



Toward a More Active Council

*A Guide for Grand Knights and
Future Council Leaders*



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*New Hampshire State Council
Knights of Columbus*

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Toward a More Active Council

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I offer my special thanks to George (Skip) LaPierre for his efforts in proof reading and editorial review of this edition. Skip's wit and humor made the revision process an extremely enjoyable task. My thanks to Barry Rondeau, FDD and Steve Riley, FDD for their review of the book and suggested changes to increase its impact while making it more digestible to its intended audience. And least I not forget, my wonderfully artistic sister Revelle Taillon who is responsible for the delightful illustrations throughout the book.

Dedication

To my wife, my lover and best friend Sue,

For her unending love, support and understanding

For the joy, peace and fulfillment she has always brought to my life.

To my parents, Frank and Claire (LaPierre) Taillon

For providing me a true model of love
in their 62 year love affair with each other.

To my Mom,

Who taught me to be strong in my convictions,
Proud of my heritage and focused on the care of others.

To my Dad,

Who taught me that wisdom comes from doing,
That success comes not in always knowing how to do
something, but being willing to always try,
That joy in life comes in touching others' lives
and being open to letting them touch yours.



Publisher's Note to the Second Edition

When I decided to write this book I started by asking myself what I expected it to accomplish. Some of these goals were very clear while others were developed during the actual writing.

The key reason for this tome is that I want to document my beliefs about Activity, Involvement and Repeatable Practices. And I want to show that there are other effective alternatives to methods that are Recruitment-Only focused.

Secondly I want to offer others a different way to measure the life, health and growth potential of local councils than the Net Membership statistics in current use within the Order.

Personally I am using the book as the basis of my plan for growth of the NH State Council as I serve as its State Deputy

I also want other people's ideas and suggestions to make this message stronger, easier to understand and able to be adopted by others. If you have ideas or just comments about the book please forward them to me at G.Taillon@Comcast.net or send them in care of Dragon Press, 111 Willard Way, Plaistow, NH 03865.

Initial reaction to the limited first edition has been very positive and the feedback for small changes to the content of this second edition will hopefully improve its readability and use as a leadership training tool. I again am very appreciative of the additional reviewers' time spent and constructive input.

— Greg Taillon
July 2007



My Journey into Knighthood

About 20 years ago, I was serving on a Pastoral Council that was moderating a Parish Forum. The intent of the forum was to get into the open, issues, ideas and feedback from the parishioners.

During the lively discussion, I kept hearing about a group called “the knights”. I heard “*the Knights do this . . . ; and the Knights do that . . . and the Knights are involved in this and that . . .*” etc.

Despite having belonged to a number of parishes while serving in the Air Force and having recently returned to the New England area, I had not heard of the “knights”. A little bit unconsciously I blurted out “*Who is this group called the Knights?*” A voice in the back of the hall replied spontaneously “*Greg, after the forum, I’ll tell you all about them!*” That was my introduction to the Knights of Columbus and to, what I found later to be, one of the most active councils in New Hampshire.

During the subsequent discussion about the Knights, with the individual, who had replied to me from the back of the room; I was told what this local organization of men did in support of their Church and Community, as well as what they had scheduled in the near future with regards to activities and events that I and my family might want to get involved in. I was also asked how my interests in the Parish and Community might be supported by the knights. And these became my primary reasons for joining the Knights.

Being actively involved in Scouting at the time, the Grand Knight’s appearance at a Pack Signup that I was holding in the Grade School impressed me. When I asked him why I as a brand new member deserved such support, he told me two things that I have never forgotten. This is just what knights do in support of each other and that he was the Grand Knight of ALL knights in the Council both new and old and what each of them did were very important to him. “**WOW!**” I thought



“Did I ever join the RIGHT organization!”

From day one, since signing my application for Membership, there was an expectation expressed by the Grand Knight that I would not only become involved, but that I would progress through increased levels of responsibility as a chairman, director and officer. I remember the Grand Knight¹ often saying to us new members, “This is you Council! What do you think that you can do to make it better?”

When I began to serve as Grand Knight, I remember thinking about what I had experienced as a new member and tried to focus my attention on two areas that this Grand Knight had emphasized through his actions: **Activity** and **Involvement**.

With my officers and directors, we evaluated what we had done in previous years and set goals for increased activity. We planned for this activity by setting up an events calendar as well as planning how we were going to put new members to work and keep them busy. During the two years I served as Grand Knight my council reached their New Member Recruitment goal the first year and the second year achieved a 300% net gain in Membership and was recognized as a Star Council. All of this growth occurred without any formal Membership Drives.

The reason I tell you this story is two fold.

1. It relates the effect that Activity, Involvement and positive expectations can have on a new member and
2. It relates the effect that they can have on the growth of a council.

Thus the major message of this book is:

“Increase Activity and Involvement within your Council and it will grow in membership, retention and service.”

¹ The Grand Knight was PGK Don Richardson of my local council in Plaistow, St. Jude #6617



Toward a More Active Council

What I relate to you in these chapters represents experiences, observations, learning and proven practices collected from brother Grand Knights, District Deputies and Membership Directors at both the local and state level as well as my own learning as a Council Membership Director, Grand Knight, District Deputy, State Membership Director and State Officer.

I encourage you to make what you read your own, by modifying or enhancing these techniques and ideas to the specific and unique needs of your own Council. Please drop me a line or email (G.Taillon@Comcast.net) about your own experiences and ideas on the topic. Shall we begin?

God Bless,

Greg



Section One: Introduction

“Attitudes set the boundaries of accomplishments!”

We begin by relating the importance of our attitude, because it sets the boundaries of our potential accomplishments. What I believe I can not accomplish is nearly always NOT accomplished. And so the opposite can be stated! What I believe and expect I can accomplish is most always accomplished. **“Success comes in CANs and not CANNOTs.”** Independent of all the work ahead, it is our positive and expectant attitude as leaders that will have the most impact on the success of our councils.

“Independent of all the work ahead, it is our positive and expectant attitude as leaders that will have the most impact on the success of our councils.”

If you give a council a challenging goal to improve its activity and involvement and deliver the message with a positive and expectant attitude, you’ll see results. If you are skeptical and unconvinced that positive change is possible, your council will be also. And no plan, no matter how sound will secure positive results. We start by checking our attitudes to ensure we can deliver the message of positive change.

God has endowed us all with powerful and creative minds. Expecting your council’s progress and success challenges them to deliver creatively on the goals that you set. When I first joined my council it consistently raised around \$3,000 during its annual Tootsie Roll drive year after year. One year a newly elected Grand Knight called a meeting of the committee to set a new goal for the coming year. He asked the committee to really stretch themselves in setting this goal. On the night of the meeting, the new Grand Knight arrived a half hour late on purpose. By the time he arrived, the committee had already set the goal at \$5,000, which they all felt was indeed a stretch. The Grand Knight listened quietly as the chairman explained the



new goal and how it might be reached. The Grand Knight then thanked the committee for their work on the goal and asked them if hypothetically the goal was \$10,000, would they have done anything different. *“Well, we’d need to get the financial support of local businesses and we’d have to increase the number of days of the drive”* replied the chairman. Another committee member added *“We’d also have to expand the number of workers and ensure we have better coverage for each two hour timeslot.”* After a few more general needs were offered, the Grand Knight suggested to the Committee that the new goal be \$10,000. The committee replied that a 70% increase moving from \$3K to \$5K was a stretch but a more than 200% increase to \$10K was just impossible, hypothetically or not. The Grand Knight explained that the new goal **WAS** possible as they had already come up with ideas to accomplish it. All’s that was left was the details. He then asked them not to focus on whether the goal was possible, but to assume it was, focusing their efforts on the **“HOW”**.

This expectant “can do” attitude of the Grand Knight was passed on to both the committee and the council that year and the \$10K goal was reached. As a footnote to the story, the following year the goal was raised to \$12K, but the council only raised \$11,800! The second goal was missed, but a total of \$21,800 was raised, for the two years, instead of the accepted \$6,000 it would have been. This increase of \$15,800 (\$21,800-\$6,000) that had been achieved is labeled a success in most people’s books!

“Attitude sets the boundaries of our accomplishments!”

The Grand Knight brought his positive and expectant attitude to other council projects, events and activities during his two year term. By growing the scope and service goals of these projects he necessitated more involvement of council members both new and existing. The result was a substantial increase in new members in both of his 2 years and the years that followed; an increase in the retention of existing members and such an increase in delivered service that the Council was recognized as “Council of the Year” at the State Convention



during both years of the Grand Knight²'s term.

This is just one story of which there are thousands within the Order. They show us that Attitude does make a difference. It is the quintessential characteristic of a successful leader of any organization. With the ideas I expect you to gain from this book; I believe that if you add a positive and expectant attitude that not only you, but your Council, District, State and our Order will be extremely successful in meeting the needs of our Church and Communities.

"Any fact facing us is not as important as our attitude toward it, for that determines our success or failure." -Norman Vincent Peale

² The Grand Knight in the story was PGK, FDD Barry Rondeau of the Plaistow #6617 Council.

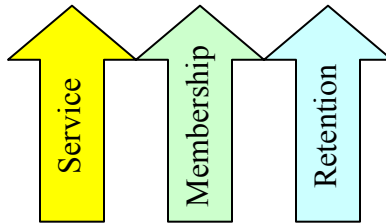


Isn't it all about Recruitment?

If you haven't guessed the answer by now, let me make it very clear. **NO!**

Please understand what is being said here. I am not saying that Membership is not important. It is VERY important and the lifeblood of every council. What is being said is that Recruitment alone only temporarily increases membership, while increasing Activity and Involvement has a three fold effect.

1. It increases the level of service delivered to our Church and Communities
2. It more permanently increases Membership and
3. It increases Retention of existing members.



This may be a fundamental change in thinking for many, as most organizations measure progress in the only quantifiable fashion they believe they have available to them, i.e. the net of Recruitments minus Suspensions. While this is easy to measure to many decimal places, there are gapping flaws in this approach.

- It doesn't measure the Level of Service being delivered.
- It doesn't measure the Life and Health of a Council.
- It doesn't measure the Level of Involvement.
- It doesn't measure the Long Term Viability of a New Member or a Council.
- And it delivers Cyclical Results

I will take these one at a time and try to explain their short comings as I see them.



Net Membership doesn't measure the Level of Service being delivered

Membership Statistics do not help us measure the level of Service being delivered by a council. And despite organizations rewarding the very best service projects, such as our Order's Council, Church, Community, Family and Youth Service awards, this does nothing to measure the total level of service being delivered even at the winning councils. While there's nothing wrong with recognizing service excellence, it doesn't encourage or recognize Councils who deliver high levels of Service in terms of hours expended and percent of Involvement. It is these councils that are best in delivering on the intent of our founder. Consider this: If you were a sales manager would you only recognize the salesperson with the highest single sale or would you also want to recognize the salesperson with the highest total sales, even if he accomplished this without any flashy accounts or big ticket sales transaction?

"it is the cumulative hours of service that a Council delivers and not a single project that identifies its true worth to its Parish and Community."

Using the chart below, which sales rep is contributing the most to the company's bottom line? Obviously it is Sales Person 1.

	Sales Person 1	Sales Person 2
Sales Budget	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000
Highest Single Sale	\$200,000	\$1,000,000
Total Sales	\$5,000,000	\$3,000,000

It is the cumulative hours of service that a Council delivers and not a single project that identifies its true worth to its Parish and Community. We should find a way to measure that.



Net Membership doesn't measure the Life and Health of a Council

If you've had the opportunity to work closely with other Councils or if you've worked under a number of different Grand Knights within your council, then you may have seen what some call the "*flash in the pan*" syndrome. It occurs when a new and energetic Grand Knight through his own efforts makes a previous low activity council come alive for a year or two. But when he adds "Past" to his title, the council reverts to its previous passive state. While Membership goals are often achieved during this term, unless the Council has a plan for the involvement of these new members with an agenda of activities, events and projects, it is very likely the new members will lose interest without the energized leader and slowly become suspensions.

Membership statistics do not measure the size and breadth of a council's Activity & Involvement. Since these are the real magnets of acquiring new members and retaining existing council brothers, we can really miss the point if we rely only on membership numbers. Our Columbian Award from Supreme attempts partially to address the activity side of a council's overall health, but it only documents that a limited number of events have been carried out by the Council (i.e. four events for each of the five Service Areas). It does not measure the number of hours or the percentage of involvement the Council achieved in any of these twenty events or any additional services the Council conducted. If one accepts the premise that Increasing Activity has a direct and long term positive impact on Council growth, we should be measuring it.

Net Membership doesn't measure the Level of Involvement

Many times council members experience burnout when a small group of brothers are involved in every event and activity of their council. New members may not feel part of the Council if every event is being conducted and staffed by existing



members. Without a planned utilization of these new members, this situation can lead to both suspensions and even lower levels of involvement. As long as the Council is recruiting, Membership Statistics can report that things are good, even if the council might be showing serious signs of pending inactivity and disinterest on the part of the new members recruited.

Using Membership Statistics as a primary measurement tool doesn't accomplish or report how many members are involved in the activity of the council. Shouldn't the Grand Knight know who and how many members are involved in the activity of their Council? Councils need a better involvement ruler or at least a tool.

Net Membership doesn't measure Long Term Viability

Net Membership statistics do not tell whether a new recruited member will make it his first couple of years within the council nor whether a new Council or existing Council will keep its members active and retain them to continue the work of the Order. The biggest problem with most net numbers is that they are only a snapshot in time. Granted we could retain Supreme's monthly reports and attempt to track our on-going retention ourselves, but this would only apply to the current Grand Knight and would represent too short a time frame to identify trends. What is needed is a long term and on-going measurement of the Council's average retention rate. At least 5 to 10 years of history would be needed. This trend line could act as a warning of the need for changes in the Council's level of Activity and Involvement. I believe Supreme has the raw data for this type of quantifiable measurement and this type of reporting could help our Grand Knights by providing them the rate of their council's retention and if it is increasing or decreasing.



Net Membership delivers Cyclical Results

Some might see this last flaw as the most harmful in using and rewarding Net Membership gains each year. This might be due to the fact that the pressure to recruit without the need to retain leads to a vicious cycle of Recruit – Suspend – Recruit – Suspend as is seen at the local Council, District and State levels. Many new Grand Knights (myself included) were handed a fist full of suspensions by their predecessor; who may have held onto them to retain their

“Behavior is often matched to the measurement we employ. Reward people for raw numbers and they’ll find creative ways to deliver them to you.”

modest gains in new members to achieve a Star Council award. If a Grand Knight serves a second year it is normal to assume that they’ll be tempted to do the same thing to the Grand Knight that follows them. Many Past and current Grand Knights have told me that they have felt pressured or at least strongly persuaded not to process suspensions by District Deputies or State Deputies who are attempting to archive their own net-membership goals or awards. I can’t really blame those involved in this process, but instead see the flaw in the Net Membership Standard. Behavior is often matched to the measurement we employ. Reward people for raw numbers and they’ll find creative ways to deliver them to you.

Summary

Despite the flaws we have discussed previously, we continue with this flawed measurement process (Net Membership) for two reasons:

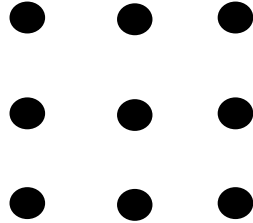
- 1. Its easy to quantify and measure and**
- 2. Its something we have always done**

Since I have already discussed the ease of reporting net membership numbers, I will focus my attention on the second reason.

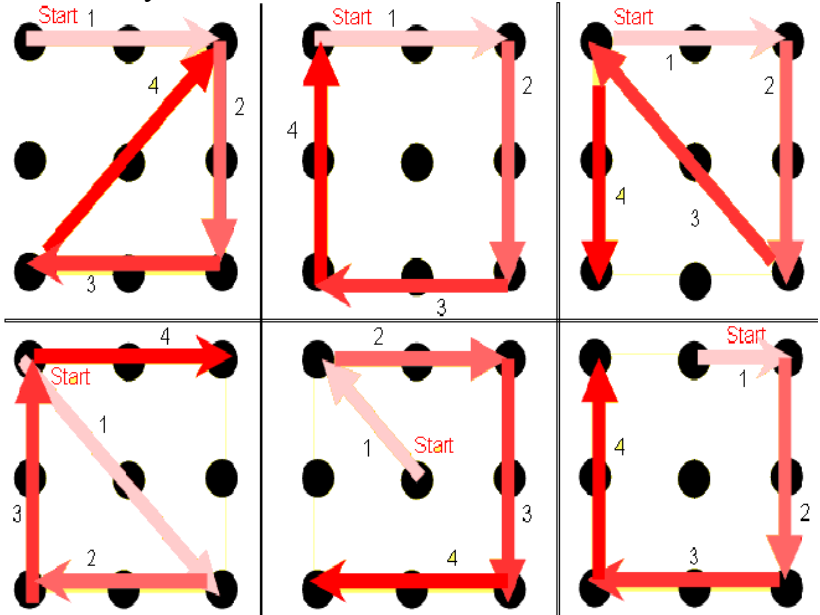


Here is a puzzle for you to solve. Connect all nine dots with four straight lines. The only rule is that once you start you may not take your pencil off the paper.

Draw 4 straight lines to connect all 9 dots without taking your pencil off the page.

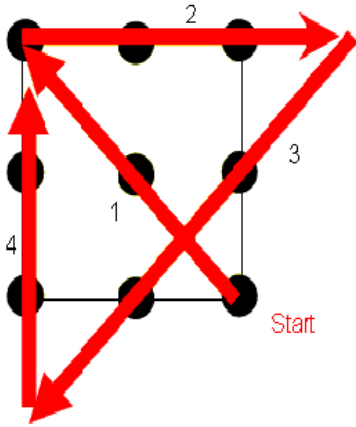


Below are a few attempts that you might have tried. Each one leaves you with one dot not connected.



The solution requires a different way of thinking, yet it is easily solved. It is displayed on the next page:





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What you might be thinking after seeing the solution is “Hey, you went outside the 9 dots!” But if you look back, you’ll notice that it was never stated that you couldn’t. If your attempts to solve the puzzle stayed within the boundaries of the 9 dots you should realize that it was a self imposed boundary.

“To find really, creative solutions we need to sometimes think outside the box.”

Far too often we are stuck within those 9 dots. Doing things the same way they have always been done. To find really, creative solutions we

need to sometimes think outside the box. I would suggest that both our Order and we as Local, District and State leaders could come up with more creative and constructive measurements than Net Membership. I have suggested some possible ways this might be done, and I know there are others that could be developed and implemented if we are all willing to look beyond the usual ways we have always done things. I believe that there are tremendous opportunities to help our Councils, Districts and State Councils to grow. As previously stated, I believe that “*Growth begins first with an increase in Activity, Involvement and Service.*” This increase will generate long term growth in Membership and improve Retention. Our current focus on Membership Statistics is backwards and detrimental to the progression of an organization’s growth. I offer this not as a criticism of our Order but instead as a suggestion for change and reflection. What follows are ideas for how to implement this change in thinking, within our councils. If it is successful there, then changes in the way Supreme measures will hopefully follow.



How do we build more active and involved councils to cause candidates that hunger for activity to come knock at our door asking “*How do I join your organization?*”

I am confident that increasing activity and involvement works as I know from my experience within the Knights that Active people are attracted to active and involved organizations!

Definitions: Activity, Involvement & Service

The remainder of this book is broken into three sections. The first two address *Activity* and *Involvement*, which ensure that councils grow and remain strong enough to deliver *Service* to our Church and Communities. The third section covers *how to become a Repeatable organization*. The discussion will focus on ways to setup our programs, activities and planning, to deliver repeatable and continued service into the future. While these are not hard concepts to understand, they are general and not specific terms. There are all kinds of *Activity*. There are numerous ways to view *Involvement*, and finally there are different types of *Service* as well as how one might view the objective, mission, or reason we are delivering that *Service*.

I will give my definition of these terms now and later explore the details of these concepts.



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“Activity is a measurement of the actions, events and projects a Council accomplishes within a given timeframe that benefit our Church, Community and Council Family.”

Activity can be viewed as a measure of what your organization does within a given time period. The activity must be generally open to your entire Membership. The other aspect of Activity is the degree to which your membership wants to be involved in those events. If your council holds two sports related events per month, one would think that as

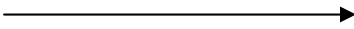
far as Council activity goes, you are very active. But to brothers with little interest in sports there is little to do in your council. This example also applies to Family; Church; Community and Youth activities. Remember

“Variety is the spice of life!”

As we each have a diverse set of backgrounds, experiences and interests, so too does what we chose to be active in need to have diversity and variety. Activity needs to have a direct or a significant indirect benefit to the people we serve. The activity involved in your Tootsie Roll Drive provides a direct benefit to mentally challenged people in your community. While a social that fosters fellowship within your Council Family may retain existing members and offer an invitation to new families to join our ranks. This social activity provides an indirect benefit to our Church and Communities, because those members retained or recruited by it are now available to work projects with direct benefits, such as your Tootsie Roll Drive.

