Brethren,

I have been noodling around some meaningful words to convey my personal perspective around why Masonry matters, and why the Craft Lodge resonates so deeply in my core. From our Grand Lodge Website, I harvested the following;

**A LODGE IS NOT A BUILDING…IT’S THE MEN THAT FORM IT.**

“The foundation of the Masonic family is the Masonic lodge. It is here that Masonry teaches its lessons: kindness in the home, honesty in business, courtesy in society, fairness in work, concern for the unfortunate and respect for one another.“

Our Grand Maser has stated that "the quality of our membership must always remain foremost, in our hearts and minds, when we consider proposals for change. We must not lose the true perspective of the function of a Masonic Lodge. Its function primarily, is not to initiate candidates or merely to enlarge its membership. Its chief concern is - or should be – education, learning, being happy within ourselves and more importantly, communicating that happiness to others. That is what Masons do."

Years ago, I read a series of three books by Ken Blanchard and Sheldon Bowles around leadership and developing a winning organization. This series of books **“Big Bucks”, Raving Fans, and “Gung Ho”** describe a three legged stool that every organization needs to consider in order to grow and prosper.

Three is an important number to masons, three degrees, three pillars, three principal officers, three grand masters, three sets of three tools. Consider that Masons participate in three progressive degrees, each one teaching an important lesson through the use of symbols. The degrees help a Mason think about the big questions: Where did I come from? What am I doing here? And what comes next?

So combining the words of the M.W. with the concepts of a three legged stool may solve my noodling issues.

The first of these books, **Big Bucks** is about having a sense of business acumen in delivering your offerings. . By focusing on concepts like commitment, intensity, purpose, and even fun, you can create an irresistible paradigm for success.

**Big Bucks** asks you to consider three tests for success.

* The Test of Joy, - Do you enjoy the Work that you do. That your lodge provides?
* The Test of Purpose, Do you understand the purpose of being here, why your presence matters?
* The Test of Creativity – Do you greet challenges as opportunities? Are you willing to commit to making your Lodge successful?

The Grand Master has said, we need to engage all of our members, use their strengths and align their skills to get involved in making Masonry Matter. The Test of Creativity is about using everyone’s strengths to overcome any challenges facing the Lodge.

The Second book, **Raving Fans** is about delivering value to your customer. In Masonic terms, Raving Fans is about attracting the right people, getting them engaged and keeping them committed. Three must be an important number to Ken Blanchard as well, because Raving Fans is about executing Three Secrets.

**First secret, Decide what you want:**

To create Raving fans, we need to first be clear on the types of men who will be interested in Masonry. First you will need a detailed vision, creating a vision of your future Lodge, centered on our core values and personality will take time and effort but without it you will not be able to progress.

Defending the West gate is about filtering through the wannabees and identifying the individuals who comprise our core values. By being clear on our purpose, we connect to the right minded men who will thrive in Masonry.

**Secret 2: Discover what the Members want:**

A lodge is made up of the men who form it, it therefore follows that you canvass your members for their needs and expectations and be prepared to respond to their feedback. Our newer members are Seekers, our Mentors and leaders need to work with them to illustrate how the degrees answer their big questions. Get them involved and help them understand the deeper meanings of the Work.

To develop understanding we are taught to ask questions and sincerely listen. Past experience has taught members that chances are you don't really want to know what they think and feel. If they are going to open up, you have to first gain credibility. An aside, the Brother to Brother program is full of ideas and techniques for gathering insight into what the membership want. A caveat here, the disillusioned customer votes with his or her wallet, the disillusioned mason votes with his absence.

**Secret 3: Deliver plus one percent**

Members want consistency. We need to deliver what they expect plus one percent. Small incremental gains for growth drive engagement. Consistency creates credibility. Credibility inspires confidence. Good execution of the Work and ritual creates a common sense of accomplishment. Lodges exist to communicate our core values and teachings; passing on the values and lessons we all have adopted. The Work provides us with a consistent and detailed toolkit that drives an inward perspective and lets us all contemplate our individual journey. The work shapes our habits, and inculcates those moral tendencies and our core principles in our hearts. A well delivered degree makes everyone want to stage engaged and participate in growing the Lodge.

The Third of three books, is **Gung Ho**. Gung Ho means “Work Together” or “Work in Harmony.” Something that we all aspire for in Masonry. The Gung Ho theory comprises three key principles.

**First Principle: .The Spirit of the Squirrel (Doing Worthwhile Work)**   
Squirrels work with purpose and dedication. As Masons our Work is meaningful on an intellectual, physical and spiritual layer. It sharpens our saw. The Spirit of the Squirrel, speaks about an understanding that what we do makes the world a better place. Everyone works toward a shared goal.

In Masonry that goal is to make good men better. Memory work, to strengthen the mind, enlightenment to strengthen our spirit, support of the Supreme Being to strengthen our faith... Trust and putting each other first leads to support and harmony. When you put the effort into doing the Work well…in a timely fashion…in harmony with each other…so that all parts are done equally well, then we see confidence grow. The result? Self-Esteem – internal happiness and contentment that makes each of us feel good about our Lodge and the work we do.

Within a lodge the masons support best that which they help create. The goal of excellence in the Work focuses collective attention. Our values are then derived from the work and guide our individual plans, decisions and actions.

**Second Principle: The Way of the Beaver (In control of achieving the goal)**   
Beavers do their work their own way. They work freely and get the job done at the same time.

I can attest that the Words of the Work are consistently delivered, but the intonation, delivery and style is so varied. Each Mason puts his own stamp on how they achieve the goal. Gung Ho requires work that stretches people’s ability that demands people’s best and allows them to learn and move ahead into uncharted territory. How many of us have taken a part in the work and not had a big gulp before our first time delivery? From the lesser lights, to an apron charge, to the obligation. Our work stretches each of us, and once you understand the part enables a deeper sense of understanding and enlightenment.

**Third Principle: The Gift of the Goose (Cheering each other on)**   
Geese honk and encourage each other during flight. The way of the goose speaks of active or passive congratulations that must be TRUE (i.e. Timely, Responsive, Unconditional, Enthusiastic)

Congratulations are affirmations of who and what people are and that they do matter, and that they are making valuable contribution toward achieving the shared mission.

Telling people what a great job they’ve done or presenting an award is an active congratulation. Passive congratulations are such things as stepping aside and letting a team member go forward with a tricky, complicated, and important part, mentoring as necessary, gaining satisfaction when the Work is delivered well. Remember to cheer the progress, not just the results.

**A LODGE IS NOT A BUILDING…IT’S THE MEN THAT FORM IT.**

Masonry exists as a benevolent fraternity. Individuals come together as Brothers to provide an opportunity to pause and reflect on the important matters. Teach each other what matters, prioritize our lives and learnings to look beyond today’s horizon and consider the meaningful elements of our lives. To add value everywhere we go.

To each of you here, I ask, can you pass the three tests?

The Test of Joy? Will you work with each other to define and explain the joy you receive from Masonry?

The Test of Purpose? Can you explain the purpose of your Lodge and why it matters? Are you willing to commit to making your Lodge Successful?

The Test of Value? What value do you place on the privileges and mysteries you have been exposed to, mused upon and practiced?