

... And Then What?

*On purposefully building the habit of self-care and self-development;
becoming the strength and support of our Lodges and our communities.*

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Introduction

Last year, the Scottish Rite for the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction began an advertising campaign entitled, "Not just a man, a Mason" ([link](#)). The goal was to build awareness of our Craft and thus increase membership in local Lodges. Remember, of course, that to be a Scottish Rite Mason (or a Shriner or a York Rite Mason), one must first be a Master Mason. Thus, the campaign began. It was very successful. So successful, in fact, that in 2020, the Scottish Rite for the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States as well as the Shriners joined them in their efforts – rebranded as BeAFreemason.org ([link](#)).

Beafreemason.org invites visitors to the site to "*Become the best version of you. Answer the call. Begin the journey.*" It promises visitors that "*When you become a Freemason, you begin your journey toward being a better man. You will build rich, meaningful relationships with your Brothers, commit to the service of those around you, and strive for a deeper, more honest connection with yourself and others. It's a journey of self-discovery and enlightenment.*"

Links to beafreemason.org are spreading like wildfire across social media. Individual Masons are sharing the web site with their friends and families. Masonic groups online have shared the link, debating and commenting on the style and content of the web site. The goal is being met – building awareness of Freemasonry.

The language found on the web site is in harmony with what we've all been saying for generations – that *the purpose of Freemasonry is to make good men better*. The web site is a promise, setting expectations as to what these good men will find when they knock on our Lodge doors. They'll knock. Some will make it past the West Gate and be admitted to membership ... **and then what?**

Our Grand Lodge lists *leadership development / self-development* as the number one way in which we can attract and retain active and engaged members. Yet, when you examine the Grand Lodge's web site, and it's guidance on this topic, Lodges are left to themselves to develop programs to fulfill this mission. If one looks into the many Grand Lodge programs with "leadership" in the title, one discovers that these programs are oriented towards "administration" and "management" of one form or another.

Leaders help things go right; managers correct things that have gone wrong. Leaders set direction; managers set policies. Leaders inspire; managers discipline.

The leaders of the many appendant bodies have done us all a great favor. They're taking the lead on recruitment. They're driving potential members to our doors. Are we prepared to meet them, to fulfill the promises made to them? What happens if they don't find what they were looking for?

Leadership development does not happen by accident. Offering a learner random bits of information and expecting them to make sense of them is a recipe for failure. Programs should be structured, with targeted curriculum and specified learning goals. Handing someone a flyer or a PowerPoint slide deck does not cement learning; nor does it ***build a habit of self-care and self-development.***

Just as the solution for our recruitment problem has come from the outside, so too does the delivery of a structured program for leadership development – and thus the fulfillment of the promise we've made – come from the outside. I would like to introduce you to ***Revitalize! Revitalize!*** is a daily program of mentored leadership development offered on-line as micro learning. It's daily lessons meant to be completed in 90 days' time, building the habit of self-care and self-development.

To understand what ***Revitalize!*** is, let's go back in time to 2009.

History

Eleven years ago, I was enrolled at Woodbury University in Burbank studying towards a Masters' degree in Organizational Leadership. One of the first things that one does in such a program is declare what one's Thesis will be. Out of the gate, beginning with the end in mind, one must pick a topic and a focus, structuring the work done in one's courses around this central theme.

Also, in 2009, I was the Classroom Director at the Scottish Rite in Pasadena. With access to the Ritual scripts, as well as the Liturgy, Legenda, Morals, and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Rite, I would prepare my lectures and discussions much in the way that I've prepared for tonight's lecture. Setting my mind to work on the problem of what the focus of my Thesis would be, whilst swimming in the ocean of Masonic Philosophy, I came upon my Eureka! Moment – ***Freemasonry is actually a leadership academy.***

As an educator and instructor in my vocational life, and now exploring modern leadership theory, I saw the Degrees of the Lodge of Perfection as a perfectly designed course of instruction in leadership – of course, *veiled in allegory and symbolism.*

Thus, my Thesis explored the leadership lessons hidden in plain sight within the Lodge of Perfection.

Upon completion of my degree, my faculty advisor counseled me to publish my Thesis as a book. In 2010, I did. Leadership in the Lodge of Perfection ([link](#)) is now in its 2nd edition, revised after decade of *further light* in life, with additional material included to illustrate lessons learned in the past decade.

Elsewhere in my life, in 2015, I co-founded an autistic support charity in the rural mountains of northern Los Angeles county – the Praeceptory at Towcester Abbey. The work of the Abbey is to bridge the gap between the promises of a free public-school education and the unique needs of autistic students and their families. We started the non-profit as a sort of hybrid tutoring service. It's since expanded to cover vocational rehabilitation and training, research and publications, fitness and nutrition, and a visitation ministry.

