Bodies a personal letter soliciting his support and asking for membership recommendations.

Secure a commitment from each officer in your bodies to attain a petition for the next Festival.

Write a letter to each newly made Master Mason in each of the Blue Lodges your Bodies serve, including in the mailing a packet of materials about the York Rite. In this letter, you will want to encourage these men to feel free to contact your Membership team with any questions they may have. By all means, include a petition in the mailing.

Consider rewarding the member of your Bodies who gain the most new members during a calendar year.

Spread the leadership around by using some inactive members on York Rite committees.

Enlist the cooperation of all your past presiding officers. Include them in your plans.

Meet together on a regular basis with your planning committee and advisory committee to increase cooperation and a common goal.

Assign those officers and members who have speaking skills to a “Speakers Bureau”. Make this list available to Blue Lodges for their Masonic Education programs.

Develop a membership packet for new members. Include booklets and pertinent information that a new member would want and need.

Start very early. Most people cram too much work into too little time and not only lose effectiveness, but leave a sour taste.

Track your efforts and keep them going.

Build your infra-structure as strong as humanly possible.

Use as many twenty-first century methods as you can.

Experience has shown that it is wise to have team members go in pairs to work with prospects. Any solicitation must be done on a professional level, with dignity. Treat any prospect as you would want to be treated. Some prospects take more time than others to “pull the trigger”. Don’t push. Patience is a virtue and will be appreciated by those who wish to think things through.

Invitations should be given on a personal face-to-face basis. Please do not treat a prospect as if he were one of many. He must feel that he is important and needed.

Team members must be knowledgeable and able to answer any question candidates may pose. Have appropriate information with you, but don’t inundate a prospect with more than he can handle. Some are more curious than others. Prospects need to know that we practice what we preach.

It is not difficult to sell York Rite Masonry. We have a lot to offer. Remember, we get out of York Rite Masonry what we put into it. We do need good dues paying members, but we really need to men who are willing to share in the load. A prospect will thank you after he has been through the degrees and orders and has become a full-fledged member of your Bodies.

Dedicated, qualified leaders need to be elected and appointed to the chairs. The first regular convocation a new member attends will be the one he most remembers for a long time. We never get a second chance to make a first impression. Our officers should be leaders who see to it that the work gets done in an efficient, orderly, and pleasant manner.

The number one function of our Membership team and the officers of our Bodies is to do everything possible to increase membership and build the manpower and effectiveness of our Bodies. This duty must be attended to on a constant basis. As leaders, the team must devote its time to the cultivation of membership functions.

# **Assimilating New York Rite Masons Into the Bodies**

Bringing every new member into the active fold begins immediately upon his election into the Bodies. Notification of his election should be given to him in the form of a congratulatory letter. He will need to be assured that he has made the right decision and that his Masonic Education will continue and would be incomplete without his taking this step. He should be given the dates of the Festival and what is expected of him as he arrives.

The Degrees and Orders should be performed in such a manner as they at moments he will treasure and never forget. They should be performed in a dignified, meaningful manner. The ritualistic work requires your best and most talented ritualists. It will certainly be more impressive if members of his Lodge who belong to the York Rite Bodies are there to encourage and congratulate him. Please don't insult his intelligence or give him the wrong impression of York rite Masonry by reading the parts or performing them in a poor manner. Every candidate deserves our best efforts.

Also, the performances of the degrees and the time in between should be so efficient that no lost motion can be found. Everything must be well timed. The stage manager should insure that everything flows and all are rowing in the same direction. Men who can no longer perform or who do not have the talent to perform need to be encouraged to work in other areas. There is no part that is "MY" part.

After the degrees and orders have been completed, each candidate must be greeted warmly and allowed to express his thoughts. Each man should be given a job – regardless of how small. We need to get every new companion and sir knight involved – right then and there. Each candidate should be assigned a mentor (preferably his first line signer) who should give him instructions about the customs, traditions, and history of the York Rite. The mentor will need to take his new York Rite Mason under his wing until the new man is thoroughly oriented and comfortable.

The membership committee will want to follow up on each candidate to insure continued interest and activity. The sooner the new York Rite

Mason is contacted, the more likely he will be to become a part of a vibrant, exciting organization.

It is important to remember that men vote with their feet. That is to say, that with so many organizations and activities pressing each of us for a part of our time, we select those things which interest us and gravitate toward them, often to the exclusion of another activity or Body. We vote with our feet. We travel the direction that most interests us. We must never forget that we are competing for the time of men. We must succeed if our gentle craft is to continue on for our successors. Contact and interest are essential if we want our new members to feel needed and important.

We live in the information age. Men are busy and they mostly live in the fast lane. They are pressed for time. They want to know that they are trading that valuable commodity of time for something worthwhile. The moment they feel an activity is not worthwhile, they will vote with their feet. They must gain a feeling of belonging to sense fulfillment.

We need to get past the trap of “titles” and just be ourselves. Very few men care about all the regalia we wear and the initials each of us could place behind our names. They only care that we care.

Give it the most careful thought and attention. In order to assimilate new men into our beloved York Rite, we must make that all important first impression. Display the leadership needed to get the job done and make it happen.