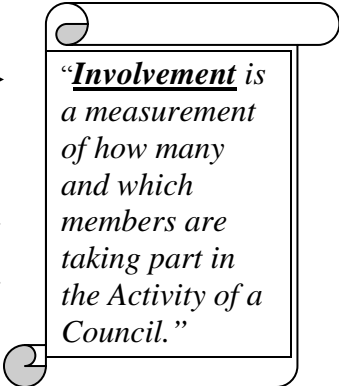


Involvement is another concept that on the surface appears easy to define and measure. We just need to count up the number of brothers that showed up and divide the total by how many knights we have in our council. If twelve brothers showed up for the function and we have 120 knights in the council, therefore we have a 10% involvement for this event. This is one measure of involvement but does it tell us enough about the Involvement to help us affect either Membership or Retention in a positive way?

Here's a different definition to consider: 

Two key points can be gleaned from this definition.

- 1) We need to know who is getting involved and
- 2) By tying involvement to our definition of Activity, we can make Involvement time related as well.



***Involvement** is a measurement of how many and which members are taking part in the Activity of a Council."*

To accomplish this, we should be measuring our Involvement over a specific period of time.

The "who" aspect of Involvement can tell us where we are succeeding and where we need improvement. How you measure this aspect should relate to your own Involvement goals which we'll discuss setting in a later section. But for this discussion if we assume you have set a goal of increasing the involvement of new members with less than 2 years of service or maybe you set a goal of getting members with grammar school aged kids (or grandkids) more involved in Council Events. You'd want to measure the involvement of all activities with one or both of those member characteristics for a clearer picture of involvement, which is really not that difficult to do.



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Simply categorize your Council Roster into these groups and poll each council event's attendance. The following table provides a simple example of how you might do this:

Members Attending	New Member	Young Kids (or Grand kids)	AGE GROUPS			Totals
			Young 18-35	Mid 36-60	Senior 61-99	
Alan Able	1	1		1		1
Bob Baker		1			1	1
Calvin Cats			1			1
David Doe	1			1		1
Ed Els		1		1		1
Fern Frank	1	1	1			1
Greg Gold		1			1	1
Harry Hill	1	1			1	1
Ivan Igman			1			1
John Johnson	1			1		1
Keith Kellogg		1		1		1
Louis Lavalle	1	1	1			1
Total Attended	6	8	4	5	3	12
Total in Council	12	40	20	60	40	120
% Involvement	50%	20%	20%	8%	7.5%	10%

The example shows 3 categories that the Grand Knight might want to track:

1. If the attendee is a New Member
2. If the attendee has young children (or grandchildren)
3. and Age Group of the attendee.

Your council's should be related to the goals you set and want to measure. Hopefully you can see how much richer in value this type of measurement would be. It not only tells you whether you are making progress on your goals but identifies who you need to target for more involvement in activities that will appeal to them. It also can help the event chairman to realize the need for possible changes to his project that would attract the target audience you are attempting to get involved. You'll also be able to give the chairman a specific list of members that he can contact for ideas to implement these



needed changes. The list shows also whom he should be soliciting help from to work the event. By now you should understand my slant on defining and measuring Involvement. We'll now move on to a working definition of Service.

“Direct Charitable Service
is the work or effort done by
council members that directly
benefit the needs of our
Church and Communities”

While Service can be viewed as anything we do, directly or indirectly, to assist our Church and the people of our communities, the definition above refines

this concept by focusing on direct charitable service that will most likely have a positive impact on the retention of existing members and the attraction of potential new members. The distinction is made for one reason. While donations of money are a definite part of Charity, it is primarily the work that helped raise that money that most impacts membership and retention. In some cases, donations of money that members have not had a direct involvement in raising can be a demotivator to their further involvement. While we still have a Christian responsibility financially to support the needs of our Church and the disadvantaged, we need to tie in service activity, whenever possible, to raising those funds. Or we might expand the financial support with other work or service actions.

Another area of Service that is not emphasized by the definition is work done to maintain a Council Home or building. Not that this work isn't important to meet the financial obligations of councils owning homes, but this effort consumes valuable and limited resources and members' time that might have been used for projects, events and activities that have a more direct impact on the needs of our Church and Community. Minimally if the fund-raising to support a home can be wrapped in a social event for the Council we gain potential benefits in building fellowship in our council family. We might also want to combine raising money for supporting



the financial needs of our parishes, youth and community organizations or a local charity. In this way, our members can feel like they are addressing both a charitable service as well as a council financial obligation.

I will expand more on this new definition of Service in book. Throughout, we'll also be using the terms *Retention* and Membership *Recruitment*, so it might be a good idea to define or make clear the meaning of these two terms as well.

“Recruitment is the activity of marketing and processing of new members into an organization.”

Recruitment is the process that brings new members into our organization. In itself, it tells us very little about their potential success as members or the duration of their membership. While this important process provides the raw material

of a council, it is a rather poor measure of council growth. Unless coupled with a formal New Member program that documents a plan for new member development and involvement, we are likely to see these same names on a potential suspension list 18-24 months from their 1st degrees. Many organizations reward Net Recruitment versus long term Membership growth. This practice promotes a vicious cyclical ride in an organization's membership ranks. We see Councils, Districts and State Councils having good years immediately followed by poor years in Membership growth. I'm told by many Past Grand Knights I've talked with that my experience during my first year as Grand Knight was not unique. I was handed 54 suspension notices from the previous Grand Knight. To put this in perspective, our council had about 120 members at the time. Two years later we were at 300% of our Membership quota and thus the See Saw effect.

From conversations I have had with other Former District Deputies about this subject, stories relating similar suspension dumping during a first year of a State Deputy's term and pressure or strong influence to hold the line during their second



year have been related to me. I've confirmed the existence of this practice in other state councils with brother knights that I've met and talked with at the three Supreme Conventions I've had the pleasure to attend. That this behavior occurs at the Council and State Level is a symptom of the real problem: ***the measurement that motivates it***. We will talk more on this point later.

“Retention is the process that keeps existing members active and involved.”

Retention is many times viewed as whom we didn't suspend. This is an “*after it's too late*” approach. If we call a brother who hasn't paid his dues for the past few years and attempt to convince him to pay up instead of being suspended, even if we are successful, we are probably putting off the inevitable. A better way to look at Retention is as a process that keeps existing members active and involved. This process is not a subtle difference but one of significant change in both our planning and approach. Saying “Whom do we need to suspend” versus “whom do we need to get more involved” requires a radical change in behavior and mindset by your Council. It also requires serious self-reflection on what we are doing or not doing to have lost the interest of an existing member.

Just as we need to plan for new member involvement, the activity, involvement and inclusion of existing members also needs our attention. As I expand and elaborate on the main premise of this book, I will be defining retention in this proactive way and giving you specific help to plan for it.





**Notes Page for Your ideas on the
Introductory Remarks**



Section Two: Activity - A Path to Council Growth

Passivo,
The Dragon
of Inactivity



Once upon a time, there lived a dragon named Passivo. He was also known as the dragon of inactivity, as Passivo loved peace and quiet. Any doings out of the ordinary were addressed by him in the most severe way he knew possible (like roasting and eating the trouble makers). After a while he was able to convince the people of the village, called Ourcouncil, to continue their existence in a rather bland and unexciting way.

As time went by, the villagers got older and more receptive to becoming quite passive. This made Passivo's job much easier. Some of them, who in their youth had caused the dragon



much grief by always holding social gatherings, fund raisers for the poor, work parties for the local church and doing good deeds for the less fortunate of the village, were now retiring to warmer parts of the kingdom or slowly dying off.

Despite efforts of the village elders to encourage young families of other villages to move to Ourcouncil, most were unimpressed with what the village had to offer. Those few, that did come, found themselves becoming bored and disenchanted within a relatively short time. They felt no strong connection to the village despite the invitation to attend the village's monthly business meetings. Nor did they feel they were being included by the elders in the decision making needed to run the village. The result was that most new villagers quietly left after a single season.

This pleased Passivo to no end, who mused: *"Finally I'm through with those rabble rousers, and being a dragon I can wait out the short lives of those who remain. Someday in the near future, Ourcouncil will be no more, and I'll have nothing but Peace and Quiet!"*

But things are not always as they appear to be, or appear to be moving into the future. What Passivo didn't count on was a new village leader appearing in Ourcouncil, who brought with him strong armor and mighty weapons to bring Activity back to the village. He had plans and the will to capture and imprison the dragon. And once under lock and key, he would pass on the responsibility of guarding the village from the dragon to the future leaders that would follow in his footsteps. Why he even set increasing goals to improve the activity and work of the villagers so that even if Passivo escaped, the noise, excitement and good will that would come from the village would drive him off to a quieter part of the kingdom.

How did this leader (you) succeed against this mighty foe? **Activity!** I'll now explain its power and effect.



Why it works

By now you have a clearer understanding of the importance of Activity. I believe it to be close to a panacea to declining membership growth and poor retention of existing members. Show me a council in trouble and in decline and I will show you a lack of Activity that is impacting their Recruitment and continued Retention.

As a District Deputy, I had a council in my district that only had a very small core of members who might be considered active. When I asked what they were doing to increase their Activity, the Grand Knight told me that he just didn't have enough members to run any other projects than the few they were already doing. He further told me that until they got more members, nothing else could be done: A classic Catch-22. *"I can't increase Activity without an increase in members and I can't increase members without an increase in Activity."* If this were really true there would be no such thing as Membership growth in new or existing councils. Actually just the opposite is true. Increased Activity nearly always promotes growth in Councils. Even a number of small activities with little or no cost can spark a positive recruitment process for your Council.

Why does Activity work? The answer lies in one of the underlying reasons why people join organizations. People are looking for things to do! Otherwise they'd stay home and watch TV. Secondly, people want to belong to organizations that do good things. So our task as leaders is to make our councils organizations that are actively doing good things. It sounds too simple doesn't it? So knowing the primary motivations of new members, a great opportunity is lost if new members are not specifically asked to work on a current or up coming project or event. One Grand Knight related to me that when he asked existing members they often said, *No*, so he didn't ask new members figuring that they'd say no also. I related to him an experience I had as a brand new District



Deputy. I was attending a council meeting of a brand new council where only the Grand Knight and the Financial Secretary had been knights before the council was founded. The Grand Knight was talking about the projects and events they had planned for the coming months. When he finished explaining each project he would point to one of his 15 new members and say *“Fred, please chair this project. John and Pat, please work the Fred on it.”* He’d then explain the next project and do the same thing with 3 different members. By the time he was finished, everyone in the Council Chamber, including himself, had been assigned to one or more projects. Surprisingly no new member said *“No”* or *“I can’t”* They simply answered *“Yes, Worthy Grand Knight”*

After the meeting was over and I was alone with the Grand Knight I asked him: *“Randy, how did you get away with assigning those projects without ever asking if anyone would LIKE to serve as a chairman or work on a particular project?”* He simply turned to

me with a smile and said *“They’re all new 1st Degrees. They don’t yet know that they can say No!”*

“The real lesson of the story is that new members want to get involved, Activity is one of the primary reasons they joined in the first place.”

While I know that members do and should have the right and ability to choose what and when they want to involve themselves, this is not the point I want to make. The real lesson of the story is that new members want to get involved, Activity is one of the primary

reasons they joined the Knights. The Grand Knight in the story simply acted with an expectant attitude that affirmed the members’ goal of joining. We might not all have the opportunity that Randy had, but we can all assume that our new members have joined for the same activity reasons. We also can have a few specific projects ready to assign them right after their First Degree. A council might even assigns the projects at a candidate’s interview with the Admission Committee. In this way the council would be making clear the level of activity it expects of new members.



But what if they still say, **No**? Don't worry about it! Most new members will view your activity expectations as a requirement of the organization they just joined. In the rare case a new member is not able to be involved due to family or job responsibilities, pose the question "*How would you like to be involved?*" to them. Be positive and be expectant of an answer from them. What will also help is if you have prepared ahead of time a short list of tasks that need to be done in support of the Council's efforts that could be accomplished in a member's own time and most likely at his home. Here are a few examples:

- Sunshine Club (responsible for sending Birthday cards to members each month)
- Securing Mass Cards for newly deceased members
- Maintaining the Council Mailing List and roster
- Compiling the Council's Scrapbook each year
- Being responsible for part of the Council's Calling List
- Authoring the Council's Newsletter
- Reproducing and/or mailing the Council's Newsletter each month
- Documenting each Council event and activity in the form or a "How To" guide.

Each of these tasks can be completed independently at home during the member's free time frame. They all foster a strong connection with the Council and its members. I'm sure that there are others unique to your council that you could add to the list. It will allow you to focus on **HOW** your new member will get involved and not **IF** they'll get involved.

If a new member still doesn't want to become active, the problem may lie in your Admission Process. The expectation that new members will become active and involved needs to be set before their 1st Degree and not after, something that you as the Grand Knight should be able to rectify easily with your committee members. If during the Admission Interview, a simple statement is asked of all prospective candidates, such as "*It is our expectation that our new members become active and*



involved in the activities and events of the Council. Would this also be your intent in joining us?" the issue of a potential inactive new member can be discussed and its impact greatly minimized. It would be far better to hold off enrolling a candidate until he can commit to becoming involved than to bring on a member with little interest in the activity of your council. The postponement is not only beneficial to the Council but to the potential candidate as well. The Council should want their experience with the Knights to be positive and rewarding, for the new members will have great influence on who might become future members.

Increasing the Activity of Existing Members

So far I have talked a lot about the importance of Activity and attempted to view this concept from the new member's prospective, - "*why they want to get involve*". We should also explore the Activity level of our existing members and how we might increase it. We first ask ourselves "*Why do knights become less active and sometimes allow their membership to lapse?*" Without an answer we can not find a cure. It is prescribing medicine without knowing what the patient is sick with.

One Grand Knight told me that his suspensions of existing members were from their being either bored, burned out or feeling disenfranchised. While these feelings are symptoms of the problem, they are not the right things to address. It is lack of Activity and a plan for progression that are more likely the root causes of these suspensions. And it should be the direction that your council staff focuses on to address the issue of Retention in your Council.

Just as a new member can lose interest from a lack of Activity in his new council and not feel that he is a part of the organization, the same thing can happen to members with many years of tenure in an organization. Your actions to increase activity within your Council will benefit both new and existing members. As I have already elaborated on Activity, I would now like to discuss the other issue I listed "*planned progression*".



Having one or a few members run an annual or reoccurring event has benefits. Hopefully they learn how to run the event or activity more efficiently and are exposed to insights into the event that the one time or casual worker is not. In addition there is a pride of ownership that quickly develops in the chairman of a successful event or activity. Unfortunately this experience, wisdom, organization, and procedures are retained in the memories of one member. Attempts to get the chairman to document a “*How to*” manual of his event are often resisted as unnecessary or even a threat to his ownership of the event. Many Grand Knights will not want to address this issue as they see it in a “*Don’t fix what’s not broken*” perspective. Pity the unfortunate Grand Knight who is in office when the chairman burns out and he resigns from the event. Here is a more positive way to view this situation.

View it as an opportunity to increase both Involvement and Activity within your Council. While we will talk more on the subject of Involvement in the Next Section of the book, I want to show here how it is related to Increased Activity. The simple truth is that the more members you have involved in the existing projects of your Council, the more likely you will be able to expand Activity in the form of new events, projects and charitable efforts. In this case, convincing the seasoned chairman to work hand and hand with a new member will deliver two important assets to your Council.

1. A new member who is a more knowledgeable and capable worker and potential council leader and
2. The opportunity to re-channel an existing member’s (the existing chairman) efforts to new projects and events

As far as the documentation of the established project, you can make this an assignment as part of the new member’s involvement. At the same time you can tell him to expect that you will call on him to train other new members on this project in the future. This need not cause fear or loss of control on the part of your seasoned chairman. He remains your Subject Matter Expert on his old project while being your “*Ace in the hole*” for any new major project you ask him to help you get



off the ground. Nothing stops him from returning to the comfort of the old project. What you and he might find though, is that this change can be revitalizing to both his level of council activity as well as to his old project. Having the fresh mind of the new member involved can produce a myriad of new ideas and approaches that may prove vital to the continuing success of the established project.

Good leaders often find the looser they hold on to something, the more control they have. The same is true of the seasoned chairman. The tighter and more restrictive he is to the ownership and control of his old project, the harder it will be to see necessary changes or ideas for improvement. By releasing control of the everyday details to a new member, the seasoned chairman can view his project from a new perspective. As he trains the new member and answers his questions, the chairman will also have the opportunity to examine details of the project that he has always assumed were necessary or the only possible way.

Several results of this Activity Progression include the following:

- A successful existing project that has been critically reviewed and documented by an objective new member
- A trained project chairman who can backup the existing chairman
- A new member that not only is actively involved in a major Council Activity but one that shares a pride of ownership with the existing chairman
- A bond of friendship and fellowship between an existing and new member
- A revitalized existing member that can apply his previous experiences, organization and leadership talents to new endeavors of the Council
- A potential new project planned, staffed and implemented
- An increase in Activity and Involvement in your Council



The fall out from not addressing this issue is:

- A potential stagnated undocumented project with no trained backup leadership
- Potential burnout of an existing member
- Fewer activities to involve your new and existing members in.
- Less availability of seasoned chairmen to head new projects.
- Less Activity and Less Involvement

Setting Goals for more Activity

So we've established the need for increased Activity within our organization, but how do we make it happen? **The answer is to simply plan for it.** As simple as this sound, many new Grand Knights take over the reigns of their councils without a thought-out, personal goal for their Council or a plan to make it happen, which is understandable in a moderate to busy council. There are many status quo issues to deal with; a new role for the new Grand Knight to learn and a flood of information coming from their council, their District Deputy, their State Council and of course Supreme. If planning does not precede taking office on July 1st, many new Grand Knights will find themselves caught up in the protocol and parliamentary procedures of preparing to run their first Business Meeting. They also will be busy searching for volunteers to fill vacant director and chairman positions and attempting to assimilate new information from documents mailed to them from Supreme. They will also have handouts or guides from their State Council and verbal advice received from many, many sources within and outside their council.

All this well meaning advice becomes overwhelming and an atmosphere of self-survival sets in! Even if the Grand Knight knows that he should be planning, the need can take a second priority to keeping his head above water. Even after the first few months of dealing with the trappings and stress of these new responsibilities, the need for planning may still not bubble to the top of his priority list. Before he knows it, he is caught up in the issues of the same old projects the council does each year. He blinks and he is discussing State events and



meetings, and then someone mentions the Council Christmas party. In another blink of an eye he is dealing with the annual State Convention and immediately after the Council elections. The Grand Knight might think “*Wow! Where did the time go?!?*”

Unless you’re a Past Grand Knight, it will be shocking to you how really fast the year will go. Without planning where you want the Council to proceed, you will be left with the status quo events and activities of the council. As far as goals are concerned, you’ll only have the default ones that Supreme set for you. (i.e. Increase net new members by 5%; increase insurance members by 2.5%; run 4 projects in each of the 5 service areas and complete/submit all your forms.) But even the accomplishment of these goals will still have required you to plan.

So let’s step back in time. Let’s go even further back than when you were elected Grand Knight. Let’s return to the date you signed your membership form and took your First Degree. What if someone told you that they expected you to run for Grand Knight in maybe 5-10 years? Wouldn’t you have been better prepared? Wouldn’t you have been more observant of the Past Grand Knights as they served their terms of office? Wouldn’t you have been interested in where your Council was excelling and where it needed work? Well, of course you would!

While it’s likely no one gave you this forewarning and long range expectation, there are still ways to set up both your goals and plans to accomplish them, even if you are reading this well into your term of office. My purpose in bringing you back in time is to emphasize the opportunity you have now as a Grand Knight to set these expectations with your Council’s future leaders as they join your organization. Since you won’t know which members will become Grand Knights, it is extremely important that you set these expectations with **ALL** new members. And once your term of office is complete, it is equally important that you continue to support these long term expectations with the new members brought in during your



term. Your motivation, advice and positive fostering of these new members can produce strong, planning and effective leaders for the future of your council.

Let's come back to the present and discuss ways you can be successful with your plans for the remainder of your term of office. Since we can't change what has happened in the past, or even the last 5 minutes, let go of that history! Focusing your attention on the past and what should have been done can be both destructive and limiting. Whatever baggage you are now carrying, Let it go! What has happened HAS happened. It cannot be changed. We can only plan for the present. Please notice that I didn't say "Plan for the Future". I said "Plan for the Present". We can not live in the future, nor do we know what the future will be. The only time we live in is the Present. This is also the time we must plan. Scheduling time in the future to start your planning can be just another way to put the task off. *"I'll start my planning after council elections."* *"I'll start planning after July 1st when I take office."* *"I'll start planning after I have found all my directors and chairmen."* *"I'll start: next month, next term, or when I get the time for it."*

It may seem like it is easier to put planning off into the future, but when that future comes it will be the Present with less days remaining in your term of office. It being the Present right now, just do it! It's really not that hard, it only requires an open mind, a little bit of imagination and a positive expectant attitude. Here's some help: Think into the future to the last day you'll be your Council's Grand Knight. How does your council look different than today? Have you held more social events than the previous year? Do more of your brother knights know each other? (Especially your New Members), Do you have an increase in the number of new and existing members actively involved in the events/projects of the Council? Did your Council run 20-30% more events in all the service areas than the previous year?