Added one after another, our programs existed as separate silos, with nothing coherent connecting them together in a cohesive whole. Something was missing. The inspiration for the solution was found in Masonry; specifically, in the book Understanding Manhood in America ([link](#)) by Bro. Bob Davis. The central premise of Bro. Davis' outstanding text is a question, "*how does a boy become a man in America?*" This resonated with us in addressing a problem within the autistic community where autistic people are often infantilized and left without agency by their family and the system. How does an autistic boy become a man? Or more generically, how do autistic youth become mature participants in our society?

That question leads us to 2019.

Paths Converge

Around the time we were scaffolding the instructional design for a course in leadership and entry into adulthood for our autistic clients, a conversation in Lodge emerged around the new Masonic marketing program – *Not Just a Man, a Mason*. It's sure to work. In fact, it's probably going to be a smash hit ... **and then what?** What's waiting for these new members once they arrive?

In its instructions to a newly-raised Master Mason, the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons in California counsels, "*Once raised, all Freemasons are expected to make use of all the symbolic tools and opportunities provided them by their fellows to complete the journey to discover the innermost secrets of the craft and continue to search for light and truth wherever it may be found. A 'rusty trowel' is evidence that a Master Mason has not properly continued his lifelong work in preparing himself as a 'living stone' for use by a Supreme Being in 'building that house not built with hands, eternal in the heavens.'*" Master Masons around the world are similarly advised to continue their education, but few programs exist to help fulfill this goal.

Whilst programs exist to develop the management capabilities of the current and future leaders of individual lodges (e.g. Masters / Wardens Retreats), there are no such programs for the development of the leadership capabilities of the general membership of Freemasonry. We tell our newly raised Masters, go do this thing – but

don't properly equip or guide them on this journey. **Until now.**

With our program successfully implemented with our autistic clients, why not offer it to those who inspired the program in the first place? Thus, in January 2020, our internal program was rebranded and offered to the public as **Revitalize!**

Revitalize! – Program Design and Implementation

Revitalize! is a *competency-based learning* program and delivery system for the leadership development of the general membership population of Freemasons, informed by and framed around the Degrees of the Lodge of Perfection (AASR SJ USA). This program – **Revitalize!** - includes the essential elements of program analysis, program design, instructional development, program implementation, as well as on-going evaluation and course maintenance. The program is offered to individuals on a per-learner basis, to individual Lodges on a per-Lodge basis, or to governing bodies (Grand Lodges, Orients, & Sees) on a per-jurisdiction basis via a state-of-the-art learning management system (LearnUpon LMS).

After expanding steadily throughout most of the previous century, many major civic organizations have experienced a sudden, substantial, and nearly simultaneous decline in membership over the last decade or two. A variety of factors have contributed to this substantial decline in membership. Masonic organizations have not been immune from this decline. According to the membership information provided by the Masonic Service Association of North America, there were over 4 million Master Masons in the United States in 1959. In 2015, the latest date available, there were just over a million. Whilst the current trend is slowly rising in many states, a generational gap exists leading to a bimodal membership distribution.

This generational gap has implications for Lodge culture and climate. Within the distribution are long-time lodge members who are older than 60, as well as newer members across all age groups – but strongly skewed towards the Millennial and Centennial generations. Long time lodge members opine on the regular attendance habits of new members. The comments center around a lack of participation in degree work and their overall lack of involvement. They note that the newer members lack the same sense of duty and responsibility to the Lodge that they had.

The younger generations are not interested in joining any organization simply because it is the right thing to do. The primary motivators of the Millennial and Centennial generations are quite tangible - what benefits themselves and their communities? To be sure, the younger generations want to be part of something bigger than themselves and want to make a difference in world and have a personal impact on it. But nothing is more important to them than their family, friends, and the social network they have developed around their personal interests. Given the opportunity, they will choose to spend their precious time within their network than involving themselves in the Lodge. Any organization that attempts to separate a person from their family, their community, or their social sphere and does not engage with the person in those environments and activities will be met with

resistance, complacency and will soon have no place in their world. They have little interest in spending hours away from their family and their other interests to pursue ritual work, lectures, degree work, or even our traditional fundraisers ... *if it does not align with their personal goals.*

Thus, the instructional design of ***Revitalize!*** centers around a proper introduction to the culture and climate of Freemasonry, framed by the admonition delivered to every newly raised Master about one's commitment to mastery, continuing education, and leadership. Included in the design is the resolution of how best to utilize the platforms and methods that the younger generations expect in delivering the primary message of Freemasonry - ***how Freemasonry makes good people better.***

But, there's a fundamental problem...

