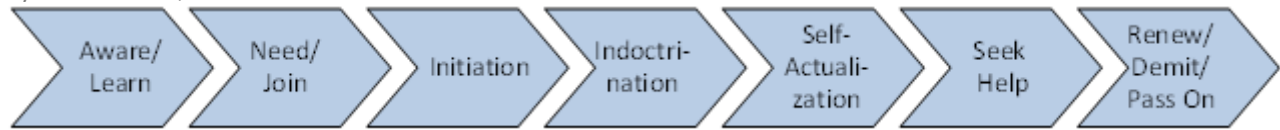


# Masonic Experiences Lifecycle

by Rick Reichert, Grand Senior Warden 2011-2012



One of the four high priority goals of **Vision 2020**, our 10-year strategic plan for Grand Lodge, is to greatly enhance the Masonic Experience. Specifically, the plan calls for

"By the time of the Annual Communication in 2011, there will be a comprehensive toolkit in use that has made significant impact on membership attempts and has filled the voids in the Aware/Learn and Self-Actualization portions of the Member Life Cycle. Measurements will include members added by age group, by geographic area, and other measures as appropriate."

When the topic of improving the Masonic experience was first proposed in the strategic planning process, I argued that the experience is not a specific event but a continuum of experiences that *change* over the lifecycle of a Mason. We must endeavor to fulfill his needs throughout his Masonic life or we will continue to experience the low number of joiners and high number of quitters. This article is meant to both explain the concept of the Masonic Experiences Lifecycle and also indicate where the most improvement needs to be made if we are to entice new members and keep the ones we have. The grade to each component indicates our progress on these goals to date.

**Aware/Learn.** Grade. **C** A manufacturer trying to sell a product has to make hundreds if not thousands of positive impressions before the potential customer is aware and has a positive impression of the product. Knowledge of the product and a favorable opinion formed is necessary before the opportunity to acquire the product arises. For Masonry, these impressions are made through our image, the Internet, media, signs along the highway, brochures, and most preferably word of mouth from family and friends. Unless an eligible and worthy man is aware and favorable perceives the Craft, the likelihood of his wanting to join is extremely unlikely.

**Need/Join.** Grade. **B** At this stage of the life cycle, if favorable opinion meets opportunity there is a high likelihood of a customer taking the necessary step to buy. A customer searching the shelf in a store for aspirin is more likely to pick a well-advertised brand, like Advil for example. For potential Masonic candidates having formed a favorable impression of the institution then needs opportunity to join. That puts the onus on lodge members to be available and approachable. Availability means email, phone number, web site, mailing address, Facebook presence, and/or physical availability at public events, in church, work or school wearing the square and compasses. Approachable means that we do whatever we can do to reduce the intimidation factor. We must eliminate any barriers between us and a good man fearing the unknown. We should be encouragers that make our fraternity appear inclusive and not exclusive.

**Initiation.** Grade. **A** No doubt there is always room for improvement in our ritual, but for most Masons, they are impressed with good degree work and can include two poignant events in their catalog of "Masonic moments"; Coming to light in the Entered Apprentice degree and at the East Gate in the Master Mason's degree. Ritual work is how the lessons of our Craft are handed down and gives us a common experience that helps bind us as a close-knit society of brothers.

**Indoctrination.** Grade. **C** Often it has been heard that we leave our new Masons at the altar. Most of what we know about our Craft we learned *after* being raised as a Master Mason. Each Mason becomes a student of the Craft. The 3rd degree may be the highest degree a lodge can confer, but it doesn't have to be the end of impressive, well presented lessons that further a Mason's education and continues to keep him engaged in building toward a feeling of ownership.

**Self-Actualization.** Grade. **B** The ideal state in the life cycle is when a Mason takes charge of their own growth and seeks an active role within the lodge. They find their niche and take an active part. They don't need meeting reminders and feel uncomfortable when meeting night rolls around and they're not with their brothers. They are likely part of a cadre of stalwart Masons at your lodge who are omnipresent, dependable and loyal. They are motivated to realize their full potential. Although there is a lot of opportunity, many younger Masons are not encouraged and mentored to reach their full potential and allowed to take charge.

**Seek Help.** Grade. **B** Unlike a business where a seller must provide support and service to their customers, we are both the client and the provider. Do our brothers know where to get customer service? Our *raison d'etre*, and why we can continue to operate even during times of controversy and misunderstanding is our well know penchant for quiet philanthropy. We are obligated and practice certain forms of charity to each other and our families. We do this well but could improve in formalizing support processes so widows, orphans, and Masons in need continue to find solace in their Masonic relationship.

**Renew/Demit/Pass On.** Grade **D** On an annual basis, we lose nearly as many Masons due to non-payment of dues (NPD) as we do to death. Death may not be preventable, but simply letting brothers quit is inexcusable and avoidable. Long term, improvements in the other areas of the life cycle will reduce loss due to lack of interest. Short term, each lodge must make the effort to determine why brothers are no longer paying dues and institute the changes necessary to keep their interest.

For those of us wearing a 25 or 50 year emblem, it is hard to remember what it was like to be the newest Master Mason and what kept us coming back to lodge all these years. What motivated us to begin our journey is likely no longer a factor in the lives of younger men of character we need to petition us for membership. The Masonic Experience Lifecycle can be used as a tool to enable lodge leaders to assess whether they are not fulfilling the needs of their membership and determine if programs are needed to fill the gap. A sampling of candidate programs is shown on the last slide of Vision 2020 Overview, March 19, 2010 (Slides) on the [Grand Lodge web site](#) under Vision 2020 for the full Masonic Experiences Lifecycle chart.