While these questions may not relate directly or exactly to the growth needs of your Council, hopefully they will get you in the right frame of mind. The first and most important step in



this process is to dream and visualize what you would like your legacy as a Grand Knight to be. When your Council thinks about your term as a Grand Knight, what would you like them to think of? The following are sample vision and goal statements to help answer that question:

Note: In the blank line following “**Goal:** To increase by” enter either a percent figure or where appropriate a specific number.

Vision: “*When Your Name was Grand Knight . . .*

“ . . . we became a more active council. We were always doing something”

Goal: To increase by _____ the number of all events/activities that the Council completes in all 5 Service Areas.

Vision: “*When Your Name was Grand Knight . . .*

“ . . .brothers in the Council all knew each other, even all the new members!”

Goal: To increase by _____ the fellowship of brothers in the Council with each other and new members.

Vision: “*When Your Name was Grand Knight . . .*

“ . . .we became really involved in helping our pastor and parish. And you know what? Men from the parish were and still are asking us to join the Knights.”

Goal: To increase by _____ the Activity of the Council with regards to Church events and projects.



Vision: “When Your Name was Grand Knight . . .

“ . . .we really reached out to address the needs of our local community”

Goal: To increase by _____ the Activity of the Council with regards to Community events and projects.

Vision: “When Your Name was Grand Knight . . .

“ . . .New Members were expected and did become Active Knights. And most of them have become Directors and Officers in the Council.”

Goal: To increase by _____ the Activity of New Members and integrate them into the Council into a planned progression of responsibility and position.

Vision: “When Your Name was Grand Knight . . .

“ . . .many of our inactive members that we have not seen for many years were personally invited to come back and get re-involved in the Council Activities. I’m told by our FS that suspensions are down to nearly zero.”

Goal: To increase by _____ the Activity of existing members by reaching out to their interest and their talents.

Vision: “When Your Name was Grand Knight . . .

“ . . .I became more proud to be a knight of our Council! We worked together, we socialized together and we prayed together. We became a much closer Council Family.”

Goal: To increase by _____ the Activity of the Council Family with regards to Family, Social and Worship type events/projects.

If any of these hit an emotional chord, take the goal below



them and make it your own. If there are other things that you would like to be remembered for, then use the samples listed above as examples to make your own vision statement and goal. You don't need to be overly detailed at this point. We will refine the goal shortly. Just by reaching this point you have taken a tremendous step toward your goal: ***You now know where you want to go.***

Write your new vision statement(s) and goal(s) on the lines that follow:

Vision: _____

Goals: _____

Vision: _____

Goals: _____

You will use this page often throughout the remainder of your term so I'd suggest you fold down the top corner of the page for easy reference to it. Our next step is to quantify our goal. It will allow us to measure our progress toward its completion. While I'll try to help you here, you'll need to take most of the initiative to set an increase that is appropriate to the growth needs of your council. When asked by Grand Knights how much should they set for a reasonable goal, I try to always reply "***THINK BIG!***" No matter what you want to achieve, always set a goal that is a bit higher. This will stretch and challenge your Council and allow it to accomplish a level that was higher than it would normally expect possible. (Remember the story about the new Grand Knight and his setting a new goal for his Council's Tootsie Roll Drive.) Robert Browning, in the quote that following, says it all:

*"Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
or what's a heaven for?"*



How to Set a Service Activity Goal

How do you find a number that will cause your council to be both challenged and have a good chance of being successful in reaching that level of Activity? If you set your increase in Activity too low, say a mere 5%, the increase may appear as just the status quo and will not provide much of a challenge to your Council. On the other extreme, setting a goal of 300%, unless your council is doing nearly no activity, could appear to have been set without any reasonable chance of being achieved, discouraging Council brothers who have little belief that the goal is possible. The way to find an appropriate number is simply to count the number of projects, events and activities your council completed last year.

Total the number for each category and it will give you a Status Quo or Baseline of your Council's Activity level. Your job now is to determine a reasonable increase for each service area. If your numbers are in the single digits you might want to bump them all to 12 (1 project/event per month). Your activity goal(s) now becomes *"Increase each service area activity to one event per month"*.

If you are already in the two digit numbers for most of the five service areas consider focusing on those that are not. For example let's say last year you ran 10 Church; 5 Community; 12 Council; 4 Family and 13 Youth events, then your focus should be to increase Community and Family activity within your council. With this opportunity one might want to set the goal for family and community to 12 or one might think bigger and raise the other three by 20-30% as well giving you an increase across the board while still focusing on your 2 biggest needs. You might ask all your directors to come up with ideas for more projects than the goal you give them to provide them with backup projects in case some do not get done.



Toward a More Active Council

Here's an example of how this might look:

Church	Community	Council	Family	Youth
New Song Books	Old Home Day Booth	Las Vegas Night	Family Picnic	Teen Dance (Sep)
Parish Picnic	People Helping People	Monopoly, Tournament	Communion Breakfast	Teen Dance (Oct)
Fall Cleanup	Christmas Baskets	Scrabble or Trivia Pursuit Night	Family Fun Night	Teen Dance (Nov)
Easter Parking	Thanksgiving Baskets	Ethnic Night Out	Family Hay Ride	Teen Dance (Dec)
Christmas Parking	Town Square Cleanup	Fall Dance		Teen Dance (Jan)
Vocation Awareness		Spring Dance		Teen Dance (Feb)
Coffee & Donuts		Christmas Party		Teen Dance (Mar)
Support of CCD		Blood Drive (Fall)		Teen Dance (Apr)
Altar Server Party		Blood Drive (Spring)		Kids Christmas Party
Parish Rosary		Lobster Bake		Boy Scout Support
		PGK Dinner		Free Throw
		Council Pool Party		After Prom Party
				High School Sports Support
Total: 10	Total: 5	Total: 12	Total: 4	Total: 13
New Goal:	New Goal:	New Goal:	New Goal:	New Goal:

The worse that can happen is that only main events get run. The best that can happen is that your council runs all the events that are in the goal. Suppose your council is not large and you only have a small group of workers to call on. How do you run 12 or more family and community events? By inviting families from the parish you support to be involved in the events. Ask people within your city or town to help in your community events. This does three things for you.



Toward a More Active Council

1. It magnifies your work force allowing you to have a higher activity level.
2. It allows potential candidates to see first hand the kinds of things knights do, and
3. It advertises your council and the Order in a good light to those we seek to serve in our Church and Community.

What if you've a large and active council and maybe you already run 15 or more events in all service areas? Do you need to plan for more activity? **Absolutely!** The more members a council has the more important it is to have many activities for them to be involved in. It is also important to have a variety of functions/events that will appeal to the broadest range of members.

A large active council can also benefit from simply changing and improving the events/activities they did the previous year. First, you might try to determine to whom each event currently appeals and determine how to make it appeal to a larger audience. Another track might be to get more new members involved in each activity (see the previous discussion on how to do this). Lastly you might want to start the planning for the event much earlier. Do this with a group of existing and new members at a brain storming session at which you can solicit new ideas on how to make an event better, more appealing, and involve a larger number of members.

Each of these approaches has the potential to breathe new life and freshness into your council's existing events. Remember an increase in activity is our overall goal, and revamping existing projects to involve more members is just as good as coming up with a new project.

Now that you have considered what we have discussed, it is time to put either a percent or number increase in your goal statement. This step will help your council quantify the goal you will challenge them with. It also allows you to measure its progress. Have fun with these goals, make up a thermometer or column chart for each goal and fill in the progress at each business meeting.



Introducing your goals

Once you have your vision statement and activity goal, share it with everyone. And I do mean everyone! Family, friends, your council, your community, and your parish are the key initial contacts, but others, both groups and individuals, should also be contacted. Ideally, this communication can start with your new officers and directors at your first planning meeting. Continue at your business meeting with your brother knights, in your Council Newsletter, your Church bulletin and with your pastor, the next time you see him.

Why am I suggesting such a broad base of communication? I do this for two simple reasons. It creates commitment in your council to complete these goals and it provides an urgency to get started working on them. A journey of 1,000 miles begins with a single step. Publicity is your council's first step toward the goals you have set for it.

“Communicating goals creates commitment and provides urgency.”

Generating New Ideas

We know where your council is going and your vision of the future, time now to determine the “*What*” and the “*When*” of your Council Activity Plan. The *What* is the additional events whether new or revised that we need to hold, to meet each of your service area goals. The *When* is a tentative date on your Council's Fraternal Calendar. There are many ways to generate new ideas for Council events. Here's one recipe that has always gotten good results.



Recipe for New Event Ideas

Bring together the following:

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 part leadership | 7 parts event planning |
| 1 part wisdom & experience | 1 part fresh outlook |
| 1 part involvement | |

Blend in an open brainstorming process. Add ample amounts of positive expectancy. Place outside our 9 dots. Yields many new, creative and activity-generating event ideas. Prioritize and implement most promising ideas.

Let's discuss this recipe further. Here's a simple explanation of the ingredients:

- Leadership** = Grand Knight, who is responsible for positive expectancy; explaining the Brainstorming process and communicating Council Goals.
- Wisdom & Experience** = Immediate PGK provides prospective of past activity and events.
- Freshness** = New Member, who is unhindered by history and cognizant of activity needs of future new members.
- Involvement** = Chancellor, responsible for the involvement of Council Members
- Event Planning** = Council Directors (Program, Service & Membership), responsible for the planning of service and membership events and activities.
- Brainstorming Process** = An exercise to generate many new ideas out of which will be selected those that have the most promise of meeting activity needs/goals.

At this brainstorming get together, your job as Grand



Knight is to communicate your goals, explain the Brain Storming process and then to motivate the participants with your positive and expectant attitude. You are also the watchdog for negativism and “*Inside the Box*” thinking, and this is an extremely important job. If comments like “*Oh that won’t work!*” or “*That’s not how we have done it in the past!*” are allowed to be heard uncurbed, they can totally shutdown the brainstorming process and limit new and creative ideas from being heard. Here’s how to brainstorm.

Brainstorming

To start with, brainstorming is not a process that develops only workable ideas. If you set out with this goal you’ll find yourself consuming a lot of time discussing to great detail only a few ideas. Brainstorming is an exercise whose goal is to generate as many ideas as possible in a relatively short period time. It is quantity and not quality that you are shooting for. From this cache of ideas will often emerge a few gems that can represent a completely out of the box and creative approach to what you are brainstorming, in this case new or revised events. Here are the few rules or steps that I try to follow when conducting a brainstorming session.

1. Explain to the participants what they are brainstorming for (i.e. ideas for new events or revised events)
2. Explain the rules of Brainstorming
 - a. No idea is a bad idea. (even a terrible idea can be the stepping stone for a new creative one)
 - b. No comments or remarks about anyone’s ideas(s) are allowed. (Criticism no matter how well intentioned, shuts down participation)
 - c. You can expand, add to or modify anyone’s ideas as long as the new idea can stand on its own.
 - d. All ideas are recorded on a flip chart or white board as they are offered. (this promotes new ideas from the group) (All ideas should be given a sequential number as they are recorded.)



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- e. The recorder may summarize a person's ideas before writing it as long as the idea is not changed. What the person who offered the idea said is what should be recorded not what someone believes they meant. (The recorder should always ask for confirmation "*Is this what you meant?*")
 - f. All ideas are fair game and encouraged. The wilder and off the wall the better. There is no sacred or protected ground. All past and present events are up for consideration.
3. Pick the top most promising event ideas. Have everyone pick their top three ideas from the list. Give first choices 3 pts, their second choice 2 pts and their last choice 1 pt. When everyone has voted tally up the points. Re-list the ideas with points from highest to lowest. This now gives you your list for new events to fill out your Activity goals.

Note: If you are brainstorming for ideas for events for all 5 service areas, your recorder can group the ideas by the 5 areas.



The Event Calendar

Now that we have ideas for the new and revised events, we'll need to schedule them into our Council's Event Calendar. You may feel you are not ready to schedule an event that doesn't have all its details defined (i.e. Chairman, Location, Committee, Costs, etc.). But if you wait for those to be settled you can easily lose track of the event. Tentatively putting the event on our Event Calendar will help set a positive level of expectancy, expectancy that it will be successfully held and run. If it's actually on the Calendar its planning and progress can come up for review each Planning and Business meeting. This adds to the level of expectancy by providing the impression that the event is real and will happen versus just an uncommitted idea for something we might do. The calendar also provides your Service, Program and Membership directors a scheduled plan for working activity in the present. With all the events of your Activity Plan on a single calendar, scheduling conflicts between the different director's events can be easily worked out and synchronized, as they are the people who will be populating the Council Event Calendar.

The final benefit that I see in this approach lies in the completed calendar. It can be an excellent management tool for you to use to measure your progress, your staff's progress and the progress of your Council in meeting their Activity Goals.

Two common questions you will be often asked about adding new events to a Council's Event Calendar are:

"What if an event has to be rescheduled?"

And

"What if we can't get a Chairman for a new event and it has to be cancelled?"

These questions tend to reflect a sense of uneasiness in scheduling tentative dates on the calendar. My answer is to ask them if they had ever had to reschedule or cancel a social engagement at home.

"Of course!" they answer.



So what happened?

“Normally we just find another date”.

So what’s the difference in having to reschedule a Council Event?

None! It happens all the time, so don’t worry about it.

Your council Event Calendar is really a Plan for Activity. The dates are not fixed in concrete. Setting tentative dates for events is a positive way to improve their likelihood of coming to fruition. More details in constructing a Council Event Calendar can be found in Section 4 of this book.

Communicating the Plan

When you agree to do something for someone, there’s an unspoken sense of commitment to follow through. Plans for future action can provide a similar feeling of obligation and required follow-through once they are communicated. The broader you publish your Council Event Calendar, the greater the sense of commitment there will be among you, your officers, directors, chairmen and Council brothers to make the events occur. Here’s an example of a simple communication plan to make the details of a Council Event Calendar public. Notice that you want to take a different approach with each audience. I’ve listed just a few here, but you may have other distinct audiences that you’ll want to get the word out to. Use the blank table at the end of this section as a template to set a tailored communication plan for each of them.

Audience:	Council brothers and their families
What to Communicate:	The entire plan
Method:	Printed handout and Council newsletter insert
When to Communicate:	Next Business Meeting after your directors meet to fill in the plan.
How to Communicate:	Ask each brother which event they would like to co-chair or help with



Audience:	Parish Communities of the churches your council supports
What to Communicate:	The next 6 months of Church, Community, Youth and Council/Family social events
Method:	Insert into Parish Bulletin Pulpit announcement by Grand Knight
When to Communicate:	Every three months or sooner depending on the activity level of your council.
How to Communicate:	Request their involvement, participation and support, especially for projects that benefit their Parish

Audience:	Local School Systems
What to Communicate:	Youth Activities and Events
Method:	Through the Principals Office or a Teacher within your council
When to Communicate:	September and January (for school year events) and May (for summer events)
How to Communicate:	In person with a printed schedule they can consider when they are scheduling their own calendar.

Audience:	Community Organizations
What to Communicate:	Community Events
Method:	Newspaper article, Copies of your Council Newsletter and via personal letter to their leaders.
When to Communicate:	Newspaper article (Quarterly) Council Newsletter (Monthly) Personal Letter (July and January)
How to Communicate:	Send a personal letter to each leader requesting their support in the events and minimally to communicate to their members about the events.



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Audience:	General Public
What to Communicate:	Community, Youth and Social Events
Method:	Newspaper articles, Community Cable TV announcements, Local Radio Station community announcements
When to Communicate:	Monthly or Bi-Monthly
How to Communicate:	Provide a liaison (or Public Relations chairman) to the newspapers, Cable TV and local Radio stations within your area. The PR chairman should email or paper mail the details of each event the month before. Communication Companies (TV, Cable & Radio) are required by license to provide Public Service.

Audience:	Sister Councils
What to Communicate:	Council Events, Degrees & Membership Events
Method:	Copies of your Council Newsletter and email/paper mail correspondence to their Grand Knights.
When to Communicate:	Quarterly for events, Monthly for Degrees
How to Communicate:	Email, Paper Mail or Phone call to their GK

Audience:	
What to Communicate:	
Method:	
When to Communicate:	
How to Communicate:	

This communication effort makes a great job for either a new member or for an existing inactive member you're trying

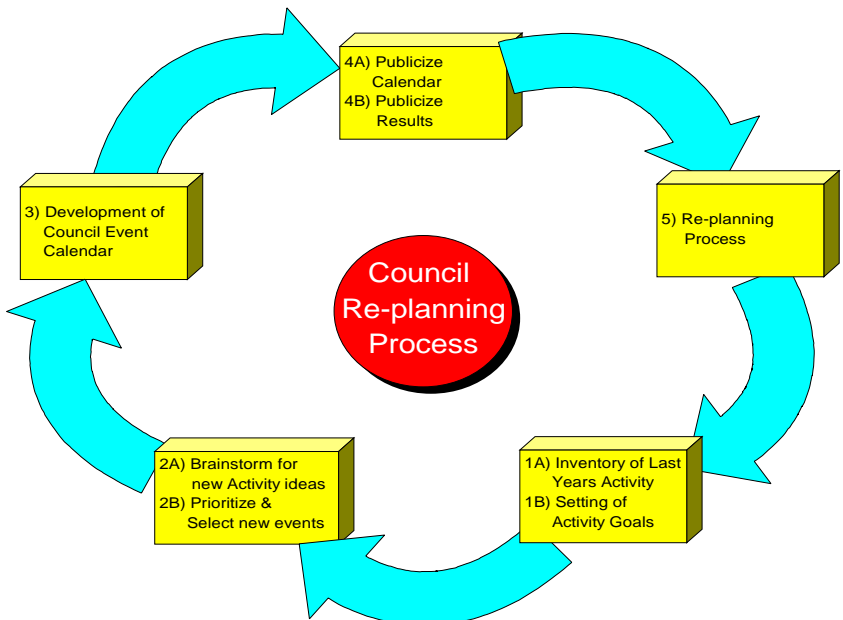


to re-involve in the council. Most of this work can be done on the phone or via the mail (paper or email) with the only exception being the Council and Parish announcements which the Grand Knight should address personally. Some of the audiences you'll want to communicate the plan to should be updated each quarter or every other month. In this way changes and additions can be communicated as well.

Another job related to communicating your plan is the reporting of the results of these events, which also can be done by another new/or existing member. They could co-chair the activity with the member handling the event announcements. Not only will you benefit from the communication of your Council Events Calendar, but if you treat this as an activity in itself, you can get additional members involved.

Re-planning

We have now set new activity goals, brainstormed new event ideas to fill those goals, scheduled those events and made our Calendar public. While this is great progress toward



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becoming a more active council, one small yet important step needs to be added to our Activity Plan. This is a Re-Planning effort. It makes your Council's Activity Plan a closed feedback loop that allows the process to continue and live past a single Grand Knight's administration. This step can also make the Council the owner of the process versus a specific Grand Knight, important both in keeping the new activity we have introduced and allowing new ideas to influence what the Council does in future years.

Re-Planning does not have to be of the same scope that developing a brand new Activity Plan was. It can be done each quarter or even each month at your planning meetings. You simply review the past quarter's or month's activity from the Event Calendar.

If the events were held and were successful, you may only need to re-schedule them for next year. If they were not successful, you can hold a simple brainstorming session with your officers and directors to develop new ideas to implement next time you hold the event. In either case your goal is to ensure that good events get rescheduled and poor events get revised or replaced and then rescheduled. Finally, have your Publicity Co-Chair document the results of the event and make them public.

If you continue this Re-planning Process, your Council's activity can be maintained at a high level or at its potential without major changes in the Council Schedule or swings in its Activity level. Once a year, do a Complete Review of your yearly goals and adjust them as necessary. Your brainstorming session can be equally focused on ideas to improve existing as well as brand new projects. These improvements can fill the gaps created by any new Activity goals that are set by you or your staff. A good time for this review is right after your State Council's Annual Convention. If you know that you'll be succeeded by a new Grand Knight, invite him to take part in the review. His involvement will not only benefit his administration, but will greatly improve the likelihood that the entire Planning Process will be instituted as standard practice



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of each future Grand Knight, a very significant legacy for you
to leave to your Council.

Summary

When you have brought your Council to this level of Increased Activity, there is **No Turning Back!** You'll find that new activity is like honey to bees. It will attract new members as well as keep existing brothers interested and connected to their Council!




Notes Page for Your ideas on Activity



Section Three: Involvement - Becoming Inclusive



Xlewd,
The Dragon
of Exclusion

 Once upon a time, there lived a dragon named Xlewd. He was also known as the dragon of exclusion, as Xlewd allowed very few people to come in contact with him.

The dragon's lair was directly adjacent to a pathway through the nearby mountains where an internal spring existed. This being the only source of clean water within many, many miles, access to it was very important for the existence of the village of Ourcouncil.

After many battles with the villagers, Xlewd finally agreed to allow a small group of villagers to use the path to retrieve water for their village. These the dragon picked and memorized their faces as he was extremely suspicious of anyone new or



different. Even when some of the oldest of these villagers had died, Xlewd would not allow their sons to take their place until they started to look and act like their fathers and the dragon could not tell the difference. Eventually the initial water carriers became old and burnt out from their responsibility. They were now barely able to carry enough water for the current residents, never mind for the new families that the elders had been asking to join the village.