## *Retention is Critical*

### *NPD Personal Contacts*

Equally important to attaining new members to the York Rite is retaining those we already have. In the past several years, we have witnessed a mass exodus from our rolls, both in demits and NPD's. This trend is a strong indicator that we are failing to pay the price of doing the work and are content in "playing" the game. We talk the talk, but do we really walk the walk? A letter asking for a demit and/or unpaid dues are cries for help. They are signals that we need to wake up and take notice. Somewhere, in someone's life, a decision has been made that a man is not receiving value for his investment.

It is the responsibility of the Retention Chairman to personally contact each of these men and inquire as to the reason(s) for this action. It cannot be overemphasized that the Retention Chairman plays a key role in the health and welfare of each York Rite body. Each contact will bring a new challenge for him, but he must make the call. Sometimes a member may be moving, other times his health may prevent his activity, and sometimes, he may simply no longer feel the need of belonging. Each case must be handled with love and care and individually.

Each request for demit and/or NPD has assumed the same vows each of us has, and he must be treated with the same dignity and respect that will effectively and firmly remind him of his commitment and allegiance. Should he be ill or financially unable to keep up with his dues, ways and means can be taken to assist our member.

Care must be taken with NPD's that each man is still a current dues paying member of his Blue Lodge. If not, then your Body has no option but to release him.

Otherwise, any man in jeopardy of going out of the York Rite as an NPD, needs to be contacted about his situation. The Secretary/Recorder can do much to help the Membership team in this area. Use his talents, understanding and information wisely. Have a plan of implementation and follow it. Remind each man that he is needed and he will be leaving behind a great deal of fellowship, Masonic Education, and opportunities for service should he opt out. Be proactive and work hard to retain each member.

## *Obtaining Restorations and Affiliations*

When a member is suspended, there is still a chance that he may be restored into the fold. Often, his situation is traceable to finances, as opposed to dissatisfaction on his part. In recent history, many York rite Bodies have lost members due to the new Shrine membership requirement, and some are now beginning to want to return to the York Rite. The Retention Chairman should frequently review lost members to determine whether they may now wish to return to active status again.

The same holds true for demitted members. Do not ignore the fact that he may be ready, willing and able to re-affiliate. The Bodies must be aware of the reason for demit. Bodies should review the inactive rolls annually to determine if there are any who might be ready to petition for active membership.

We must not suffer from the belief that once lost, always lost. It is time to open our eyes to the fact, that in our economy, financial conditions may change at any moment. The Membership team must take the initiative to seek out those who can and will restore and affiliate.

No one knows how many members could have been returned to the folds over the years. That, however, is no reason to “bite the bullet” and start now to contact these men. How many would be receptive to a kind word or deed? We must show that we care enough to be gracious to these men. The rewards of reinstatement far outweigh the efforts it will take to get in contact with the wonderful men. We must show our concern for the lost.

## *Stimulating Interest and Attendance*

Value is the one thing men are looking to receive. Are we offering our members value for the hard earned dollars they pay in dues? Do we offer Masonic Education at our Convocations?

Leadership is very important in all our activities, but never more than in offering stimulating meetings and activities for our members. Good leaders find ways of interesting men to work for the Bodies. There are countless ways of stimulating their interest. Each man must be made to feel that he is a vital part of the team, not spectators.

Opportunities for service include:

- Committee assignment
- Ritualistic work
- Festival work
- Stage Manager
- Costuming
- Meal preparation
- Speakers bureau
- Publishing a monthly newsletter
- Organizing nights to honor Blue Lodges, etc.

A little thought will reveal many more ways to utilize the talents of the memberships. Men will respond to an opportunity to serve. They will attend the Stated Convocations and be an active part of them. Ways to stimulate attendance include the following:

- Honoring Companions on the month of their Birthday
- Awarding of Service pins and certificates
- Recognizing achievement for Masonic or civic service
- Having a past presider's night
- Receiving and honoring outstanding Masons
- Celebrating the anniversary date of your Chapter

By a little creative thinking, the leadership of your Chapter can significantly improve attendance and participation in your local Bodies. Be bold and try them.

## *Conclusion*

It has been the goal of this booklet to assist each local York Rite Chapter in its efforts to improve its membership base. It must be realized that no work can be accomplished in this world without exertion. It is therefore imperative that each local Chapter give the ideas in this booklet a try.

The time has come to put aside any “good old boy” networks and begin to utilize the talents, enthusiasms, and energies of those men who have plans and ideas to offer. We cannot afford to lose this good ship York Rite to those who cannot or will not do the work. We have too many companions who are more interested in rank, pomp, circumstance, and title than they are in serving the craft. Men who seek power, prestige, are stubborn to change, read their parts, insist on having their way, never offer anything for the good of Chapter Masonry, and/or encumber the progress of this beloved Fraternity, must now be gently and lovingly set aside in favor of newer, more energetic men who are willing to boldly step out in faith and are willing to take the risk necessary to turn the ship. Else, we will soon see the end of York Rite Masonry in the United States. As stated in the introduction, a look at the numbers will prove this statement true.

We must now find the men who will take a personal interest in membership and growth. We must return value for the investment of our members. We must be willing to change.

Your Membership Committee is both grateful and indebted to General Grand High Priest, Most Excellent Benny Allen, for allowing this booklet to be accomplished and to the Grand Encampment for its wonderful ideas on Commandery campaigns, from which much was adopted.

*“We have come up thus far to help, aid, and assist in the noble and glorious work of rebuilding our city and the House of the Lord, without the hope of fee or reward. Will you go up?”*