The factors contributing to the problem are many. First, there is an aversion to technology on the part of many Lodges. There is a sentiment amongst the leadership that to organize such a program of leadership development would mean a debasement of the *hidden mysteries* found in the Lodge room, in working the Ritual. This view ignores the obvious; that the current generation does not have the entry-level skills to interpret and apply esoteric lessons delivered in overly ornate Victorian English. Second, the Lodge must prepare their new members to receive the esoteric knowledge by spelling out the path to that knowledge in a very exoteric and explicit fashion. Given that communication is *the act of conveying intended meaning to another entity through the use of mutually understood signs and semiotic rules* (relating to signs and symbols), the Lodge and the Mason must learn to speak the same language. Additionally, the new member must see the value proposition in membership. Furthermore, the educational programs of Blue Lodges within a Grand Lodge's jurisdiction, and around the world, vary wildly in quantity and quality. Some offer no explicit educational programs at all, becoming de facto supper clubs. Finally, declines in membership and participation forces the current officers of a Lodge to accelerate the pace at which candidates are offered their degree experience. Once raised, they're almost immediately invited to take their position in the leadership line. The Lodge's personnel problems are prioritized over the members' personal growth.

You see, the demographics of Lodge membership are changing. Sustained educational programs are mostly non-existent. Personal development is an afterthought. Progress through a Lodge's leadership line is physically and mentally exhausting as the officers take on too much. Many Past Masters are not seen in Lodge as they recover from the ordeal of their year(s) in the Oriental Chair. New members arrive seeking the *mentorship* and the *personal connections* they've heard so much about, but often leave; feeling let down when specific programs fail to materialize.

Additionally, the current programs for membership development around the country feature out-of-date web sites, sets of static leaflets and presentation materials, or

disconnected video clips that have no coherent connection to a learning event. For in-person delivery of this information, very little in the way of training is offered to those that will deliver these presentations.

Remember, our Grand Lodge notes, "*Membership development is critical to the future of your lodge and the Masons of California. To maintain a sufficient membership level, each lodge must add a minimum of five Master Masons per year...*" "*The best way to attract and retain members is to offer a comprehensive and diverse program of activities that have broad member appeal.*"

The number one activity listed to attract and retain members is a program of "*personal growth and leadership.*"

This sentiment is echoed around the world as Grand Lodges struggle to attract and retain quality members.

The current conditions are passive, relying upon the new member to pry loose information from a Lodge membership population that may not actually have the capacity to deliver upon the expected results. The desired condition is active, meeting the members where they are, in the way in which they are familiar with receiving and interacting with such information.

Should they stick it out and progress through their Degrees, we often take a newly raised Master Mason and suggest that they enter the Lodge's leadership line. *But, are they duly and truly prepared for this journey?* It's important to consider that people involved in any leadership role should understand the following:

- What it means to join with an existing culture
- How to assimilate new information and skills
- Identifying what you don't know, and acting upon that information
- The leader follower relationship
- Dealing with uncertainty
- Acting as the peacemaker
- Acting in judgment of others
- What a commitment to continuing education looks like
- Developing personal core principles and values
- What it means to be tolerant
- What it means to have an outward / improvement mindset
- How and why authenticity matters
- How and why to lead by example
- What it means to learn the way, then to find your own way

Now consider that these are the central themes of the fourteen Degrees of the Lodge of Perfection in the Southern Jurisdiction.

Conclusion

Currently, instructional delivery and on-boarding of new members happens in the

Lodge building. Lodges prefer to invite potential members to the Lodge multiple times, usually for social occasions, before accepting an application for membership. This arrangement is haphazard in terms of identifying the applicant's knowledge, skills, and abilities, as well as identifying specific needs and delivering upon expectations. The randomness of the timing of events vs. visits contributes to the problems we face.

On the surface, having the applicant or candidate come to the Lodge during a regularly scheduled event appears to be the most cost-effective instructional option. However, given the candidate's proximity to the Lodge, and the uncertainty of the program on offer, circumstances often conspire against their full attention to any learning experience offered. Occasionally, the candidate will be called away on Lodge night to perform their normal work duties, interrupting the development of their proficiency.

Optimally, the learning context should be divorced from location. Competency-based micro learning, delivered on-line, is a learner-centric approach that offers just-in-time instruction that is accessible by the learner where and when the learner is available. Micro learning is affordable and agile, has a shorter development cycle, is easier to update, has a wider potential application, and a higher impact on learning, application, and habit building versus traditional on-premises training delivery.

Bombarding the brain with an abundance of information, as often happens in a noisy environment or by studying a large amount of data ahead of a high-stakes proficiency demonstration or exam, is not an optimal way of delivering training and education to a mature adult learner population. Competency-based micro learning provides small segments of information to the learner so that their mind can process it more effectively, assisting in better retention. Thus, adult learners are able to absorb the information before they have to move onto the next activity or module. The learner can also decide when and where they participate in the educational experience, which allows them to pick a time and place that are conducive to the learning process. For example, instead of having to sit in a crowded dining hall that has a variety of distractions, they can wait until they are in a quiet place where they can simply focus on the learning activity.