When men from some of these new families offered to help or re-negotiate with the dragon, they were turned down by the elderly water carriers. This rejection of their offer of help was partly out of pride, as this was their important duty that only they should undertake and partly from fear of changes that might be made in how this long time tradition was carried out.

Xlewd, being a fairly bright dragon, easily figured the dilemma the village was in. He reasoned, *“If I stand firm and only allow these old men to perform their water carrying task, it won’t be long before the new families leave and the existing ones die off. This will leave the village of Ourcouncil empty and I won’t need to include anyone new to violate the passageway of my lair.”*

As smart as he thought he was, Xlewd was in for a surprise. A new village leader has been elected in Ourcouncil. This leader knew that new blood must be brought into the village in the form of new families if it were to thrive. He also knew that they needed to be involved in all the work of Ourcouncil. His goal was to involve all able men in bringing water to the village, thus spreading the work out into teams that can share the daily work without burning out anyone. The leader didn’t appear to care what the dragon thought about this change. He had also made plans to capture and imprison the dragon if he would not re-negotiate whom he would allow to pass by his lair. Once imprisoned, the leader planned to train subsequent leaders to take on the responsibility of rotating this important work and of guarding the village from the dragon should he escape.

In this Section on Involvement we find out how the lessons



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of this story will allow us to build a more involved Council.

Becoming Inclusive versus Exclusive

At the heart of getting your membership more involved is the concept of “*Inclusion*”. To generate a feeling of belonging and ownership, you, the Grand Knight and your staff must communicate a strong and sincere desire for new members (and for that matter, ALL members) to be involved intricately in the workings of their Council. You do this, by actively soliciting their ideas, opinions and advice to the decisions you need to make as their leader.

Secondly, you need personally to request their participation in the planning, organization and possible restructuring of the Activity of their Council. Just a footnote here, we are not signing up people to work events, but instead to plan them. We are also not talking about general requests made from the podium at a Business Meeting, but instead personal face to face invitations to serve on one or more committees that tackle the Planning Process of your Council — a very different approach to involvement than what most councils and Grand Knights are use to. Some may even consider this a delegation of the authority that should reside with the position of Grand Knight. But to the contrary, if your focus is developing a sense of inclusion in your council brothers, you’ll see that their new connection with their council will bring about new ideas and perspectives that you’ll be able to use to make better leadership decisions for them. It will also bring about, in the members you involve, a sense of commitment and responsibility to the future success of the Council’s efforts to be of service.

You will come to understand that Involvement requires Inclusion. Most of us want to be considered part of a group or organization before extending ourselves in its involvement. While we might be willing to help out initially in organizations that we don’t have a strong connection to, long term dedicated involvement comes only as we develop a sense of belonging or inclusion in this group. This is why officers and directors are



more apt to attend planning and business meetings, while the general membership will stay home. Officers and directors have this strong connection and sense of inclusion through their elected or appointed positions. To involve your entire council you need to build a similar connection between the general membership and the running of your council.

In sharp contrast, councils where directly or indirectly, a sense of exclusion or “*private club*” mentality is projected, the opposite result often occurs. Members, especially new members, can feel that they don’t belong to the clique that runs their council. This clique made up of Past Grand Knights, current council officers and senior members of the council does not have to be blatant or deliberate about fostering this feeling of exclusion to have a drastic impact on the retention of new and existing members. Would you want to continue to belong to an organization that makes you feel unwanted?

While some council members may feel that it is the responsibility of the new members to get themselves involved, this approach rarely works. What’s needed here is a proactive effort personally to include as many members of your council as possible.

Involvement is a Full Time Job

Building inclusion into the very makeup of your Council is a task for a full time, self-confident leader. You can’t just ask for an opinion or idea on a once in a while basis or do it in a rhetorical sense where you are either just going through the motions or have made up your mind before you ask for possible dissenting viewpoints. You really have to believe that it is worth your own while and not just your Council’s.

One aspect of your success as a Grand Knight is what you goal the council to accomplish. We have discussed this to great length in the previous section of the book. The likelihood that these goals will get accomplished is strongly influenced by the number of active (involved) members you get to work on them.

The more members you involve, the more you can



accomplish. And what you actually accomplish is how you will be remembered and what you should be most proud of.

What does it takes to involve people in a common goal? If I have a paid employee I can simply ask them to do things for the compensation they are being paid. If I am a higher ranking supervisor in the military, my position (rank) allows me to direct the actions of lower ranking servicemen based on their pledge of obedience and committed service to their country. But now as a Grand Knight, I look out over my Council brothers and realize that neither money nor conscripted service motivates these gentlemen. They are volunteers who have chosen to involve themselves in the work of an organization they believe in. It is this relationship and sense of belonging that I believe has the biggest impact on how involved they will become. Our focus, then, should be on increasing this bond and fostering their participation in the planning and decision making of the Council. ***“But how do I as one person find the time to talk with 100, 200 or 300 members in my council?”***

One at a time!! Each member in your Council has important things to tell you about their involvement. You won't get this at Business Meetings, but instead through one on one conversations. Of course this communication process will go a lot faster if you can assign a few members to each of your officers, directors and PGKs of your Council. So let's see how that might work. Counting your immediate Past Grand Knight, you have ten officer positions. If each called only 2 members per month, you'd reach 240 members per year. If you have a very large council, say 300+, you can add your directors and maybe a few PGKs giving you another ten callers. That's a potential of twenty callers times two calls per month times twelve months or 480 contacts per year. If you have a smaller council (<100 members), you'll be able to repeat the process say every 3 or 6 months. Obviously your mileage may vary, but hopefully you see what is possible.

Who do you call first? Well, one way might be to do it by Birthday month. Distributing the work across the months and including a mix of new, existing and senior members of your



council. It also gives a perfect opening line to the caller by simply wishing them a “Happy Birthday” before chatting with them for their opinions, ideas and advice.

What to Ask Them

The issues of councils differ greatly, just as the activity goals you have set will be dissimilar to other Grand Knights, so it would be difficult to offer one set of questions that would work with all councils. Instead let me offer you a possible starting script and some topics you and your officers might want to use. Please add to these as is appropriate for your own Council.

“Hi, this is _____ (Your Name) _____ and I’m calling on behalf of our Grand Knight _____ (His Name) _____. As I see your birthday is (was) this month, let me first wish you a very Happy Birthday. Secondly, your Grand Knight has asked me to call you and get your opinion, ideas and advice on a few topics affecting our Council. Do you have just a few minutes to chat?”

(If they say “No”, ask them when a good time would be to call back. If they answer “Yes”, thank them and pose the 1st question.)

“Our Grand Knight is attempting to increase the involvement of as many members as possible. We are contacting as many brothers as we can to collect their ideas, opinions and advice. This feedback will be discussed and acted upon at our Planning and Business Meetings each month. Here are the topics we would like your thoughts on:”



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1. Do you feel the Council is **Inclusive** or **Exclusive** in involving members in the running of the Council? Why? _____

What could the Council do to be more inclusive of its members?

2. Did you attend the Council's last event (Name the event)?
If YES – What could we have done to improve it?

If NO – What could be done to get you to the event the next time we hold it?

3. What additional things should we as a Council be doing to support Our Parish?

to support Our Community?

to support Our Youth?

4. Do you feel the council holds enough Social events to involve you, (if married, Your Wife and your family)?

5. What kind of Social events would you like to attend that we are not doing currently?

6. Do you feel that you are kept well informed about what goes on in the Council and what is being planned?
If NO – Please Explain.



7. Do you attend regular Business Meetings of the Council?

If NO – Why not? _____

If YES, How might they be improved to attract other brothers in the Council?

8. Do you have any ideas, opinions, suggestions or advice that you would like passed on to our Grand Knight?

9. When we plan new events or attempt to improve existing ones, our Grand Knight calls on a number of knights to help him brainstorm for new ideas. Please understand we are not asking these knights to volunteer to work the event, but instead only to help plan for it. Would you be willing to help our Grand Knight in this capacity? _____

“Thank you for your feedback and thoughts. I will report back to our Grand Knight on your input. Should you want to add to this, please call me back at (Your Phone#).”

Before You Call

Before you or your Council Officers make these calls, be fully aware you are asking for open feedback. Don't be surprised if some of it is critical and not complimentary. If you act defensive or attempt to counter what is offered, you might as well have not made the call. Asking for feedback is similar to asking for ideas in a brainstorming session. Being open and receptive allows new ideas and uninfluenced feedback to flow, but being critical or defensive will shut down the flow of new ideas and input. Our job as callers is to listen and record, not to evaluate or rationalize what is being said. Please, remember also that not only are we accomplishing one of our involvement



goals by bringing the voice of all Council brothers into consideration, but we are also acquiring extremely valuable input, ideas and advise. Callers should be gracious as well as neutral to the input they receive. Impress upon your callers how very important their job is in collecting this intelligence. It will allow good decision making to occur and foster a sense of inclusion and belonging in your council.

After the Calls

Once the calls have been made, the input needs to be collected and reviewed by you and your staff. For this reason, it will be helpful if the calls can be made the week before your planning meeting, to ensure that the feedback is fresh in the callers mind. This may require you to contact each of the callers to remind them to make their calls.

Week One	Phone Calls made	
Week Two	Review Feedback	Planning Meeting
Week Three		Business Meeting
Week Four		

Another approach would be to remind them to make their calls the week of your planning meeting and then meet with them after your Regular Business Meeting to review their feedback.

Week One	Phone Calls made	Planning Meeting
Week Two	Review Feedback	Business Meeting
Week Three		
Week Four		

I personally would favor the first approach, as Business Meetings can be very busy and your attention span can be put to its limit with many council brothers wanting to touch base with you. However you decide to handle this is fine, as long as it's done every month.

While every member's input is important and should be considered, you should also be looking for trends in the feedback of all the members called. If you are contacting 1/12th of your membership in some random way such as by Birth Month or Alphabetically, you can be sure that your sample will



be highly representative of the overall council population. If you are selecting who to call by service time in the Council, by age or by their level of activity, you are likely to get skewed results; based on how you group the Council members you are to call.

Follow-Up

It is important for you to communicate to your entire council the fact that you are collecting this feedback to set expectations and to make members more receptive when they hear from the callers. But additionally it is important that you communicate the results and ideas collected and to give proper credit to the members who offered them. Equally important is to acknowledge to the council when you use this feedback in your decision making and event planning. Personal “Thank You’s” made by you to the people who were called each month can also go a long way to encourage the feedback to continue in the future. Finally, don’t forget lavishly to thank your callers for the important service they are providing to you and their Council.

Cashing in Your Chips

After the calls have been made and the valuable input has been evaluated, there is still another payout for all this effort toward keeping your Council inclusive. Remember the last question posed in the sample calling script I offered? It was a friendly invitation for further involvement. The member was asked if they’d be interested in helping their Grand Knight in brainstorming for new ideas during activity/event planning. Compile this list and cash in on its use. You can make the members who have volunteered an integral part of the event planning process of your council. Such follow-up invitations can make the members’ sense of belonging sky rocket. Since increasing activity is such an important goal, the work to develop ideas for this activity is likewise. Your invitation to these members to take part in this work should be presented in like fashion.



You are **NOT** asking these members to work on or chair the actual events at this point. Keep the planning and staffing of the events separate. You might even want to make “How to Staff” the event one of the brainstorming topics, but don’t jump the gun. You risk creating a perception that volunteering one’s ideas about an event requires one to work it as well and shutting down a member’s willingness to get involved. Planning new events and revitalizing old ones with new ideas is a significant and valuable piece of work. At least for the time being lets keep this work separate from staffing your events.

Staffing Your Events

We’ve previously talked about this topic in the Activity Section. Below is a short recap and list of 10 actions you can take to build the teams that will actually run your Council’s activities and events.

1. Assign New Members to one or more events after their 1st degree. Have the list completed before their First Degree starts and pass it out immediately after the exemplification.
2. Make clear to candidates during the Admission Interview this expectation of involvement. Make it no surprise to them that they’ll be receiving their 1st Council Event assignments at their First Degree.
3. Request New Members to work with a senior chairman both to learn the event and to document it.
4. Request the New Member to train the next new brother of your council on how the event works that he just documented.
5. Ask “*How*” members would like to be involved, not “*If*”.
6. After the Planning/Brainstorming of a new or revised event, give the team an additional topic to brainstorm. “*How do we staff the event*” they are likely to come up with new and creative ways to accomplish this. (*When you hit upon one of these creative ways, please drop me a line or email, as I’d like to add it to this list.*)



7. Ask Officers to chair one event during the year. These don't need to be large events. You are shooting to set a model for your existing members to follow.
8. Ask your existing members to co-chair one of the events your officers will be working on in #7
9. Ask a Senior Chairman that you have paired with a new member (see #3) to chair a new project for the first year to get it off the ground. Assign him another new member to train. This new member should also be asked to document the event.
10. Pick one event yourself and volunteer to chair it. Don't forget to assign yourself a new member to work with and train.

Hopefully you can see a repetitive and repeatable theme in this list of actions. It is intended to become a normal practice of your Council. As new members become existing members they will eventually become senior members of your Council. So if you set this practice of moving new members into the involvement of your Council into action, you will generate a steady supply of trained chairmen that can reciprocate by training future new members. The result is an Increase in Activity and Involvement in your Council, which is your goal in the first place!

Communications

Part of my professional career involved project management. I found it not dissimilar to managing a Council. Often in project management, just like within a council, the people assigned to your project team will not normally report directly to you. Instead they work for you to accomplish the goal of the project.

Of all the project management skills and techniques one might employ to make the team and project succeed, I found that communications had the most impact. The more I communicated with the project team and them with me and



with each other, the more committed the whole team acted to the success of the overall project goal. Problems and issues that popped up were most often at their initial inception and were able quickly to be resolved before reaching a crisis state. By communicating frequently with the Project Business Sponsor (i.e. the project customer), changes in requirements or scope of the project could be addressed in the early stages of the solution's design, before a major revamping would be required.

Communicating Planning Meeting Discussion

The same benefit of frequent communications can be realized in a Council. While attending Business and Planning meetings is one way for a member to hear the issues and decisions a council is involved with, many members either don't attend out of choice or due to work or family obligations. We can attempt to determine why members choose not to attend these meetings and based on what we find change aspects or the format of the meeting. Hopefully the change will attract those members back to attend the meetings. But until we can accomplish this, we still need to reach those members who remain away. While your Council newsletter should report the minutes of the previous Business Meeting, it may tend to lack the necessary background and discussion of the issues surrounding the tabled motions or upcoming events. While these are normally brought up at a Planning Meeting, members need to be in attendance to be privy to those issues.

Why not publish a one sheet handout with the results of your Planning Meeting discussion. This can be as simple as the following:



Sample Planning Meeting Issue Sheet

Issues and Recommendations from Planning Meeting

Held on July 20, 2007 Council #99999

Issue: The tabled motion for a Food Pantry donation will not cover their need.

Recommendation: Deputy Grand Knight will amend motion to \$200 at the Business Meeting.

Issue: Teen dance is not getting enough volunteers to act as chaperones.

Recommendation: Short brainstorming session yielded 2 promising ideas

1) Request chaperones from the Youth organizations we make donations to from the proceeds of the dances. 2) Request Council members to sign up for a single dance for the year. This would generate 50-60 chaperones per year or 5-6 per dance.

Issue: Feedback received that Business Meetings are too long. Too much time being spent on making and revising motions.

Recommendation: 1) Spend 5 minutes reviewing “how effectively to make a motion or an amendment”.

2) All money motions be written out and reviewed by at least 2 trustees for completeness and recommendations, before the motion is brought on the floor for discussion.

3) Grand Knight should pass out a printed agenda before each Business Meeting.

4) Solicit from Council members other ideas to speed up meetings.

Note: Please pass on to our Grand Knight any ideas or suggestions concerning these items



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This handout would make a great assignment for a new member. It has the potential of making him feel integrally involved in the workings of the organization he has joined. Having the new member at your planning meetings will also add a fresh point of view to the discussions. The assignment could be passed onto subsequent new members every few months. Once compiled, these minutes could be posted or made available to Council members at the churches your council members attend. Post or make them available at the entrance to the Church. It can also be made available before the Council Business meeting. Obviously the intent is to expand interest in the Council to those not attending your Business meetings, but there are a few more benefits to this extended communications.

The first is it communicates to other men in your parish(es), allowing them to get a clearer understanding of what Knights do, who they serve and how they resolve issues. It is easy to see how this could spark an interest in learning more or answering a request to join (in the affirmative).

Secondly, it clarifies the background and viewpoints of the council officers on motions that will be voted on at your next Business Meeting, saving time during the discussion phase of the motion. It will also make each member more informed and allow them to make better decisions when asked to vote on motions.

Thirdly, it will help move along your Planning Meeting by focusing it on the issues and motions that have or will be coming up and lead to actual recommendations instead of just discussing the problem. Should a topic or issue lead to unproductive debate, a simple *“So what should be our recommendation to the Council?”* can bring the item’s discussion to a more productive conclusion.



Other Communication Ideas

How else can we communicate to our inactive Council members? We've sent out the newsletter, and we've made recommendations from the Planning Meeting available, "***What else is a Grand Knight to do?***" The answer is to communicate in whatever format that is necessary to maximize and strengthen the connection that each brother has with his Council. Just because we send out a fine newsletter doesn't mean that it will be read by all. Sometimes we need other paths and communication methods to reach our entire audience. Here are a few ideas that you might want to employ in your Council. Please feel free to modify and add to these ideas as you see fit to reach most effectively your council brothers, as that is the overall goal we are attempting to accomplish here.

1. **Pick up a box of Thank You cards and send them out to *senior* brothers** you don't see at business meetings or Council functions. (By *senior*, I mean years of service in the Knights and not age.) In the card add a message and request similar to the following on the next page



Dear Brother <Their Name>,

Just dropping you this small note to thank you for your involvement and support of our Council over the years. While I appreciate your past Service, I would like to express to you that your Council once again needs your knowledge, experience and history in our Order. The new members we are recruiting need senior brothers like yourselves to assist them in building strong foundations and connections to our Council.

I would like to assign you to one of our new members as their mentor and friend. I am not looking for your re-involvement in Council events even though they are always open to you. Instead, I am asking you to meet socially with this new member, over coffee or maybe a simple meal at your house or local fast food restaurant. I would like you to relate your experiences and history with the Council and why you are proud to be a knight, to answer any questions the new member might have and continue to provide him encouragement and positive motivation to progress through the ranks of responsibility within our Council. I will be giving you a phone call in a few days to discuss this further with you. Until then, please consider this request and any questions you might have about it. Thank you for your consideration of this need.

May God Bless you and your family.

Vivat Jesus

<Your Name>, Grand Knight



2. **Make one random phone call each night to an inactive brother in your Council.** Your purpose is not a hard sell to them to come back to Business Meetings or even reactivation into the events and projects of the Council, but instead to simply reconnect with them. Ask questions of them. Ask lots of questions. Your purpose is to find out what is going on in the life of this brother. And if possible, to take the first step in mending their connection with the Council. Here's a possible script that you can modify to your own personality and style.

Hi *<Their First Name>*,

This is *<Your Name>*, the Grand Knight of your Council. I'm calling just to check in with you and your family. How are you?

<<LISTEN and write down key points of what they have told you>> _____

Ask another question related to what they have told you. You are attempting to keep them speaking and you listening.

<<LISTEN and write down key points of what they have told you>> _____

[Your knowledge of this member will determine how you might continue this conversation.]

[Finish with something like]

Well I have enjoyed talking with you and want you to know that we still consider you and your family an important part of our Council Family. Please know that you remain in my prayers and thoughts. Should you be able to attend the next Council Social on *<It's Date>* we would be so glad to see you again.

God Bless

The phone call can be short and sweet with no commitments on either side. But it has the potential of regenerating an inactive brother's connection with his



Council. It also can give you, the Grand Knight, special insight into why brothers might be losing interest with the Council, and thus the opportunity to address the matter.

3. **Communicate your Dream:** Rev. Martin Luther King had a dream of what America could become without discrimination and with equal rights for all. He communicated this dream in nearly all his speeches. While each of us may not be as motivating, we can still communicate our dream for our Council. Here's one approach: Print out on card stock, business card sized boxes that describes the vision you have for your Council (See the Activity Section). Add a simple challenge for ideas to make it happen. Now pass these out to everyone in your Council that you see at Church each Sunday. I've provided an example of what they might look like.

"My vision for our Council is

<Your Vision statement>'

To find out more or to offer an idea on how to help us reach this goal, call me at

<Your Phone Number>.

Looking forward to hear from you!

