

Branding

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Freemasonry is not an inclusive organization. It is extremely exclusive and offers a refreshing yet demanding environment within which good men can make themselves better. Its demands are many and challenging, starting with the three questions to the candidate about his belief in a supreme being. The challenges as he approaches to take his obligation, the constant trials and challenges to determine and ensure that he has understood the secrets and can prove himself. And in the process, he takes himself away from being a volunteer in a voluntary organization to being a committed, obligated and dedicated member of society.

But how do we present ourselves to the World? I want you to think about that.

I speak a lot about the high value and the importance of Freemasonry. Indeed, in June 1979, I was addressed in that chair with these words ***“...in like manner it will be your duty to communicate light and instruction to the brethren. Forcibly impress upon them the dignity and high importance of freemasonry and charge them to practice outside of the Lodge those excellent precepts which are ever inculcated within it, so that when a man is said to be a Mason the WORLD AT LARGE WILL KNOW that he is one to whom the burdened heart may pour forth its sorrow, to whom the distressed may prefer his suit, whose hand is guided by justice and whose heart is expanded by benevolence.”***

One Saturday morning recently I heard a CBC radio broadcast called “The Age of Persuasion”. The program dealt with branding. In the intro the presenter referred to the pace of progress using as an example the phone system.

When I was a boy my grandparents phone number was Ryton 300. To call another number you dialed a few digits, no more than three. Anything else you dialed 0 and asked the operator to get it for you.

Later seven digits were introduced. The system derived from the widely adopted theory of a psychologist who wrote a book called “Seven -- plus or minus two” in which he postulated that the human brain could only remember 7 +/- 2 things in short term memory (and these lessened with age!)

Branding is a means by which we see or read something, a symbol, a name, an image or a word, and it immediately creates a long list -- many more than seven

things, feelings, memories, and ideas, associated with the brand name. Think Coca Cola, NHL, Ottawa Senators, McDonald's.

Consider three brands

1. Clint Eastwood is a brand. (He is not referred to as Clinton Edward Eastwood the third). He is an actor who 30 years ago played small, inconsequential parts. Then he became Dirty Harry and began to play a particular part, a stand offish, loner, outcast or misfit, violent, but capable of tenderness. A good guy who was capable of bad acts. Sort of like Robin Hood (an ageless brand). He was a Hollywood icon within a year and has lasted as such through the TV era
2. "The sixties" In the 60s, there were many, rapid changes. I know. I was there. (But seem to have missed a few things I didn't appreciate at the time!

Think of the 60s and a long list of things immediately spring to mind

The Beatles

The pill

Chicago

Flower power

SEX

Woodstock

Anti war protests

SEX

Vietnam

Long Hair

SEX

Abortion

Rapid change

Sex

Expo 67

Trudeaumania

Boeing 707

And that's just me. Many more then seven.

3. Queen Elizabeth. *Her Majesty Elizabeth the Second, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, Ireland and the British Dominions beyond the Seas Queen, Defender of the Faith,[2] Duchess of Edinburgh, Countess of Merioneth, Baroness Greenwich,[N 1] Duke of Lancaster, Lord of Mann, Duke of Normandy, Sovereign of the Most Honourable Order of the Garter, Sovereign of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Sovereign of the Most Ancient and Most Noble Order of the Thistle, Sovereign of the Most Illustrious Order of Saint Patrick, Sovereign of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Sovereign of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, Sovereign of the Distinguished Service Order, Sovereign of the Imperial Service Order, Sovereign of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India, Sovereign of the Most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire, Sovereign of the Order of British India, Sovereign of the Indian Order of Merit, Sovereign of the Order of Burma, Sovereign of the Royal Order of Victoria and Albert, Sovereign of the Royal Family Order of King Edward VII, Sovereign of the Order of Merit, Sovereign of the Order of the Companions of Honour, Sovereign of the Royal Victorian Order, Sovereign of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem.*

She was the only female royal to serve in the armed forces being a driver in the British Army. Can drive a truck and strip an engine, train dogs (one of the best in the World) pigeon fancier, horse breeder and rider. She has known and worked with 12 UK PMs, 10 Canadian PMs and 12 US Presidents. She has outlasted, as a cultural icon, many others. Despite the progress of TV from no TV, to B&W sets with one channel to High-Def, 3D & hundreds of channels and a 24 hour news cycle. Her private life and that of her family has been subjected to extreme scrutiny & public exposure.

And all of this is conjured up in an instant when we hear or see the Words "THE QUEEN"

So what has this got to do with Masonry?

Well, what does this mean to you?



Friends

Fellowship

Virtue

Morality

Faith, Hope, Charity

Good times

Ladies nights

But what does this brand mean to others? Others who are not masons?

I want you to think about that

To your wife? Nights without you? Ladies night?

To your friends and colleagues? A bunch of antediluvian old men dressing up in aprons?

To others? Dan Brown? The source of a good subject for a best seller?

Note please, that when we see the Coca-Cola or the McDonald's brand it is not aimed at just their owners and employees; they are conveying a concept to people outside of their company, customers and potential customers. They want people to "get it".

As masons we would be well served if our Brand meant to the world at large what it means to us.

Grand Lodge has just released a Long Range plan. It contains four principal Strategic Objectives

We will embrace Craft Stewardship as a responsibility to future generations of Freemasons in Ontario as well as a critical component in the conveyance of Masonic excellence to our current membership

We recognize that our membership and their families represent the heart of Freemasonry in Ontario and that the culmination of our efforts are intended to result in a richer experience for all our members and their families.

We will communicate in an effective and consistent manner using the most appropriate method to reach the target audience and to facilitate dialogue when needed.

We will ensure that the operations and governance of Grand Lodge, as well as the numerous local Lodges in Ontario, are managed in a manner which is effective, sustainable and efficient.

Note that there are four key points in this. Craft Stewardship, Membership and their families, communication and operations and governance. You can, and should, aim to have every activity of the lodge, every committee, fall in to one or other of these categories

Perhaps our logo should look like this:



Enabling good men to make themselves better

The Holy Bible which we use as the VoSL and is open on our altar for every meeting contains these words:

“Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick: and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

“Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven”

Brethren I charge you this: Let your light shine