

A MESSAGE FROM THE
SOVEREIGN GRAND COMMANDER, Northern Jurisdiction

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The Valley of Chicago (VOC) conducted an interesting research project some years back when it hired the Gallup Polling Organization in New Jersey to conduct research on the opinions of Valley members. The polling was conducted from 1993-95 and included existing members as well as those who had let their membership lapse. One particular question asked during the polling stands out in this unique survey, covering 400 Valley of Chicago members. “What do you think is the greatest strength of the Scottish Rite Valley of Chicago?”

What conclusions can be drawn from this survey? You can decide for yourself. What if we spent more money today and did the same type of survey on a jurisdiction-wide basis? Would the leaders of the fraternity pay any more attention to a more current study of its members?

It is interesting to note the lack of positive responses to some of what traditionally takes up much of our time in the fraternity. For example, charities and ritual work together polled only 12 percent of responses and yet these two segments generally occupy the vast majority of the time and efforts of our officers and members. Would the results of the poll been different if we had selected a number of local symbolic lodges in the Chicago area? Again, you can decide for yourself.

Whether we admit to it or not, many of our members vote with their feet and don't attend our meetings. Why? Could it be that the leaders of the craft are not listening to our members? Has the Masonic fraternity evolved into an organization of top-down management with regard to the communications with our members? Perhaps another question that should have been asked to these 400 Valley members:

“Do the leaders of the fraternity serve the needs of the institution or do they serve the needs of the members?”

Noted management guru Peter Drucker identified one of the primary responsibilities of management was to effectively communicate with its customers (members). Early in his career, Drucker made one of his many brilliant yet simple observations when he noted that management must understand “the most important thing in communication is to hear what isn't being said.”

One of our Deputies recently noted that if the Masonic fraternity were to go out of business tomorrow, he wouldn't miss the meetings and responsibilities of the office, but he would certainly miss many friendships. This Brother truly understood the value of these enduring lifelong friendships each of us made when we knelt at the altar of Freemasonry.

Understanding that the Masonic fraternity has experienced a significant drop in membership over the last 50 years, perhaps the next Gallup Poll should include a question about our leadership at every level of the craft. “Are the Masonic leaders of the 21st century listening to what isn't being said?”

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Response:	Percent
Brotherhood/camaraderie	20
Its members/people	18
Charitable work/philanthropy/helping people	8
Degree work/programs	4
Programs/activities/performances	4
Dedication	3
Education	2
Morals/ethics/values	2
Information/communication	2
Leadership	2
Large membership	2
Association with/assistance to Blue Lodge	2
Other	8
Don't know	19
Nothing	2
Everything	1
Refused	1