God Bless

<Your Name>, Grand Knight

You can create a group of these with a simple Word Processor such as Word, Works, WordPad, WordPerfect or other packages you are comfortable with. Don't have a computer; find a New Member that does to help you create these. They don't need to be fancy, but just printed and passed out. While your primary audience for these should be inactive brothers, pass them out to all brothers



you come in contact with. If your phone starts ringing, they've been successful. You should have your objectives and plan available, to allow the Council to reach this Vision, but listen and question the people who call you first. Ask for their ideas and suggestions. Write them down and ask them questions about their ideas. Remember, your goal is to re-establish a connection between the inactive brother and his Council. If his ideas and suggestions are received by an appreciative and interested Grand Knight, you'll accomplish your goal. Let the caller ask for your plan instead of you offering it yourself. Focus on the caller and their reaction to the vision you have set. Thank them with sincerity and invite them to call back with other ideas or feedback they might have in the future.

4. **Set up quick feedback sessions after your business meetings.** Ask a new member, a quiet member, and an active or outspoken member to meet with you right after the Business Meeting for five minutes. There are only two questions to ask:

- 1) What did you like most about tonight's meeting?
- 2) What did you like least?

Tell the three members that you are looking for quick, off the cuff responses. After you have received answers from each, thank them for their feedback. Next ask them to think about ways the Council might improve, fix, or resolve what they liked least about the meeting and to call you tomorrow night after supper with their ideas. Give them an appointment card like you get from your dentist with a time to call you. For example you might select 7:00, 7:15 and 7:30. Tell them you'll be expecting their call. If they don't call you should call them, but give them 5 minutes past their appointment.



You have a Phone Appointment with your Grand Knight
on _____

Date

At 7:00PM 7:15PM 7:30PM

Regarding your ideas on improving last night's
Business Meeting. Please call him at _____

Phone



Looking forward to hear from you!

God Bless

<Your Name> Grand Knight

Either way, you should ask for their ideas then LISTEN and write down whatever feedback is offered. Thank them once again and make it known to them that you will be discussing their input with your Council Officers and Directors at the next Planning Meeting. Be sure to identify and give credit to the members who came up with the ideas. Wherever possible try to implement their suggestions. If you can't, explain why not and again express your appreciation and openness to this type of feedback. Remember even if an idea for change doesn't work out, it is your willingness to receive new ideas and feedback from your members that will continue to build and maintain strong connections between your membership and their Council that will provide the biggest payback.

5. If you're not reaching all your members because they have decided not to attend business meetings, **try reaching them at another forum**. A short talk at the Sunday Masses can be more than a request for new members. It can be an opportunity to single out and connect with previously active brothers. Pick three or four previously active members that normally attend a particular mass. Give a short talk that identifies them to



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their fellow parishioner as well as their past efforts to assist their Church and Community through their participation in past Council events. Make up some framed Certificates of Appreciate and present these to them. If you want to take this one step further, have your officers and/or directors host coffee and donuts after this Mass to give the parish the opportunity to congratulate these members and equally important to give these members the opportunity to re-connect with brothers of their Council. This could be just the spark needed for a possible reactivation. Remember your goal here is to rebuild a failed connection and not to sign up a volunteer to a current Council event. Sensitize your staff to this goal. They need to be engaging these members in conversation about what is going on in the honored member's lives and not selling the Council to them. If they ask questions about the member's previous experience with the Council or Knights they can learn about what provided the connection the member once had with the Council. At this point inviting the members to the next Council social can provide another opportunity to further the rebuilding of their connection with their Council Family.

Hopefully, these five ideas will not only give you a starting point to reconnect with your membership but also will get you thinking in a new way about communications, setting the stage for other new and creative ways to reach out to all your Council brothers. The current state of technology brings us many new ways to communicate, such as electronic mail; websites; electronic forums; instant messaging to name just a few. But while these may address the communication needs of some, you may have noticed their obvious exclusion in the communication ideas I have proposed to you. Despite my computer background this was done deliberately. When rebuilding connections between inactive members and their Council or soliciting feedback or when just communicating to



your entire brotherhood, I believe that it is the personal or in person outreaching that has the most potential for promoting a sense of inclusion and reconnection. Keep this in mind when you are developing your own methods of communicating to your Council brothers.

New Member Involvement Planning

By now you have seen my continued message to involve your new members. Hopefully, I've convinced you that this is one of the most important investments you can make for the future of your Council. We have talked about many different types of involvement that can strengthen a member's connection to his council. These also benefit your Council from the perspective that a new member can bring and from the experience, knowledge and tradition that a reconnected inactive member can once again provide his council. As of yet, we have not put this into a formal plan. The one thing that sets apart a Council that continually grows from Grand Knight to Grand Knight with one that only experiences growth spurts separated with dry spells or reductions in membership.

Planning a new member's involvement is not different from any other planning. You start with the goal you want to reach and break up the path to that goal into smaller steps that can be easily accomplished. Your ultimate goal for a new member could be for them to become a Grand Knight or maybe in some cases a far more modest goal of becoming an actively involved member that can provide their leadership skills and experience to major projects or activities of the Council. While I recognize that each council and member is unique, the need for future leaders in our Order is paramount to its continued growth and service. We need aggressively to develop new Grand Knights. You can alter these plans to the needs, abilities, talents and desires of each new member you accomplish this planning with.

You will need to set each member's goal by meeting with them on a one to one basis. Discuss their future in the Council,



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both what they are aiming for and what you see as their potential possibilities. Planning out the next ten years of a member's involvement with his Council is in my opinion a reasonable timeline for a new knight to progress through chairmanships, director positions and through some of the key Officer chairs, such as Advocate, Treasurer, Chancellor, Deputy Grand Knight and finally Grand Knight. If your council typically re-elects its officers for a 2nd year then a new member's progression will be more gradual than faster pace in a Council that changes all of the chairs each year. But in either case, a ten year planning cycle can be employed to build an experienced, knowledgeable and tested leader for your Council. On the next pages are two possible paths that you might want to use as a starting point with your new members. The first assumes a two year rotation of the chairs and the second a one year rotation.



Two Year Officer Rotation

Year	Role	What to Learn
1	Co-Chairman / Chairman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to document and run an event. How to train others to Co-Chair an event. • How to: Plan an event, Recruit workers, Request funding and Report a project's status.
2	Service Director /Guard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to plan and communicate a yearly Event Calendar. How to recruit chairmen. How to make an event report at a Business Meeting. How to work with and train a Co-Chair. How to evaluate a completed project and re-plan it. • How to check Membership Cards and the duties of the Warden.
3	Membership Director /Warden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to plan a Membership Recruitment Program. How to run Membership Drives; Knights information sessions; How the Admissions Process works. • How to direct others to check membership cards. How to report attendance at a Business Meeting. How to inventory & report Council property.
4-5	Advocate or Treasurer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding parliamentary procedures, Roberts Rules of Order and Rules of Protocol. How to advise the Grand Knight on motions, Order of Business and protocol before, during and after meetings. How to conduct a Council By-Laws Revision. • Understanding how the Council Financial process works; the duties of the Financial Secretary; and how to make a Council Financial Report.
6-7	Chancellor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to measure/report Membership involvement. How to work with the Admissions Committee, Service Directors and the Membership Director to involve new and existing members.
8-9	DGK /Program Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to run a Business or Planning meeting. How to develop a Council vision and related goals. How to develop a Council Budget. How to develop a Council Activity Plan. How to run both the Admissions and Retention process. • How to develop a Council Event calendar. How to conduct a brain storming session. How to report Council Activity.
10	Grand Knight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to Activate, Involve and Motivate a Council to Service



One Year Officer Rotation

Year	Role	What to Learn
1	Co-Chairman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to document and run an event. How to train others to Co-Chair an event.
2	Chairman /Service Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to: Plan an event, Recruit workers, Request funding, Report a project's status and how to train a Co-Chair How to plan and communicate a yearly Event Calendar. How to recruit chairmen. How to make an event report at a Business Meeting. How to work with a Co-Chair. How to evaluate a completed project and re-plan it.
3	Membership Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to plan a Membership Recruitment Program. How to run Membership Drives; Knights Information sessions; How the Admissions Process works.
4	Guard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to check Membership Cards and the duties of the Warden.
5	Warden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to direct others to check membership cards. How to report attendance at a Business Meeting. How to inventory & report Council property.
6	Advocate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding parliamentary procedures, Roberts Rules of Order and Rules of Protocol. How to advise the Grand Knight on motions, Order of Business and protocol before, during and after meetings. How to conduct a Council By Laws Revision.
7	Treasurer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding how the Council Financial process works; the duties of the Financial Secretary; and how to make a Council Financial Report.
8	Chancellor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to measure/report Membership involvement. How to work with the Admissions Committee, Service Directors and the Membership Director to involve new and existing members.
9	DGK /Program Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to run a Business or Planning meeting. How to develop a Council vision and related goals. How to develop a Council Budget. How to develop a Council Activity Plan. How to run both the Admissions and Retention process. How to develop a Council Event calendar. How to conduct a brain storming session. How to report Council Activity.
10	Grand Knight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to Activate, Involve and Motivate a Council to Service



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Giving a new member such a plan does a number of things for you, him and your Council. For him, it sets expectations of what his future involvement level will be in his Council. It also lets him know that he is viewed as being important to his Council that someone would set up such a plan for him and exhibit confidence and faith in his ability to achieve it. Finally it provides him with a step-by-step plan where he can learn about his Council and the Knights in a gradual sequential fashion. This being a plan, he can also realize that it is flexible and can be modified to take into consideration changes in his personal life or unique needs or opportunities presented by his Council.

For your Council, having a defined and documented New Member Plan will provide stability to and progression in its leadership ranks. This process can also increase the level of knowledge and experience that new leaders can bring to the table when called upon to serve their Council. And lastly, because such a process strengthens the connection between the new member and their Council, new member retention should increase as well.

So what's in this for you? I see two major benefits to the standing Grand Knight. The first will be realized immediately as this process develops Co-Chairs and Chairmen for your Council events. This means more Activity and potentially more Involvement. Secondly it delivers a significant legacy of providing future leaders to your Council. This is something any Past Grand Knight can be extremely proud of. Indirectly, your own future involvement will be positively affected, due to the need for your continued motivation, advice and positive encouragement to these new members as they work through the plan of progression you helped set out for them.



Not So “New” Member Involvement Planning

My final thought on this topic is to offer you another use of this process. If you remove the word “New” it will give you a “Council Member Involvement Plan”. There are most likely a number of existing members who have kept active working on various events and activities, but have never taken on the responsibilities and challenges of a Council Officer position. Possibly what might have been missing is the right encouragement and a plan to accomplish this goal. Sit down privately with some of these existing members and discuss their future in their Council. Often simply saying to them something like the following can make them reevaluate their thoughts or position:

”You’ve been an active and valuable member of our organization. You are also knowledgeable of how to get things done in our Council. And you are respected and liked by your brother knights. I think you are capable of taking on new leadership roles within our Council and one day becoming a great Grand Knight. I’d like to explore this possibility with you and offer a possible plan to get you there.”

Keep the offer friendly and without any sense of pressure. You might need to give them some time to think about this and in that case just schedule another meeting with the individual about a week later. You want to sound sincere and encouraging. Express your confidence in them as a person and in their abilities and talents demonstrated in their past successes in running or working Council events.

If you get a positive reply for their interest in progressing, let them know that being an active member and knowledgeable about the workings of your Council will allow you to build a fairly short term plan to Grand Knight. A couple of five year plans are listed on the next page for your and his consideration. Again the first assumes a two year Officer rotation and the second a one year rotation.



Two Year Rotation Plan	One Year Rotation Plan
1. Membership Director / Warden	1. Service Director
2. Chancellor, Treasurer or Recorder	2. Membership Director / Warden
3. Chancellor, Treasurer or Recorder	3. Treasurer, Advocate or Recorder
4. Deputy Grand Knight / Program Director	4. Chancellor
5. Deputy Grand Knight / Program Director	5. Deputy Grand Knight / Program Director
Grand Knight	Grand Knight

Remember that all these plans are flexible and can be changed to meet the needs of the member as well as your Council. Expect there to be opportunities and challenges that will present themselves and will require changes or at least reflection on any plan you put together. Meeting periodically with these members to review their progress and possibly adjusting their plan will improve the likelihood of its ultimate goal (i.e. new leaders for your Council). Understand that this responsibility continues well past your term as Grand Knight. We've mentioned this previously when discussing the New Member plans. If you continue with this periodical review you'll find it will also keep you active and involved as a PGK and a valuable, respected advisor to the future leaders of your Council.

Hopefully I've infected you with a few new ideas and tips to increase and maintain Involvement in your Council. Building inclusion and doing personal planning with members are the two key ways to accomplish this increased involvement. Working to make this a continued and repeatable process from one Grand Knight to another will ensure that involvement continues to grow for the future of your Council. As you modify the suggestions I've made here, with your own ideas and your Council's unique needs, please drop me a line to tell me of your successes and challenges.



Additional Tips for Measuring Involvement

Membership Statistics only give us a snapshot of a current point in time of your recruitment versus your suspensions, but does not provide you with any information about who you are losing or how long you are retaining them as active members. Below is additional material on measuring Involvement. It is not normally relevant to most councils. Nearly all Grand Knights can measure whether their council's involvement is increasing or decreasing on a purely intuitive basis whether or not they can scientifically measure it. Additionally, very few councils have their membership data stored electronically to allow them to track their council involvement in this type of quantifiable way. I include this only for those that can make use of it, so please don't feel you need to understand the mathematics or the resulting analysis one would need to do to utilize it.

How to Measure Who's Involved

In most cases the degree to which members are involved in their Council's activities has a direct effect on their decision to stay a member. Active and Involved knights are Retained knights. So one measure of how your involvement efforts are doing is the average retention your council is experiencing with its members. Ask yourself what is the average membership life of members in your Council? We are asking here what is the viability of a new member or how long do you retain new members within your Council? You might want to measure this in the following method:

ARR – Average Retention Rate is a number less than five that represents the average number of years of service of all members on your books five years ago. You calculate this by determining for the last five years how long each member has stayed in your council. You should be able to glean this information from your Financial Secretary's records (i.e. members that have been suspended in the last five years) and from your Council Roster supplied by Supreme.



This statistic can provide important information to a Grand Knight. It helps show your Council's long term success rate in retaining members and whether the efforts to involve them is paying off or falling short. You will need to track all your suspensions since your council was formed if it is a new Council less than five years old. Otherwise use the last five years to give you a good section of your Council's history to measure. You'll need their admission date to determine whether to include them on your list and their termination date if they were suspended. With these two dates you can determine total Service Years per individual member which can then be totaled and divided by the Number of Members on the list. This average is a snapshot which can be tracked from year to year. This again will show either a positive or negative trend.

Developing an Average Retention Rate

1. Include on the list only those members who came into the Order five years ago or earlier. Someone you recruited after that (less than five years ago) should be omitted from the list. (They'll show up on a subsequent snapshot when they have five years of service.)
2. If the member has not been suspended and thus is still a member, assign them the ending date of your five year analysis. For example, let's say we are looking at the period between January 1st, 2001 and December 31st 2005. You would include members of your Council that were already members before that starting point 1/1/2001. If the member is still current assign them the ending date of 12/31/2005. If they were suspended during that time period assign them their specific Suspension Date.
3. Now just subtract the difference between the two dates. Current Members will get five years and suspended members something less.



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4. Add up all these differences and divide by the number of members on your list. The result is your Council's ARR or Average Retention Rate. On the example the ARR is equal to 3.3 years, which means, on the average, members in your Council had 3 years and 4 months of service.
5. If your Council runs this calculation at the end of every year, they'll end up with a trend either positive or negative.

**Members on Roster 5 Years Ago
1/1/2001-12/31/2005**

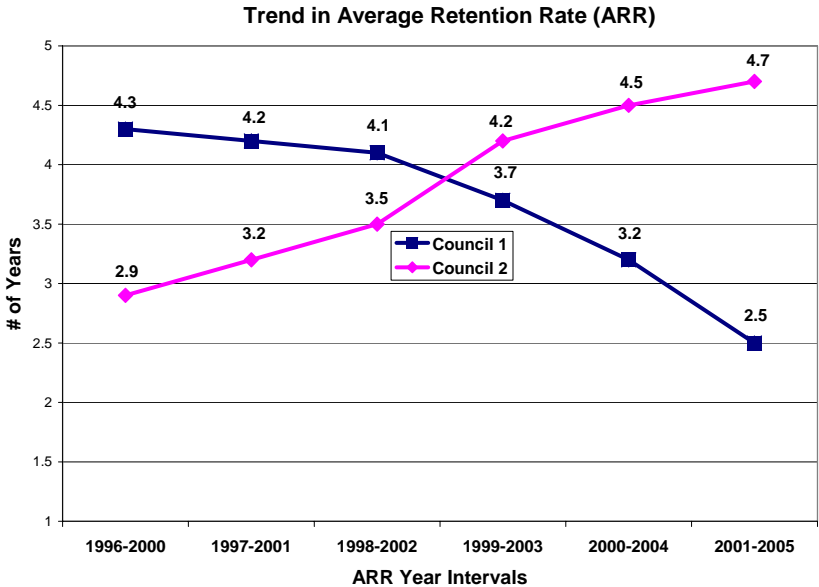
Members Name	Date of Suspension or Current Member	5 Years ago Jan 1 2001	Retention
Alan Able	5/25/2004	1/1/2001	3.4
Bob Baker	2/19/2003	1/1/2001	2.1
Calvin Cats	1/11/2004	1/1/2001	3.0
David Doe	12/31/2005	1/1/2001	5.0
Ed Els	6/17/2001	1/1/2001	0.5
Fern Frank	7/20/2005	1/1/2001	4.5
Greg Gold	5/31/2003	1/1/2001	2.4
Harry Hill	3/22/2005	1/1/2001	4.2
Ivan Igman	12/31/2005	1/1/2001	5.0
John Johnson	6/6/2002	1/1/2001	1.4
Keith Kellogg	3/16/2001	1/1/2001	0.2
Louis Lavallo	12/31/2005	1/1/2001	5.0
Mike Miller	6/19/2003	1/1/2001	2.5
Norm Northwood	4/18/2005	1/1/2001	4.3
Oscar O'Hara	12/31/2005	1/1/2001	5.0
Paul Pileski	1/22/2005	1/1/2001	4.1
Quincy Quick	12/10/2003	1/1/2001	2.9
Robert Robinson	7/17/2004	1/1/2001	3.5
Sam Smith	12/31/2005	1/1/2001	5.0
Tom Thomas	10/14/2004	1/1/2001	3.8
Unger Underwood	9/5/2001	1/1/2001	0.7
Victor Viceroy	9/16/2001	1/1/2001	0.7
Will Woodall	12/31/2005	1/1/2001	5.0
Xavior Xerxes	8/31/2005	1/1/2001	4.7
Yang Youngblood	11/5/2003	1/1/2001	2.8
Zeke Zoolander	12/31/2005	1/1/2001	5.0
(ARR) Average Retention Rate in Years			3.3



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If your council is not five years old yet, use a smaller interval, say three or four years. Each year run the calculation again until you can use a five year period.

Over a period of years your Council should start to see a trend that is sloping down or up. Here's an example of two councils that have run the calculation every year for the past 6 years. It is very clear which is doing a great job to improve the involvement of its members and which still has much work to do.



Don't get too carried away with the calculations and charts. Focus your attention on improving involvement. If you use this tool, do so to bring attention to the need for improvement within your Council or to confirm that your involvement efforts are paying off in increase Retention of your members.





Notes Page for your Ideas on Involvement



Section Four: Becoming a Repeatable Organization



DoWonce
The No Repeat Dragon



Once upon a time there lived a dragon called DoWonce. He was also known as “The *No Repeat* dragon”. Being recently chased out of his previous territory in the south of the kingdom, he explored the entire kingdom until he came upon the areas surrounding the village of Ourcouncil. The dragon found and took up residence in a valley that contained some very large caves. This area was also within walking distance of the village. DoWonce was a very nervous dragon and quickly became suspicious of the people of Ourcouncil. If the dragon recognized someone traveling through his new territory that he had seen recently, DoWonce would assume they were up to no good. When this happened, the dragon would express his displeasure by attempting to roast them alive. Unfortunately, DoWonce’s new territory was in



between the village and the farmland Ourcouncil used to plant their wheat and corn. So sending the same workers out to toil in the fields was a dangerous proposition. After some of the farmers came back with either singed clothing or the life scared out of them from a close encounter with the dragon, the elders of the town realized they'd have to send new workers out every day and rotate this work throughout the entire population of the village. Problems with this process started to pop up immediately. New workers who hadn't farmed before had a very steep learning curve to work effectively on their assigned day. Since their next rotation could be months away, they never gained any experience or expertise in doing the same task twice. Yields from the farmlands were reduced drastically. Some workers had mistaken live plants as weeds and destroyed the entire rows they had worked on that day. This eliminated 20% of the normal yield that season and required the village to ration the grain that was produced to make it through the winter.

DoWonce, not being a grain eating dragon, didn't care in the least. He was happy to keep the villagers of Ourcouncil off balance and unable to make any repeatable plans. As long as he kept seeing different faces attempting to do the same work using different individual ways, DoWonce knew that Ourcouncil would never be able to effectively plot against him.