The final piece of the puzzle deals with the transition from information delivery and processing to *habit building*. Think about all of the Education Nights you've attended. How many of those sessions helped you build a lasting habit? The information delivered is nice to know, it may satisfy a curiosity, but how does knowing about the alchemical symbolism of the Entered Apprentice degree help you create amazing on-boarding experiences for your Lodge or other organization? *Hint: it doesn't.*

You see, information alone does not reliably change behavior. This is a common mistake people make, even well-meaning professionals. The assumption is this: If we give people the right information, it will change their attitudes, which in turn will change their behaviors. This is known as the "[Information-Action Fallacy](#)." Many

products and programs—and many well-meaning professionals—set out to educate people as a way to change them. At professional conferences they say stuff like, “*If people just knew the facts, they would change!*” As you look at your own experiences, you’ll see that information alone did not transform your life. And that’s certainly not your fault.

As Dr. BJ Fogg, founder of the [Stanford Persuasive Tech Lab](#), is quoted as saying, “*we are not the problem. Our approach to change is. It’s a design flaw—not a personal flaw.*” Thus, **Revitalize!** relies upon the work done at Stanford, [persuasive technology](#), to inform its *habit building design*.

[Behavioral design](#) is **the key** to unlocking the mystery of successfully building a lasting habit. Behavioral design represents the three universal elements of behavior and their relationship to one another. It’s based on principles that show us how these elements work together to drive our every action - from an attitude of gratitude to running a marathon. Once you understand the behavior model, you can analyze **why** a behavior happened, which means you can stop blaming your behavior on the wrong things (like character and self-discipline, for starters). And you can use this model to design for a change in behavior in yourself or in your Lodge.

With all of this in mind, I’m happy to introduce you to **Revitalize!** Again, **Revitalize!** is a daily program of mentored leadership development offered on-line as micro learning. It’s daily lessons meant to be completed in 90 days’ time, utilizing persuasive technology and behavioral design in building *the habit of self-care and self-development*. Learners are mentored through the entire process, providing a fully supported path to *mastery*.

To fulfill our mission, *to help make good people better*, the **Revitalize!** program distills the leadership lessons of the Degrees of the Craft Lodge and the Lodge of Perfection. It’s important to note that although the program is framed within the lessons of Freemasonry, participants need not be Masons. We welcome all who seek to improve themselves, their families, their organizations, and their communities.

Beafreemason.org and similar campaigns will be sending a lot of candidates to knock on the doors of your Lodge. **Revitalize!** is the answer to the question, **and then what?**

Please join me there – <http://revitalizemasonry.today>

Thank you for your time.

About the Author

Jim Hoerricks, Ph.D., was initiated, passed, and raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason in North Hollywood Lodge #542 (2003-2004) but now spends his time at the Archimedes Lodge #871 in Pasadena, CA, as it's Junior Steward, as well as travelling the world visiting Masonic bodies in his spare time. Being very busy professionally, he has also been a member of Oasis Lodge #854 (Chaplain, 2012), Lancaster Lodge #437, Reseda Lodge #666, and Beverly Hills Lodge #528 (Treasurer, 2006). He is a member (33°) of the Scottish Rite bodies in Pasadena, CA and Guthrie, OK., the San Fernando Valley York Rite bodies, the Allied Masonic Degrees, the Grand College of Rites, the Royal Order of Scotland, MSRICF (VII°), Al Malaikah Shrine, the Scottish Rite Research Society, the WSB Club, and the Oklahoma Lodge of Research.

Jim is an active Masonic speaker and can often be found presenting on a variety of topics in Lodges around the western United States. Additionally, he is a graduate of the Grand Lodge of California's Lodge Management Certification and Funeral Service Programs.

Jim has been most active in the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, S.J. He has served the Valley of Pasadena, Orient of California, in many ways. He was Wise Master of the Pasadena Chapter of Rose Croix (2012) and served as Classroom Director from 2008-2014. Prior to his receiving the investiture of K.C.C.H., he served in the Valley's Knights of St. Andrew service organization, attending to the Valley's needs as necessary.

Jim, the instructional designer and instructor for this project, has almost 25 years of experience designing and facilitating learning events. He has Bachelors and Masters degrees in Organizational Leadership from Woodbury University in Burbank, CA. He has a Masters in Education – Instructional Design from Western Governors University in Salt Lake City, UT. Finally, he has a PhD in Education - Higher Education Leadership from Trident University International in Cypress, CA, where his dissertation considered the optimal college environment to attract and retain autistic students through graduation.

Find out more at <http://revitalizemasonry.today>