

Exchange of Value

October 20, 2015

Hugh Murray Lodge

Brethren, I was recently asked to speak at Ryerson University to a delegation of entrepreneurs from Slovenia and much of my talk focused on the Exchange of Value. The laws governing the exchange of value can easily be attributed to entrepreneurialism however giving this talk led me to reflect on this subject in terms of freemasonry during my ride home.

Let me first digress, in saying that sales makes up a substantial portion of my work life and the exchange of value occurs in every interaction.

When a small community baker sells a warm loaf of bread for \$5, they are providing that customer with nourishment, and in some cases comfort, and even satisfaction. I say comfort because perhaps that buyer prefers to bite into a new warm loaf of bread on a cold day. I say satisfaction, because perhaps that buyer benefits from a sense of satisfaction in buying local from their local baker. The baker in exchange for these benefits bestowed upon the customer receives the monetary sum of \$5. The baker also receives the patronage of that buyer and indirectly may also benefit from referrals from that customer thus leading to increased customers, as well as the benefit of overall increased patronage and rapport, which is always important in a small community.

If the exchange of value presented by either the customer, or the baker in this transaction were to be unequal, in any way, it would inevitably lead to an early end in this relationship and quite possibly a quick end to the sale of the loaf of bread.

Let's consider for example if our community baker had been selling a cold loaf of bread, or if the community baker was in fact located in the local Fortino's store, thus no longer being a "local producer". Likewise, let's consider the consequences if the buyer had arrived with \$4 instead of \$5. Now our buyer is buying a cold loaf of bread from Fortino's bakery for \$4. They think to themselves, this is not warm, and I'm not buying local, but it's cheaper than the community baker, so I will proceed with the exchange. However if the bread is cold, the seller is Fortinos and the bread is \$6, that buyer might buy once for the purposes of convenience, but will inevitably end the relationship in favour of the community baker with warm bread in future.

Before we move off of the subject of this transaction brethren, let's consider for a moment the opposite. Let's consider that the community bakery smells delicious, customers are welcomed with a warm greeting, and the bread is \$3.50 a loaf. Customers will no doubt be lining up to purchase this bread because the scales of value are tipped in the favour of the customer. The baker is providing more value than the customer in this transaction. This is what we call good will and despite to what you might think, good will can be stored and accumulated and once accumulated is what we call buyer loyalty. Consider for example when the bakery hires a second baker. This second baker takes a couple of weeks to get adjusted and in the meantime the bread isn't that great. Customers will still buy... for a while. Until that accumulated good will which we call loyalty has been depleted.

I digress upon the details of this transaction brethren, because the sale of a loaf of bread is far more complex than a simple transaction. Such is the case with any sale, and indeed, any human interaction.

When we apply these same laws of value exchange to Freemasonry we come to the same result. If you have ever listened to a member of a Lodge explaining that they keep getting great candidates who start out strong, fail to progress, and eventually drift away and demit, then you have seen these same principles alive in our Craft. Brethren, just because a new member attends Lodge on a regular basis does not mean that their needs are being met. These brethren could very well be just simply attending out of convenience, and eventually a better exchange of value will present itself within their lives, and they will drift away and drop their membership.

When we have a new prospective applicant, we typically meet with them and answer their questions. We reflect upon what Freemasonry has provided us, and we learn about the prospective applicant and what has peaked their interest.

Brethren, if the longevity and vitality of your Lodge is on your mind and you are having trouble maintaining membership then you need simply to reflect upon what value you are providing your members. When they travel through snowy winter evenings away from their families are you providing them with an evening complete with a full and vibrant agenda? When you ask them to take on a part within the Work, are you meeting with them and sharing in fellowship while learning together – or are you simply delegating with the old adage of “if you want it you have to work for it”. Brethren if we reflect back on our own individual journeys I think that most of the people in this room can note at least one person in particular that took interest in them and took the time to guide them through Masonry, to fan their spark of interests, and to provide that added value where the Lodge may have been falling short.

In conclusion, brethren, I encourage you to think about your own Lodges and consider taking an interest in just one of your new members. Travel with them, guide them, encourage them, and the benefits back to you will be plenty. That is one exchange of value where you will be quite surprised at the results.

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