But just when things were looking bleak a new village leader stepped forward and assumed the challenge of dealing with the dragon. He started by getting the farmers of the village to write down all the duties and explanations of how to do them. They broke the work into four groups of soil preparation; planting; cultivating/weeding and harvesting. The farmers were then asked to schedule these tasks on the master village calendar and to pre-assign the villagers to one of the four major tasks. The new leader then assigned one senior farmer to each group to act as their coach and trainer. He next got the members of each team to schedule regular meetings, led by their coach to give feedback on how the documented farming instructions were working and jointly to explore ways to



improve them. Not only did this process eliminate mistakes in the fields, but it produced new creative ways to get their work done, resulting in less workers being needed to do the same work and most importantly delivering higher crop yields. Despite these changes, DoWonce never became the wiser. The leader's next step was to secure the village from the dangers of the dragon. From the workers freed up by the now smarter ways found to farm, he built a new team of villagers and trained them to deal directly with the dragon.

In short order, DoWonce was barricaded with strong, heat resistant steel bars confining him to his lair, never again to bother the village of Ourcouncil! Moral of the story is that repeatable practices allow organizations to prosper. Following the ideas presented in this section will allow you to make your council into a successful and repeatable organization.



Becoming a Repeatable Organization

In the last two sections we discussed a lot of ideas on how to increase the Activity and Involvement of your Council. We have also made casual reference to the main topic of this Section: how to setup repeatable practices used for planning, development and evaluation of events, activities and members. We could give this a fancy word such as infrastructure, but it only means to put in place those actions that will increase our Council's Activity and the Involvement of its members in such a way that it is repeatable from Grand Knight to Grand Knight.

Why is this important? Because it delivers long term membership growth versus short term recruitment spikes. Granted, by doing the things mentioned in the previous sections you can expect to have an impact beyond your term of office. The new and existing members that you intricately involved and motivated are likely to take on higher levels of responsibility in the future no matter who is the Grand Knight. But what about 5-10 years down the road? Without continuing the actions that have brought your council short term improvements in Activity and Involvement, it is easy to revert to old and comfortable practices that are more in tuned to the Recruit/Suspend cycle we have been attempting to move away from.

Repeatable practices not only help to continue or maintain growth, they also make the role of the Grand Knight far less intimidating for members to take on. By having established plans and event calendars already in place, a new Grand Knight can focus his actions on more lofty and visionary concepts to lead his council to. And having the re-planning process in place and the meetings at which to do it already on the Council calendar, the new Grand Knight is more apt to continue using these practices and planning which will also benefit the Grand Knights that come after him.



So with that said, I list the practices that I wish to make part of the Council's structure or "*way of doing things*":

1. Council Event Calendar
2. Membership Involvement Activities
3. New Member Development Planning
4. Existing Member Development Planning
5. Setting a Council Vision and Goals
6. Setting a Council Budget
7. Setting a Membership Agenda
8. Communicating your Council Plan

Before We Start

In this section we will map out how each of these practices should be placed on the Council's long term Fraternal Calendar, as well as suggesting how you might handle their details with your staff. Before we jump into the first one, here's a little general advice you might want to consider.

1. While you might be the first Grand Knight in your Council to attempt such a systematic approach to planning and goal setting, it's important that you don't own or tightly control these practices. They need to be perceived as Council practices that are expected to be followed by every future Grand Knight.
2. Set your job to establish and document the practice, recording what worked and what didn't. This will be a key legacy to leave your successor and something for him to pass down to his successor. If you are pretty sure that you will be followed by your DGK, attempt to get him to document these practices and present each to your staff at your Planning Meetings. These should be in a form that can be easily reproduced as well as updated and added to. Bind these in a 3 ring binder and you'll have the proverbial "Grand Knight's bible".
3. Involve, Involve, Involve – The more Officers and Directors you can get to participate in the creation, use and revision of these practices the better. They should feel a pride of



ownership of these repeatable practices, as the members of your staff are the most likely source of future Grand Knights. It is the acceptance of these men to run their Council in this planned way that will ultimately provide long term and lasting growth in your Council.

4. Be less concerned about making these practices perfect, i.e. crossing every “t” and dotting every “i”. It is the fact that your Council has established procedures that are used and improved upon by each Grand Knight that will have the most impact on the continued success of your Council. Even if you only get some of the practices established, documented and accepted by the next Grand Knight and the Council, you are way ahead of the curve. Setting an initial and solid foundation for your Council will be a legacy that you can be very proud of.
5. Stay involved once you become a Past Grand Knight. Your availability to your successor while he takes on these practices can be crucial to their adoption. You can encourage, motivate and advise the new Grand Knight to the benefits of using these tools without forcing “*your way*” of doing things on him. These are only tools and they allow a new Grand Knight more easily to implement his own style of leadership and goals without having to re-invent the base practices of his Council. Your suggestions about what worked and what needs improvement can be extremely valuable for the new Grand Knight allowing him to focus the energy of the Council on things that need the most work.
6. Once a Past Grand Knight, become a champion and strong supporter to all actions of your Council that encourage planning, inclusion and increased activity.

So with these ideas on the table, here’s how to become a Repeatable Organization!



Setting our Repeatable Practices

I've struggled to decide which practice to cover first. Some are probably of higher priority than others or some may have more long term potential to address the growth of your Council. So instead of making that determination, I decided to start with the easiest and most visible tool that allows a successful council to keep all their efforts in the forefront of their members' minds: The Council Event Calendar!

1. Your Council Event Calendar

We have previously discussed the development of an Event Calendar. It should cover an eighteen month rolling duration. Each month's completed page will be replaced with a new one at the end of the calendar. While you might decide to do this every three months, there are specific advantages and benefits to making this happen every month. First, the more often you review your past efforts, the quicker you can take advantage of what was learned. What happened in the last thirty days will always be fresher in the minds of your chairmen and staff than waiting every ninety days to reflect on past actions. Secondly, the more often you plan for future dates the more likely you are to continue this process each month. Waiting three months to add to your calendar can seem like a sizable task that could easily be put off until "*another time*". But in practice, it may never get re-scheduled until it comes creeping up on you a few months before the event should have been scheduled next year. The last benefit I see in more frequent re-scheduling is the mindset it will instill in you as a leader, in your staff who are the future leaders of your council and finally in the Grand Knight that succeeds you. If you are planning every month, you are far more likely to view other aspects of your Council's Activity, Involvement and Member Development in a similar consciously designed way.



If You Don't Already Have a Council Event Calendar

So how do we get started? Unfortunately I don't know of any magical way to get started with a Council Event calendar if your council doesn't already have one, but there is one way that seems to work without too much effort. This technique involves filling out a calendar for the events and activities your council accomplished last year. This may sound a little counter productive, in that we are suppose to be creating a plan for future events, but learning from the past is actually a great way to get started. There's a saying by George Santayana that goes: *"Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it"*. Using this technique will allow us to learn from our previous challenges and to repeat all our successes.

To start the event calendar, obtain a blank calendar for the previous year or printout a blank calendar on your Personal Computer. You want a single month per page as your format. A number of applications will allow you to do this (For Example: Using the Calendar Wizard in Microsoft Word, the Calendar Option in Microsoft Outlook or one of the many freeware calendar packages available on the internet {just search for "Free Calendar Software" in your favorite search engine}). Even if you have to draw a calendar on blank pieces of paper, do it!

Next, start with each month and write in every event and activity you can remember that your Council was involved in. Having old copies of your Council Newsletters or the minutes of your Business Meetings are good sources to pull this information from. Don't spend too much time getting the exact date correct, as long as you hit the right month. With this step complete you are now at the same point as those Grand Knights who have completed an existing event calendar, last year.



Populating Your New Council Event Calendar

Our next step starts with a blank calendar that starts with next month as the first page and continues out for a total of eighteen months in the future. So for example, if you are doing this in the month of December 2006, you would need a blank calendar that has one page per month starting with January 2007 to June 2008. Since this will be your master copy, use a pencil to write in it.

We now need to copy those events from our last year's calendar to the same month in our new 18 month calendar. Again you don't need to be super exact at this time. If an event was scheduled on the 2nd Sunday in June of last year's calendar, reschedule it on the 2nd Sunday in June in next year's calendar. As we review the events each month at our planning meetings, we can tweak dates as more information about an event becomes available.

Adding Knights related Milestones and Events

Our next step is to include all the dates for State Events, State and Supreme Forms submissions, Your Council Business & Planning Meetings and Scheduled First Degrees. These may include the following:

<u>State Events</u>	<u>Forms and Bills</u>	<u>Special Council Events & Due Dates</u>
State Convention	Form 185	Council Tootsie Roll Drive
State Ball	Form 365	Council Free Throw
State Membership Drives	Fraternal Survey	Officer Nominations
Scheduled Third Degrees	Semi-Annual Audit	IMMEDIATE PGK Appreciation Night
State Pro-Life Events	Service Program submissions	Quarterly Director Planning Meetings
State Free Throw	State and Supreme Per Capital	Annual Dues Invoices
Other State Functions and Events		

You should also add any District Events such as scheduled



Second Degrees, District Organization meetings and District Membership or Service events your District Deputy may have planned. There will likely be other events or Due Dates unique to your Council. If there are, add them to your New Council Calendar at this time.

Add New Event Ideas to Your Calendar

While you may not have completed a brainstorming session with your directors at this time, you may be aware of new events or activities that either you personally would like to see occur or ideas that have already been discussed by your council staff. Pencil these into the Calendar where you think they best fit. Refined these later; it's important they go into the schedule at this time.

You should now have a pretty good picture of what your Council will be involved in for the next 12 months. It is now time for your Calendar's first review.

A Feminine Review

Many times I've come to the conclusion that my brain is not wired the same as my wife Sue's. She often shows a completely different way of viewing a problem or perceiving a situation. It's not that hers or my viewpoint is right and the other's wrong, but simply that we view things differently. This is actually a good thing. Remember when you were trying to solve the *Connect-the-9-dots* puzzle? The solution should have shown you that you sometimes have to view things in a different way to see optimal solutions. Such is the case of our new Council Event Calendar. What we might see as complete, another may see as lacking some missing and essential item. This is why I would highly recommend you give the first 12 months of your partially completed calendar to a member of the opposite sex. This can be your wife, (or if you are single your girlfriend,) your sister, sister-in-law or your mother. What you want from them is an evaluation of your current scheduled events and whether they will appeal to families and foster their



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involvement in your Council. If the answer is “Yes”, then thank them. If the answer is “No”, ask them for examples of possible events and activities that you could add to the calendar that would have this appeal. You might be very surprised at their feedback, so prepare yourself to accept it as a different way to view Activity, a view that is maybe focused on family involvement. Add these events to your calendar and print a new copy for your Calendar’s next review.

Pastor’s Review

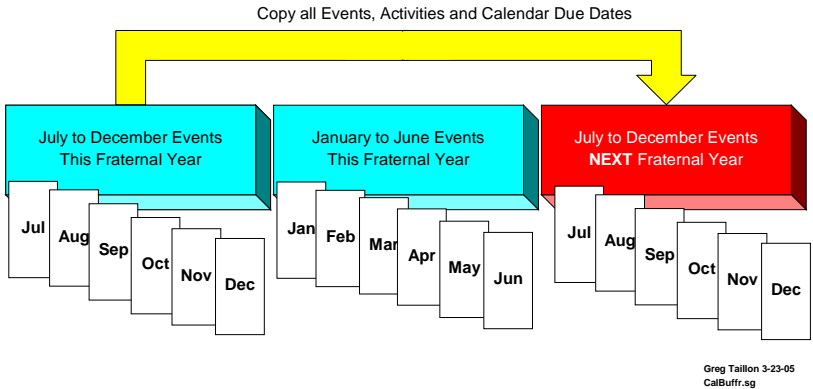
Now that we have had our calendar reviewed from a feminine point of view. Let’s do the same thing from a parish needs and religious devotion perspective. Set an appointment with the pastor(s) of the church(es) that your council support(s). Show the first twelve months of your calendar to the pastor you are meeting with. Tell him that you are interested in ensuring that some of your Council’s activities and events address the needs of his parish and that there should be events of religious devotion for your council members, especially those that attend his parish. Ask him to preview the calendar and tell you whether he thinks you are addressing those needs. Ask him also for his help in identifying parish needs that are not being addressed and for ideas for religious devotion events that you and he could jointly schedule.

If any religious devotion events come out of this discussion be sure to put them into your calendar. If unfilled parish needs are identified, write them down and save them for your brainstorming session.

Creating a Six Month Buffer

While not complete, your calendar should be coming along nicely at this point. And it is now time to create a six month buffer in our planning practice. To do this, simply take all entries for your first six months of the calendar and repeat them into the thirteenth through the eighteenth month pages. The diagram on the next page will help demonstrate this concept.





Try to reschedule the events in a relative fashion (i.e. Second Sunday of July to Second Sunday of July in the next year). If you don't have specific dates for State events, minimally write the event at the top of that month's page to show that it will likely occur in that month. In this way you won't forget about the event and can schedule it more precisely as time goes on. This six month buffer will not only help your staff to acquire a long term planning habit, but also will greatly reduce the next Grand Knight's workload by allowing events that will occur in his tenure to have been reviewed and refined by you and your staff by a minimum of thirteen and a maximum of eighteen months. As a result the role of the Grand Knight will be a less intimidating challenge to assume and you are likely to get new future leaders to offer their service for the Grand Knight role, more than you would have without this planning process having been in place.

How to Maintain Your Council Event Calendar

Once you have a complete eighteen month calendar, the work to maintain it while important can be fairly minimal and can be done in a simple and quick four step process during each Council Planning Meeting.

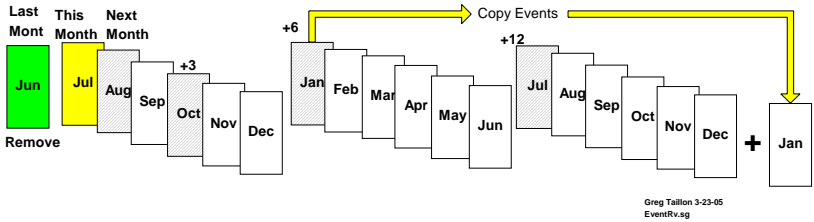


1. Review Last Month's Events
2. Do a Final Check on Events scheduled to be run Next Month
3. Do a Quick Check on Future Events that are Scheduled three, six and twelve months away
4. Add a new month at the end of your eighteen month Calendar and add events to it

If you allocate 15 minutes for this review, it will pay handsome dividends. In addition, you can help speed this review along by doing a check-in with your Council Program Director before the meeting. Give him the questions below or ones that you have constructed for the review and tell him you will call him the night before the meeting for a quick update. Now at the Planning Meeting, let him give his report to your staff. If others want to add feedback to parts of this report for specific events, that's fine! Just ensure that the report or feedback doesn't get into details. We are looking for "*lessons learned*" of past events and "*actions needed*" for future events. If you manage this right and keep the discussion out of the details, the practice can be a very positive and rewarding exercise and something that will easily become a repeatable practice in your Council.

As a simple example, if you were meeting in July you would review the events that were completed in June (Last month) and those that will occur in August (Next Month). You would then quickly look at October (three months), January (six months) and next July (twelve months). Your last step would be to add January of next fraternal year to your Calendar and copy the events you just reviewed for January of this fraternal year to it.





You and your Program Director could use these sample questions to accomplish the review:

For Events completed in the previous month

1. Do we consider the event successful? If not, what did we learn to make the event better?
2. What else could we change to make the event appeal to more members?
3. Should we hold the event next year? If no, what should we replace it with?

For Events to be held during Next Month

1. Are we ready to hold this event? If not, what needs immediate attention?
2. Do we have enough volunteers from the Council? If not, what do we need to do to fix the shortage?
3. Have we got the word out to the Parish and Community or to the specific targeted audience of the event? If not, what actions can we now take to do so?

For Events scheduled three, six and twelve months from now

1. Do we have a Chairman?
2. Do we need any motions to be made at the upcoming Business Meeting for this event?
3. Do we have any new scheduling information on these future events?

As you use this practice you should notice that the review of Next Month's events will take a shorter and shorter time to accomplish. Why? Simply because they will have been reviewed twelve months out, six months out and three months



out. These quick and simple review snapshots keep event planning in the mindset of your staff. Eventually you find that they can manage this process by exception as opposed to discussing every detail. You'll start hearing them chime in "*So what did we learn from this?*" or when reviewing future events "*Let's get those motions handled at our Business Meeting ahead of time.*" This is exactly how you want your staff (and Council) to be thinking. This reflective and anticipatory mindset can only bring great benefits to the vitality and health of your Council.

For Your New Eighteen Month Page

Just a few thoughts about your new page you'll be adding to your calendar, which can be completed before the Planning Meeting and simply passed out. You are simply copying events. If you are unsure of specific dates, either guess or add them to the top of the page. You might even want to put something like **TBS** (To Be Scheduled) before these events to remind you that they still need specific dates. Since you'll be creating a new calendar page each month, you might want to print out six or twelve extra months when you first start this practice. You can then hand out copies of the next six or twelve months as needed. The important thing is to ensure this new month gets added **each** month. It keeps your six month buffer intact and gets your staff always looking to the future.

Remember, healthy councils are built on repeatable practices such as your Council Event Calendar and not on the personalities of the current Grand Knight and those of his staff. Making this scheduling process a natural practice of your Council will greatly contribute to its long term growth and active continuance.



Activity Re-Planning

I have covered the topic of Activity in the Activity Section of the book, and now can focus our time here on making the planning process for new and existing activities a repeatable practice. If your Council was in need of an initial Activity Plan, then Section 2 should have helped you develop and expand the events and activities your Council wants to be involved in. To maintain this level of Activity and to fortify it every so often with new and revised events, your Council must have a repeatable practice that can be seamlessly passed from one Grand Knight to the next. While our Event Calendar is a continuous scheduling process, Activity Re-planning can be done much less frequently. I'd recommend an annual or semiannual process. Ideally this could be planned for April and if necessary reviewed again in September. While it is far more important that your Council is doing this planning sometime during the fraternal year, there are reasons why I have suggested the months of April and September.

1. Remember what we just stated that healthy Councils rely on repeatable practices and not personalities. So having your Activity Re-Planning in April separates it from your Council's Elections. Thus it is independent of who is running or who gets elected.
2. The Re-Planning process if done in April will be led by an experienced Grand Knight and Director staff. Minimally, they will have been serving for 9 months.
3. Scheduling this too close to the end of the fraternal year puts it at the end of a retiring Grand Knight's term and the beginning of a new Grand Knight's term. The former maybe less motivated as he begins to see his term come to an end, while the later maybe overwhelmed with the new responsibilities of his new role. By scheduling this process with three



months left in the existing Grand Knight's tenure, we put this important planning practice well within the active part of his term. The existing Grand Knight is also likely to be better equipped to drive this effort in a very productive manner. His efforts will allow the new Grand Knight to hit the road running. By the time that September rolls around, the new Grand Knight's honeymoon will be over and his staff selected and working. The review in September can bring a very positive and motivating joint project for them to work on.

4. Lastly, I like the idea of the new Past Grand Knight delivering a very valuable piece of planning to the new Grand Knight. It not only sets the stage for what will be expected of the new Grand Knight in his last three months of office a year from now, it also has the potential of strengthening the bond between the two men (Immediate PGK and Grand Knight). It delivers a road map toward continued activity in the Council and identifies to the Grand Knight the value of the Immediate PGK's experience and knowledge, which if he (GK) is prudent he'll put to good use by making the Immediate PGK a close advisor.

From the new Grand Knight's perspective, his predecessor has put into place a set of Activity Goals and led the Council through a creative process which has produced new ideas for increased Activity. The new Grand Knight is likely to be extremely appreciative of these efforts, which will lead to the success of his administration. By scheduling the review in September, his staff will be able to tweak this plan in the overall direction or vision the new Grand Knight has set for the Council.

As I mentioned before, you want to make both the Activity Re-Planning and the September Review, Council events not a



Grand Knight specific event. The more these are perceived to be practices of the Council, the more likely they are to be repeated from Grand Knight to Grand Knight. Final Note: Add both the September Review and the next April Re-Planning event onto the Council's Event Calendar. This will eliminate the need for the new Grand Knight to have to schedule them. If the dates are already on the calendar, a level of expectation will also be set to do the review and once this is completed, the future Re-Planning event in April will be more likely to be received by the new Grand Knight's staff with enthusiasm and positive anticipation. The new Grand Knight will now have the opportunity to either plan for his second year or to help prepare his successor in the same way his was planned for by the now Immediate PGK.

An on and on it goes, one Grand Knight planning for another. Not only does the next Grand Knight benefit, but the Council stays active, attractive to potential new members and has a positive impact on retaining existing members. Best of all, Service is continually delivered to our Church and Community.

2. Involvement Planning

We are suppose to be talking about practices that should become repeatable, but there is one that I would like never to see repeated. The annual passing of suspension notices from the retiring Grand Knight to the new Grand Knight is a most negative and discouraging way to begin a term of office, in probably the best job in the Order, that of a Grand Knight. Even if the last Grand Knight has processed his suspensions, he is still delivering an unhealthy organization with a gaping wound in the case of many suspensions or a bleeding cut for even 1 or 2 suspensions. If a council is suspending members no matter how few, it is a symptom that something is stopping the natural growth of the Council. Lack of Activity and Lack of Involvement should be the top of the suspects. Sections 2 and 3 should have given you many ideas to address this.



