

## MASONIC CULTURE

I wish to leave you with just a few thoughts on "the culture" of an organization.

**Organizational culture** is a system of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs, which governs how people behave in organizations. These shared values have a strong influence on the people in the **organization** and dictate how they dress, act, and perform their jobs.

My experience is that there are a few simple but key areas that one may look at when assessing an organization's culture; one area may be the parking policy - does senior management have the best designated parking spots? I was told by someone who worked at CSIS that at that organization parking is based on seniority, regardless of position in the organization; if the Janitor had the most seniority, he had the best parking spot. Perhaps this is related to the life-risks associated with this organization. Another area to assess may be how the Christmas Party is organized - does senior management sit together or are they mixed with the staff members. Who eats first?

We need to ask ourselves about our Masonic Culture, and I believe that it varies somewhat amongst the different Grand Bodies. Are decisions made through open discussion on the floor of the Grand Body, or are the big decisions made by Past Grand First Officers or a few chosen honoured individuals in some back-room meeting.

At our banquets are Grand Body officers interspersed amongst the brethren or are they grouped together to facilitate further business-related discussion.

We need to be especially cognizant about our cultures at our social events, especially with friends and ladies. When I began my first full-time job, a manager (who was a Freemason) spoke to me about the importance of 'turning off' work when we go home. In many ways, our Masonic meetings allow us an avenue to clear our minds, to turn off our daily routines. We also need to turn off our Masonic business when we are at social events with our friends and ladies.

When I attended one Grand Convocation in the U.S. several years ago, at the Meet & Greet event, it was difficult to hear the entertainment because of the loud business-related discussions still going on, even after meeting together all day. The Master of Ceremonies found it necessary to comment, which to me was embarrassing.

A few years ago on my official visit to a Masonic meeting in Thunder Bay my wife and I attended a Lodge's Ladies Night. Formalities were purposefully kept to a minimum. A few distinguished members were acknowledged (including myself), but there were no speeches.

I spoke with the W.M. of the Lodge about this, he indicated that the format had been chosen purposefully. The result is this Lodge is doing very well and is designated a Cornerstone Lodge.

Brethren, as leaders, we must always be cognizant about the message that our culture presents to our members and to our friends and families. Most importantly, on social occasions we need to 'turn off' our Masonic business and give our attention to the world around us; just a few words to think about.

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