Is there another way to plan for and approach this transition of responsibility of Council suspensions from one Grand Knight to another? Of course there is! Change the Rules! Who is saying that you HAVE to suspend a member? Don't say Supreme. Don't say your State Council or your District Deputy. The choice to suspend is a Council's decision. And just because you have always done it that way doesn't mean you can't find a creative alternative outside your normal way of thinking.

What if you suspended the Suspension Process?

What if instead you were to view the whole process as a Repeatable and Continuous practice of identifying and developing Involvement Opportunities? Let me explain. Let's say your Council has 100 members and 20 are active in at least two events during the year, then your Involvement Opportunity is 80 members. If you and our staff can call just 25% of this list each month (or 20 members), you'd find out how these members would like to be involved in the Council. Make sure the people who do the calling have a list of current and upcoming events as well as a list of things that remote members can do, without having to be on site.

What if you the Grand Knight and your staff could only get half of these 80 members to show up for a new activity or to accept a task that they could do at home? What a different transition of Retention responsibility this would be. Letting the new Grand Knight know that 40 members have been made active and involved again and the 40 that remain are an ongoing opportunity for future involvement. As the new Grand Knight takes over this process of seeing these men as opportunities rather than suspensions it can continue as a normal practice of the Council. The new perspective views these members as a responsibility to **Involve** rather than **Suspend**. These brothers are the responsibility of every Council member. And with that in mind, you and your staff should be working with and encouraging the active brothers of the Council to take on the responsibility of calling just one



inactive brother per month. Their job is to contact the member assigned to them and to relate the current events and activities of the Council and ask what they would like to get involved in. You as the Grand Knight and your staff must:

1. Identify current Inactive Members of the Council.
2. Break the list into quarters and assign a name to each Officer, Director and Active member of the Council each month.
3. Document a list of current and upcoming events and activities.
4. Document a list of alternate tasks that would help the Council but could be completed at home (See Section Two: Activity: "Why it works")
5. Keep the list updated as these members are reactivated. If possible print this information on a sheet to pass to each caller. Here's a possible script you might want to consider using.

Re-Activation Script

"Hi, this is <Your Name>. I'm a brother Knight of our Knights of Columbus Council. As we haven't heard from you for a while I'd like to check in on you to make sure everything is okay. How is everything going with you and your family?"

<Listen and respond to what they have said>

If there is a need ask how the Council might be of help. Assuming everything is okay continue with the following:

"I'd like to make you aware of some of the events and activities planned for our Council."

<List the Events and Activities>

The next thing is very important as it asks HOW they'd like to be involved and not if.

"Which of these would you like to join us or assist our Council with?"

<Make sure to thank them and tell them you look forward to seeing them and/or working with them again>



The process is painless, requires no more than five minutes a month to complete, and yet has a tremendous impact in the Re-Activation process of your Involvement Opportunities. And it sure beats the alternative of suspending Brothers from your Council.

3. New Member Planning

Another practice that needs to become repeatable is how your Council deals with its new members. I've seen Grand Knights who have a great rapport with their new members as well as Grand Knights that don't. Part of the problem is that Grand Knights come and go, and relying on the personality of one member, even if he is your Grand Knight, does not deliver a consistent methodology to the development and involvement of your new members.

What I have suggested before, applies here also, making this a Council practice that is independent of who is Grand Knight, will allow current and future new members to receive a consistent introduction and integration into their Council, from Grand Knight to Grand Knight.

In Section Three, the Involvement part of the book, I explained how a Grand Knight might put together a development plan for a new member. If this planning work is done, both the Council and the new member benefit. How do we make this planning more automatic as well as a repeatable practice owned by the Council?

When I was serving as a District Deputy, I wanted to get one of my councils to stop thinking about only recruiting new members. The Council had good speakers, a well-organized Membership drive program and the support of their pastor. Unfortunately they also had an extremely high suspension rate. New members would attend a few business meetings and realize that there were no expectations of them to do anything in the Council except attend Business Meetings. Longtime members already manned existing programs and the running of the Council. The new members soon lost interest and stopped



coming to Business Meetings and began questioning why they joined the Council in the first place. Twelve to eighteen months later, they showed up on the Council's Suspension list. At their Business Meeting, just before they were to vote on the recommendations of their Admission Committee to accept a new candidate, I posed the following questions.

1. Does the Council have a specific reason why they believe they should bring this new member into the Council? (In other words, is it due to Increased Activity, expanded service programs or the need to grow new future leaders?)
2. If they do have a specific need, have they discussed it with the potential candidate to ensure it is something he's interested in? And lastly.
3. Did they have a specific plan for this new member's Involvement and Retention?

My intent with these questions was not to discourage recruitment but instead to get the Council to start thinking about new member planning before recruiting. If you don't know what you plan to do with that member when he joins and you have no plan for his future involvement or retention, you're probably not ready to recruit him. Not only is it the wrong time to recruit him, it's the wrong time to start influencing his family, friends and the parishioners he knows with a potential negative experience he is likely to have with the Knights. Remember, a new member is perishable, like ripe fruit left on the counter. You can utilize this valuable asset to benefit your Council or let his interest spoil through inactivity and by not setting expectation for his involvement.

"A new member is perishable, like a ripe fruit left on the counter."

On the other hand, if you identify specific activities and events that you need new members to be able to conduct and if you have a practice in place that can be used to develop an Involvement plan for the new member, then you are ready to seek out and secure new members for your Council. It is important that your plan for him establishes expectations that



he will be developed as a future Council leader.

Instead of blindly searching for anyone who would join your Council, you now have specific requirements that your Admission Committee can use in their discussions with prospective members. Your Council is far more likely to find the type of knight it needs and the new member will be far more likely to join the type of organization that can offer him involvement, development and the opportunity for the type of service he has a passion to give.

Now the type of influence he will have on his family, friends and the parishioners he knows will likely be positive. He will become one of your best recruiters, as he relates his positive relationship with his new Council.

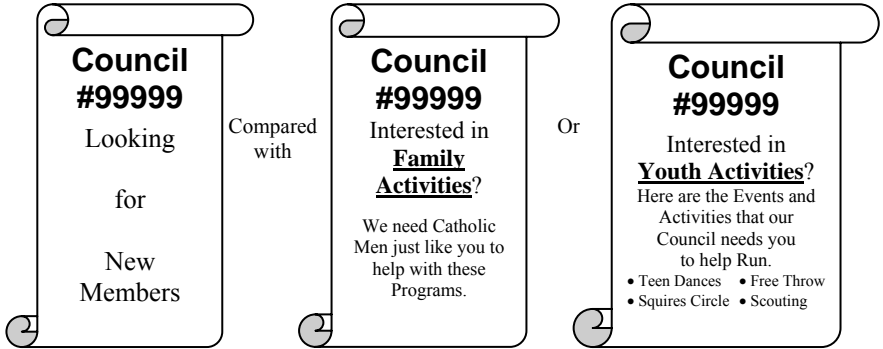
- A Council that needed him to join for it to accomplish its service goals.
- A Council that values his continued involvement enough to have planned for it.
- And finally, a Council that develops the leadership skills of its members and has a positive expectation for new members to serve as future leaders.

So how do you make this a repeatable practice of your Council? The answer is fairly simple, make it part of your Membership and Recruitment process.



Provide a Purpose to Every Recruitment Effort

Compare these two approaches to designing Recruitment Posters.



Consider the greater impact and focus that these latter invitations have over the general shotgun blast approach. If your Council knows what it is looking for, it is far more likely that it will find the right man for the job.

Some Grand Knights I discussed this with have opposed the suggestion. They told me that they would take ANYBODY. So why not stay with a generic recruitment approach? My reply: If you put all the items sold in a Supermarket on the shelf in whatever order they came into the store, not only would it be harder to find what you were looking for, but also you'd buy less. By presenting like items together we are made aware of things we need that might not be on our shopping list. The same is true for our recruitment. By advertising for men interested in Church Activities we will focus these men's attention to this opportunity to get involved in the service area they have a passion for or at least an interest in. You'll actually make your recruitment message more compelling to the men that are likely to be interested in this Service Area. This approach also provides a tie-in between Activity Planning and Involvement Planning. When you goal the Council with new events, you can recruit specifically for those activities. For



example, if last year your Council only completed a few Youth events, when you set your new Youth Activity goal you can also plan a Youth focused Recruitment effort. It would explain what events your Council has done in the past for the youth of your Parish and Community, and most importantly what new activities you are planning to run with the help of the new members you are soliciting to join your Council. This approach is focused, Activity Driven and Involvement dependent. What better way to reach your Youth Activity goal than to recruit new members interested in working in this service area.

To balance the process, plan similar Recruitment efforts in the other Service Areas your Council is looking to improve its Activity and Involvement. One final thought here is the opportunity for your Council Service Directors to work individually with your Membership Director to plan these selective Recruitment Drives. The Service Directors will get exposed to Membership Activities and programs. And your Membership Director will become a lot more familiar with the events and efforts within each Service Area. This bilateral exposure is in itself a good thing by allowing each director to be more effective in their respective jobs, but also it provides potential career paths within the Council. This cross pollination can produce future Membership Directors with a Service Activity influence or a future Service Director with specific Involvement and Recruitment skills. Either way the Council wins.

What is key is that this practice changes the way your Council recruits. This does not become a specific Grand Knight's practice, rather how your Service Directors, Membership Team and Admission Committee views Activity, New Member Involvement and Recruitment. You might need to introduce and encourage this mindset, but once in place it can continue as a Council practice with very little influences from whoever is the current Grand Knight. And by giving this practice to the most likely members to become your Council's future Grand Knights, this process will be viewed by them as a natural way of doing things. Thus it should be easily supported



and promoted from Grand Knight to Grand Knight, and your Council will have gained another repeatable practice to insure its long term success and health.

4. Existing Member Re-Planning (The Member Development Team)

We've previously discussed how to address Involvement Planning for your existing members. In particular we made these key points.

- A long time Chairman of a Council program benefits from training new members for his event.
- Utilizing an existing Chairman to get a new program off the ground is a Win-Win situation. The Council benefits and the existing member's involvement in the Council can be re-vitalized.
- Existing Members who have never served as a Grand Knight can be encouraged and motivated to that service if you, as their Grand Knight, put a short term progression plan into place.

This practice, of existing member re-planning, heavily involves you the Grand Knight and it can be made repeatable through the formation of a Council Member Development Team. As an approach on how to do this, consider the following:

1. It is human nature for people to repeat what they have previously done.
2. It's often easier to continue doing something when someone else is doing it with you.

These two points should provide some insight into how I suggest you create this team and how to make this practice Council owned and repeatable. In most councils, it is the Deputy Grand Knight that becomes the next Grand Knight, so he should be the key person who drives this practice in your Council. And since we are talking about Member Activity, Involvement and development, the second key member of this committee should be your Chancellor.



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Ask your Deputy Grand Knight to setup an initial meeting between you, your Chancellor and him. The purpose of this first meeting should be to allow you to explain the practice to the team and secondly to set goals for existing member involvement for the coming year. Your team should come up with a list of members that have played an active role in running your Council as Chairmen, Directors, or Officers. Start out by culling from the list those members who have already served as Grand Knights within your Council. Our goal here is to develop new leadership. So unless the Council is in a desperate state and needs a Past Grand Knight to serve in an interim basis until a progression of officers can be re-established, give your PGKs a break and look at the rest of the Council members for potential future leaders. If possible, come up with a list of five to ten members whom the three of you feel have a potential of becoming future Grand Knights. Have your team list everything they can remember that these members have done in your Council, as knights, as parishioners, and/or as community leaders. It's almost like you are developing a resume for each of them. You'll be using this information to help you develop an initial plan for your team meeting with them. Once you have your list and background information pulled together, your team is ready to start meeting with the members.

The number of members on your list and the personalities of these members you're focusing on will allow you to decide whether to meet with them individually or in small groups of two, three, or four members. There are pros and cons to each approach. Meeting individually while more personal can be a little more intimidating to the member. He can perceive that he is being singled out to take on the responsibility of becoming the next Grand Knight. With the other approach, there may be less anxiety as the member will feel that he is part of a group of other brothers being considered, but he can also perceive that one of the other members needs to step forward to let him off the hook.

In either approach your goals are the same. You want to



encourage these members to consider the potential they have for becoming future leaders of your Council. You also want to make clear to them that they have the talents and experience necessary and have a flexible plan to accomplish this progression, which you and the Council will support.

All three of your team should be prepared sincerely to compliment and to motivate these members. If you get across to them that you sincerely believe they can take on this challenge and succeed, they are more likely to believe it, too. Explain to these members why the Council needs to be doing this member planning. Explain its purpose as providing a pipeline of talented, informed, experienced and motivated Catholic leaders that will ensure the ongoing health of your Council.

We leave this topic with a these highlights of advice.

- As Grand Knight promote this practice as a Council practice, led by your Deputy Grand Knight and Chancellor.
- Explain and promote this practice to your Council at your Business Meetings or better still have your Deputy Grand Knight report to the Council on the efforts made.
- Schedule this initial effort and a six month review on the Council's Event Calendar.
- Have your Deputy Grand Knight and Chancellor plan a six month review meeting with the members you met with to update their plans and to consider other members that were not previously considered.
- You now have a repeatable practice that can continue from Grand Knight to Grand Knight. Let this practice act as a natural consequence to New Member planning, as at some point a new member becomes an existing member.



5. Setting a Council Vision and Goals

Why do we want to make this task a repeatable Council practice? Shouldn't this be the sole responsibility of each new Grand Knight? While it is the responsibility of every leader to ensure that the group he leads has a clear destination and a planned path to get there, it is not or should not be something done solely by the leader. To the degree that a Grand Knight involves his Council in setting its vision and goals will affect their acceptance and support of the chosen path. We also need to ensure that this planning happens each year, making it an annual Council practice. If after your Council elects its new Grand Knight either in the May or June time frame, you were to hold a brief feedback session with the Council on what they feel should change or improve, you'd provide your successor with valuable member input that he can consider while developing a worthwhile vision statement and related goals. You then tell the Council that the new Grand Knight will announce his vision and goals to them at the July Council Business Meeting. What you would be doing is setting an important expectation of the new Grand Knight that he needs to deliver a message of where he wants to bring the Council in the upcoming fraternal year. The last step is to help the new Grand Knight accomplish this task by offering to meet with him before the next Planning Meeting. At this meeting you should relate to the new Grand Knight how you set your vision and related goals for the Council the previous year. Review the feedback given by the Council after his election and help him formulate an appropriate vision. Make suggestions to the new Grand Knight on how to set up goals to address this vision. It is imperative that you and he are successful. Be the scribe at this meeting and attempt to ensure whatever is developed gets written down. You'll find most Grand Knights will be tickled to get assistance completing this task. Your efforts will ensure that the new Grand Knight begins knowing that he is expected to present this at his first Business Meeting, and the new Grand Knight should be both receptive to this process and



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appreciative of your help. Develop with him a plan to communicate his new vision and goals to all the necessary audiences (i.e. Council, Parish and Community). Finally, make sure you add to the Council's Event Calendar not only the next year's Vision and Goals Setting Meeting, like the one you just had, but also a quarterly "State of the Council" report to be given by new Grand Knight at the October, January and April's Business Meetings. This is a very short report that just restates the Vision and Goals and explains to the Council the progress that has been made. It could be as simple as this.

"Our Vision was a closer Council Family. Our goals were to increase Council and Family events by 25%. Since July 1st, we have held the following Council and Family events and activities <List them>. This represents a 15% increase and in the next six months we have more family and Council events planned which we believe if they are all run will give us a 30% overall increase in these types of activities."

If the Grand Knight wants, he could also add a statement on the progress made toward his Membership, Involvement Opportunities and Member Development Goals. For example:

*"We have currently increased our membership by **four** new members, who have all become involved in the new Family and Council events we have held so far. We have contacted by phone over 60 existing inactive members and have seen 45 of them at recent Council activities or events. Our Member Development Team made up of the Grand Knight, Deputy Grand Knight and Chancellor has met with all new members and five existing members and put in place development and progression plans to create new leaders for our Council."*

This practice helps set the expectation that a vision and goals, for the Council, **WILL** be set by the new Grand Knight.



It also communicates to the Council the progress made throughout the year and gives the new Grand Knight an incentive to ensure that there is progress to report on. This practice also keeps the Council involved both in providing feedback for potential change before the vision and goals are set and expecting that the progress on these goals will be reported back to them. Lastly, it holds both the elected and appointed leadership of the Council accountable to all.

Relate to the new Grand Knight that he'll be expected to help his predecessor just as you are helping him. If the new Grand Knight runs for a 2nd year, you could let him fend for himself when setting his second year vision and goals. While most new Grand Knights could handle this, I'd still strongly recommend that you continue to offer your assistance. Things have really not changed that much. He still has a lot to plan for, and since you are still the Immediate PGK, your objective and experienced viewpoint is just as relevant and as needed. Recommend to him that he solicit the input and feedback of the general membership first. At a minimum, you should offer to set up the meeting and attend. Listen more this time; offer your guidance only where appropriate. If you again offer to be scribe at this meeting you can ensure important ideas, as well as the new vision and goals, are captured for the benefit of the Grand Knight. Setting goals for a second year should involve last year's staff. They are the key members that know first hand what progress was made and what opportunities exist for further improvements. This provides the staff with exposure to this practice, for when they become Grand Knights.

If you are the first Grand Knight in your Council to implement a practice such as this, it is extremely important that you treat this practice as belonging to the Council and not you. Otherwise it can come across as you're not letting go as the Past Grand Knight. If the new Grand Knight perceives that it is the brothers who elected him that expect a vision and goals to be set, he'll view this practice as a normal duty of his new position and will welcome your help as someone that has already been through it.



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If done, in a spirit of charity and unity, there shouldn't be any battles of egos between Immediate Past and the new Grand Knight. Instead, there should be a joining of experience and new ideas that benefit the Council in addressing the needs of our Church, our Families and our Communities.

With regards to how to do this goal setting, one way you can offer your experience to the new Grand Knight is by asking open ended questions versus "telling" him. You want him to come to his own vision statement and related goals by coming to his own conclusions, which should be based on both the collected Council feedback and your thought provoking guidance. Here are a few questions you might want to consider using either for your own goal setting or to help the new Grand Knight that will come after you. Modify these to your own situation and personality.

<p><i>"It appears from the feedback we received at the last meeting, that brothers in our Council perceive there is a direction we should be heading in. What do you think they are saying it should be?"</i></p>	<p>This will help him to consider the Council input.</p>
<p><i>"Our Council adopted this practice of each new Grand Knight setting a vision for the Council and a set of goals to get there. When I was asked to do this, I tried to think of how the Council would have changed at the end of my term compared to how I viewed it after I was elected. What's the one biggest change you'd like to see happen at the end of your term of office?"</i></p>	<p>This will allow him to identify a vision he can be passionate about.</p>
<p><i>"Now that you have defined your vision for our Council, how will you know and how will the Council know that progress is being made toward reaching that vision?"</i></p>	<p>This helps him to develop an achievable vision and define measurement for it.</p>
<p><i>"What specific action does the Council need to make, such as events, activities or changes in the way we do things, to move ourselves toward that vision?"</i></p>	<p>This should prompt specific goals to accomplish the vision.</p>



<p>For each of the goals developed from the last question ask <i>“When does this goal need to be accomplished and how you and the Council will know that it has been successful?”</i></p>	<p>These questions will help set completion dates and measurement to be successful.</p>
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Using the ideas presented in the Activity and Involvement Sections of the Book, assist your new Grand Knight in coming up with ways to communicate his new vision and goals to the Council, to the Parish and to the Communities you serve. While he will still need to do Activity Planning for these goals to work out their details, communicating where the Council will be heading will add a high level of expectancy that the goals will actually be reached and the vision will become a reality.

Having come this far, in helping your Grand Knight and Council, take your right hand and reach it over and behind your left shoulder and pat your back, for you have made a great contribution to the continued success of your Council!

6. Setting a Council Budget

Very large councils with their own homes are often required to develop and follow planned budgets, not only for current year business purposes but also for contingency and capital purchases. If you hadn’t planned for building maintenance and long term improvements it would be extremely difficult to handle a major expense within a current year’s budget. These councils are more likely also to run the fraternal side of their organization the same way. But smaller councils, or those with no property, tend to handle things on a more informal cash basis. Dues and fund raising bring money into the Council and donations, per capita, supplies, and service project expenses send money out. While these transactions for the most part describe the accounting of a typical council, they don’t address our topic, that of Setting a Council Budget.

By definition a budget is a planning tool, something we have talked about throughout the book. We have seen how



design/planning and repetition in our Activity and Involvement practices can have a positive and continued effect on own growth and level of service delivered. They have the same effect on Council finances.

Council Fixed Expenses Budget

Some might not see a connection between Budgeting and delivery of Charitable Service. To support a Council effectively doesn't require a lot of money but it does require some. If the Council's level of Activity is increasing, more events and activities are occurring which require more money: whether for project expenses or upfront money for fund raising projects.

As a Council grows it will also generate both the need and the likelihood that it can sustain its own First Degree team. To outfit a ceremonial team properly requires more money. And if the Council pays for their Grand Knight to represent them at State Social events and if some or all of the expense of the Council's Convention delegates are covered, these items will add to the Council's liabilities. More importantly, to protect any service organization from possible financial and liability claims, it is prudent to purchase and maintain liability insurance coverage. All these items and other unmentioned expenses that are unique to each council add to the cost of running a financially sound organization. While a council that doesn't own property may not have capital improvements to plan for, every council will have some long term expenses for which they need to plan. Maybe it's planning for a Council Anniversary celebration, or the purchase of gas grills, canopies or other equipment to be used to conduct community and council events, or whatever is needed for the Council to be effective and efficient in the running of service programs. The bottom line is that a Council Budget can be a way to ensure that the Council has available the funds it needs to run the organization both now and in the near future. Budgeting doesn't require any level of high finances: put a small team together to draw up a proposed budget to present to the



Council. For example: a council is saving to purchase a complete set of First Degree Ceremonial robes and paraphernalia and estimating the cost at \$1,200. They have allocated one fourth of that cost to be raised/saved each year before they can fully fund their Degree Team's equipment. In the meantime they will be borrowing robes from a sister council. So budgeting will also allow this Council to determine the amount of fund raising necessary to augment Dues revenue to cover these expenses. In the following chart a miscellaneous expense is being allocated for things that come up during the year. This budget recognizes that we are unable to plan for everything; a contingency can still help address an unexpected item.

**Proposed FIXED EXPENSE BUDGET
July 2007-June 2008**

Motion that the Council adopts the attached Fixed Expense Budget for the fraternal year of 2007-2008. The Council's Trustees using figures from previous year expenses and expected increases/decreases will approve individual expense items.

FIXED EXPENSE	FY2007-FY2008
Supreme Per Capita	\$700
Supreme Catholic Advertising	\$130
State Per Capita	\$450
Annual Council Liability Insurance	\$350
Delegate Convention Expenses	\$600
2 tickets to State Ball and State Granite Award Banquet for GK & wife	\$80
Supreme Supplies	\$400
Grand Knight Expenses (as per Council Bylaws)	\$200
Miscellaneous Fixed Expenses	\$140
One fourth of First Degree Team Equipment	\$400
TOTAL	\$3,450



Fixed Donations Budget

Another type of financial planning that can be very beneficial to a Council is to formulate a Fixed Donations Budget which includes those items that the Council normally contributes to each year — RSVP support, Scholarships, Food baskets, food pantry, etc. By being in the budget, it is intended that these items will be funded first as funds become available. Listing them can focus the Council's efforts to plan for and conduct specific fund raisers to meet these key donations as well as other miscellaneous request received throughout the year. In this a sample Fixed Donation Budget, notice that this budget is planned for the Calendar year and not the Fraternal year, which is how one council decided to run it to eliminate the need for both budgets to come up at the same time of the year. When to run the budget will be decided by your own council and its financial condition. Whether you have both of these budgets start together or have one staggered, doesn't really matter. It is the fact that your council has a budget to follow that is really important.

Proposed FIXED DONATIONS BUDGET for CY2007

Based on the recommendations of our Council Trustees, it is proposed that the council accept the following Fixed Donations for CY2007, to be funded by Interest from the Council's Investment Fund. As interest funds become available to meet this obligation, they should be maintained in a Cash Account and their disbursement schedule be approved by our Council's Trustees through their initialing of vouchers from the Financial Secretary to the Council's Treasurer. Any shortfall in available investment interest will be covered by specific Charitable Fund Raising events.



FIXED DONATION	CY2007
RSVP 3 @\$500	\$1,500
John Scotti Scholarships 2 @\$500	\$1,000
Tootsie Roll Expenses 2005	\$250
Food Baskets - Easter 2005	\$300
Food Baskets - Thanksgiving 2005	\$300
Food Baskets - Christmas 2005	\$300
Ladies Guild Mercy Meals \$100/Quarter	\$400
Holy Angels Food Pantry \$50/Month	\$600
Kidney Fund adopted Patient Donation \$100/Month	\$1,200
Adopt-a-child	\$300
SEDER Meal	\$100
Adopt a family at Christmas	\$250
Kids Christmas Party	\$500
Mother's Day Flowers	\$250
Total	\$7,250

How to develop these budgets doesn't take a lot of planning. The initial budget for a Council that didn't have one could be generated by listing the major fixed expenses and donations that happened in the previous year. Then, the budget team need only review the previous year's items and make adjustments, additions, or remove items that are no longer appropriate. Since both budgets require a vote from the Council, plan their review at least two or three months before the budget is going to take effect.

Often someone in the Council will be reluctant to vote on a budget without the Council already having the money to fund it. It is important that someone on the Budget Team or a Council Trustee explain that a Budget is a plan and not an expenditure. Sometimes a budget item may not be spent or an approved and funded budget might run out of money before all items are dealt with because one or more items cost more than what was initially planned. While those items would have required separate approval from the Council to spend over what was planned for in the Budget, this is just the real world.



Things like this happen in our home budgets as well so there should be no surprise or shock. The good aspect still remains that we are dealing with 80-90% of both our key fixed expenses and donations.

As always, put these Budget setting events on your Council's Event Calendar.

7. Setting a Membership Agenda

We now come to the last of our practices to make into Council owned and repeatable ones. I call this one "Setting a Membership Agenda". Just like new Grand Knights, new Membership Directors often approach their new role differently from their predecessor. To provide some stability and consistency in your Council's Membership Agenda, you need to tie it to the other previously discussed practices. In particular, we want to drive our Membership Agenda off of the Council's planned Activity Goals, an excellent way to make the practice repeatable and measurable, since it can speak to the *How* and *Why* we are recruiting rather than only the *When* we will hold membership drives or the number of members we want to bring in. Linking this to the Activity Goals is of paramount importance to the success of your Council.

I have talked extensively on changing our mindset from one that focuses on numbers to one that is Activity based and Involvement dependent. During the discussion of New Member Planning, I also introduced the concept of Service Area Recruitment. Starting with an Activity Goal, I suggested we focus our membership recruitment efforts on those that would attract men with a passion for or strong interest in that particular service area, and more particularly, in the new events we had planned to run with their help.

Setting a Membership Agenda should start with the Grand Knight's vision and goals for the Council and be specifically defined by the Activity planned by each Service Director. For example, if our Grand Knight has established and communicated his vision for his Council to become a more



prayerful and Church driven Council, (That is to say, becoming an organization that meets more of the needs of the local parish(es) our Council supports and providing the opportunity for more devotional events for the Council family to participate in), this might translate into an increased Activity goal for our Church Director. Evaluating last year's Church events, he may find that the Council, with a little more increased involvement, has the capacity to meet the Grand Knight's vision. In this case, no additional Church focused recruitment maybe necessary. Or the Church Director may determine that we need to run four more Church events such as a Spring Cleanup, a Monthly Rosary, a Vocation information weekend and Assisting in a Time & Talent drive to bring more parishioners into the different ministries of the Parish. This defined Activity Goal can now be translated into part of the Membership Agenda. After discussing this need with the Church Director, the Membership Director may determine that three new members are needed to assist in these events. These members should have a strong interest or passion for Church related activity. When setting out to recruit these men, the Membership Director might attempt to focus his attention on the men of the parish that are already involved in some Church ministries, such as Eucharistic Ministers or Ministers of the Word and then expanded to other men with an interest in Church related activities.

Once this first step is completed, similar conversations would be carried out with the other four Service Directors.

Director of Membership

I have seen in many councils the role of the Membership Director as a recruiter only. A new Grand Knight, when wrestling with the decision of whom to make his Membership Director, is obviously going to consider someone who knows how to recruit. If the position had the title of Council Membership Recruiter, it would be a great choice. But as it stands, that is not the title of this Council role; it is instead "*Membership DIRECTOR*". If we change the order of the



words of this title, it might help to see its real purpose.

Director of Membership sounds more like a Director of Admissions, like at a school or university. And this is how I see this role. Just like a College Director of Admissions, the Director of Membership should have similar responsibilities. There are four broad areas that I see as common.

1. **Setting an Admissions Agenda** – a formal plan that ties the Activity Goals of the Council to the overall Growth of the Council.
2. **Recruitment Activity** - identifying whom to recruit; marketing efforts necessary to attract them, and matching whom we recruited with whom we needed.
3. **New Member Orientation** – the initial training and planned development to allow new members to become knowledgeable about the organization they have joined and how it operates.
4. **New Member Integration** – the process for transforming a new member into an “*existing member*” who is actively involved in the committees, programs and social structure of the council.

Part of our obsession of focusing on new members lies in the need to retain a level of active members in a Council. I don't know what the exact numbers are throughout our Order, but within the councils I have been involved with it's not that unusual to have less than 20% of the members in a council who could be considered Active. Let's be very liberal here in our definition of an Active member. Let's assume that an Active member is one that either attends at least three events throughout the year, or chairs, or actively works in at least one event in a year's time. Even with this liberal definition it just is not that unusual to have 75-80% of the membership in the Inactive ranks. If we were able to recruit even 10 or 15% from this group of men to work on the Activity projects of the Council that would help accomplish these goals. So measure the success of your Director of Membership based on getting



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men to fulfill the Activity goals of the Council and not just recruiting a particular number of new members. While the responsibility of keeping existing members active lies with the Council's Chancellor, there's nothing that says he can't work with the Membership Director to run a few focused drives to attract existing inactive members back to areas of their Council's service offerings that they may regain an interest in. If we are throwing 75-80% of our members on the Suspension and Inactivity heap pile we can not sustain any level of service. If we need continually to admit new members, shouldn't someone be asking why? It appears to be an inexcusable waste of talent and experience.

Please be clear on my direction here. I don't view this as an either or situation. That is, to recruit new members or to recruit existing inactive members. Every Catholic man is a potential leader of your Council, but so are existing inactive members. You have to have both in your Membership Agenda and the need to recruit or reactivate these members is because the Council has something planned for them to do.

Like a Director of Admissions, the Director of Membership's role includes the orientation and integration of new members into the organization. Just as schools orient their new students to how their school works and how to be successful there, so to should a Director of Membership. Developing a formal New Member Program that all new members are enrolled in at the time of their admissions can help standardize this orientation process. Once developed, the program will be able to be used no matter who the Membership Director is. And what kinds of things should be in this program? It should contain the formal goals, training and planned development for the new members.

Goals could be very simple: meet three existing members each month, meet and talk with a Past Grand Knight of the Council, attend another first degree, co-chair a Council Event, meet one on one with the Grand Knight, develop a personal goal for your participation within the council, etc, etc.



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Training could be done in small groups of new members with different Council Officers and could be augmented with a New Member Packet, containing some or all of the following:

- Welcome letter from the Grand Knight
- Current Council Roster
- Copy of the Council's Bylaws
- Knight in Shining Armor Information Card
- Council Event Calendar
- Copy of the Council's Newsletter
- Council Mailing List Information Card
- Details of the first 3 assigned events
- Council History
- Assigned PGK
- 3 copies of Form-100
- A guide to making motions for the beginner
- A wife and family's guide to your Council and the Knights
- Unique information about your Council
- Appointment Card to meet with the Members Development Team

Expand or tailor this package to your Council's unique needs. Spend some time explaining to your new members everything contained in their packets and answer any questions they might have. Make the contents of this packet and the expectations that are set forth in it, something to be reviewed at the end of every Grand Knight's term of office. Reviewing the packet will allow new ideas to be added and appropriate changes to be introduced on how the packet is used within your Council and will also allow the new Grand Knight and his new Membership Director to benefit from a reviewed and revised membership tool.



Measurement

What is the true measurement of a successful Membership Director? Some might say it is the achievement of Supreme's net Membership Quota. But by now you should be able to view this quite differently. It's not how many you recruit, but whom you recruit and what you do with them afterwards.

If your Membership Director is correctly identifying the type of men your Activity Goals require and after recruiting them is able to orient them and help ensure their integration into your Council, then I'd say he was very successful.

If instead your Membership Director is your star recruiter and brings new members into your Council with no interest or expectation to support the Council's new activities/events and who have not been indoctrinated into your Council or integrated into its committees, programs and social structure, then it is likely that these new members are destined to the realms of Inactivity, lack of Involvement without a permanent connection to your Council. Without serious intervention their path to suspension is only waiting the passage of time.

The second aspect of your Membership Director's performance is how well he has led, organized and made repeatable the membership efforts and practices of his Council.

- How well has he taught others to recruit, involve, and integrate new members into the Council's Activity?
- How well has he married the need for workers and activity goals of the other Council directors with his own recruitment/involvement plans?
- How well has he prepared other members to follow in his own footsteps?

These are measurement questions that a Grand Knight can use both to set goals for and to evaluate his Membership Director.



Final Thoughts on Membership

It is important that one does not view this approach as heresy to the Recruitment direction advocated by our Supreme Council. Granted it does focus us more narrowly on whom we are marketing our invitation to Membership on, but it is not intended to be in any way exclusive or restrictive. It aims to increase the probability that who we attract will be able to develop an immediate connection with the Council through their interest in the activity we plan to involve them in. *What or who you are looking for is likely what or whom you will find.* Your Council should always welcome other qualified candidates even if their passion is different from the direction of the Council's current vision. Your challenge is to involve and integrate these new members as well.

One effective way to achieve integrated and involved new members is to set that as a goal for the appropriate Service Director and your Membership Director: by matching up an existing service event or activity with this new member's plan for involvement. If the recruited member is interested in something new that the Council hasn't done yet, have him work with the appropriate Service Director to plan and develop that idea for a future Activity of the Council. You'll end up developing an instant chairman and provide the opportunity for the new member to develop a strong and lasting connection with the Council.

So viewed, this approach is a refinement that is complimentary to Supreme's Recruitment efforts.



8. *Communicating Your Council Plan*

While Section Two of the book extensively covered how to communicate your Council Plan to the audiences we serve, sharing some thoughts can help make this a repeatable and Council owned activity.

- Start by placing a communication date on your Event Calendar allowing the communication process to be reviewed ahead of time and increasing the likelihood that your staff will have something prepared to communicate.
- Formally document all correspondence to external groups about your Council Event Calendar. Put this into a small three ring binder with a label on the cover titled: **“Council Communication Plan”**.

Include a current Council Event Calendar and ensure it stays updated. Pass this book from one administration to another. Assigning this duty to one of your officers or directors (for example: your DGK, Recorder, Program or Community Director), can facilitate the transfer from one Grand Knight’s staff to another. Otherwise it will come back to the new Grand Knight who will have to find a new home for it or do it himself. If you get the Council to agree that it should be a regular duty of an Officer or Director, there will develop a natural expectation for its continuance.

- Finally, set a level of expectation for communicating new and existing events. When planning events, consider and ensure the process of how the event will be communicated to its target audience and spell it out. Just as important is how the event’s results will be communicated, so ensure that it is part of the event’s planning as well. If you make a point to do this for all activities, it can become a standard practice and normal expectation of the Council.



In Conclusion

I wish to thank you for your interest and consideration of the ideas and suggestions I have offered throughout the book. It shows me that you possess a strong desire to improve your Council by allowing it to grow naturally, not only in numbers but far more importantly in delivering Service to our Church and the Communities you live in. I know that however you adapt these practices and ideas to the unique needs of your Council that the results will ensure that Passivo, Xlewd and DoWonce, the dragons of Inactivity, Exclusion and No Repeatable actions will be held at bay. I am certain your leadership, vision and guidance will herald a new phase of growth for your Council. And finally the increased Activity, the higher level of Involvement/Inclusion and the Council owned repeatable practices you and the future Grand Knights of your Council establish and keep alive will provide a legacy that all will be proud of.



Comments on the Book

I'd love to hear about your successes and any new ideas you may have for improvement. Please know that you and your Council Family will remain in my prayers and thoughts.

God Bless
Greg





**Notes Page for Your ideas on
Creating Repeatable Council Practices**



Random Thoughts and Ideas

The following ideas and thoughts were scribbled in different margins of the many drafts of this book. While I didn't utilize them in the main text, I offer them here for your parting consideration.

- **Jet Pilots don't use rear view mirrors.** Commercial jets cruise at 600 mph or 10 miles per minute, at that speed a pilot doesn't look back. So as the pilot that is responsible for steering your council forward, you shouldn't look back either. Time is quickly changing the makeup of your council membership, so stop looking into the past and focus your attention to pilot your council into a more active and enthusiastic present.
- ***"If it is to be, it is up to me!"*** Don't blame the Supreme Council, or your State Council or even your District Deputy. As their Grand Knight, what will happen in your council and in the mind set of your members is your responsibility. Take it and make something happen! You are trading your term of office for what you can change and improve in your council. **TRADE THAT TIME FOR BIG POSITIVE CHANGES!**
- **Sell the results of your ideas** before presenting them. Say, *"This is what this new project will mean to our council, to our church, to our community"* before explaining the details of what will be required to deliver the project. This is how you win someone's mindset and support without being mired down in the details. While the details still need to be addressed, people will be more receptive to them if they know what the ultimate benefit is,
- **Be a creative Grand Knight.** Despite popular belief that creative people must be artists, scientists, writers, engineers, inventors, etc. anyone can think, dream and act creatively! Independent of interests, talents, intelligence, education, or life experiences, we all possess limitless ability to be creative. Indeed a work of art, a scientific discovery, a computer technology, or literary work all show evidence of



creative minds at work, but have you considered that finding a new way home to avoid traffic jams, or making a tight budget work, or keeping your children and loved ones involved in your life, or finding a way to balance a busy life between social, family, spiritual, and work are also evidence of creativity. Being creative simply means we are able to find solutions that resolve or improve the challenges that life and our own goals provide us. Most of the time these solutions will not be obvious or self -apparent yet they tend to be simple and straight forward once we find them. I am sure you’ve found yourself saying “*Why didn't I think of that, it's so simple*”. **So how do you become a creative Grand Knight?**

1. **Believe a solution exists** and that it’s lurking right on the surface waiting to be found. If you doubt there is a solution, your mind will provide you with many creative reasons why you are right. On the other hand if you believe and act like a solution does exist, your mind plus the minds of the council brothers around you will go to work generating new and creative approaches to the problem at hand. Among these are the solutions you seek.
2. **Eliminate negative vocabulary** both spoken and thought: they shut down creative thoughts and leave us in the realm of interacting with the false comfort of “*what has always been*”. Always consider why it can be done, and why it can be improved.

Examples of Negative Thinking	When you hear brothers using these phrases, counter them immediately with
<i>“That’s impossible!”</i>	<i>“How could we make it possible?”</i>
<i>“It’s not the way, we already did it!”</i>	<i>“This sounds like a fresh new way to approach this project, let’s give it a try!”</i>
<i>“No use trying!”</i>	<i>“We are benefiting our Church, Community or Council, that is why we should try it!”</i>
<i>“It won’t work!”</i>	<i>“How could we make it work?”</i>
<i>“Can’t be done!”</i>	<i>“How can we get this done?”</i>
<i>“It’s too hard!”</i>	<i>“It might be hard work and a challenge, but what could we do to make it easier?”</i>



3. **Be receptive to out of the box thinking.** Listen to new ideas with your tongue clenched between your teeth. No matter how off the wall is the idea someone is expressing to you, it will always have merit if you listen and ask positive questions about it. For example *“Tell me more”* *“How would you make this happen?”* *“What help from the council would be needed?”* We can promote our new brothers’ involvement in our council by actively listening to them allowing them to comfortably express new creative ideas that are not bound to the past. If we listen and recognize ideas that are creative by encouraging and supporting them, we become creative ourselves. And through this creativity we can address the needs of our Church and Community.
4. **Corner the market on listening not talking.** You have been given two ears and one mouth. Use them in the same proportions.
5. **Exercise your creativity everyday!** Give yourself 10 minutes each morning to come up with new ideas to a previous activity, event or action. Pick a topic and start spouting ideas. Don’t limit yourself to current norms or the ways things have previously been done. Let your mind wander from one idea to another jotting these down on paper as you go. Once the flow of ideas slows down, read back over your list. As you review your list the gems will show themselves. Pick one or two of these ideas to implement. Do this again each morning and you’ll be surprised how creative your mind can really be.





Are you locked on the idea that recruitment alone will make your council grow? Is your Council caught in a Recruit-Suspend cycle without any long term growth in your membership ranks? Get ready for a different approach to long term council growth.

Are you burning out your existing members and at the same time losing the interest of new recruits to the activities of your council? Get ready for a different approach to increasing Activity, Involvement and Membership development.

Are you overwhelmed with all the trapping of your new elected position as your Council's Grand Knight? Get ready for a different approach to planning for and executing this most important Council Leadership position.

Toward a More Active Council is Greg Taillon's first book on his experiences in the Knights. In it he relates a new approach to long term membership growth through increased activity, involvement and the development of repeatable council practices.

He is currently working on his second book called ***The Second Best Job in the Order*** which is about the coaching role of the District Deputy.



Greg joined the Knights in September, 1985 and has served as both a Grand Knight and District Deputy as well as in numerous State Chairman and State Director positions. At the time of publication of this book he was the NH State Council's State Deputy-elect.

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