

Captain of the Masonic Ship

Durham Lodge No. 66, June 6, 2012

Leadership lessons can come from many sources. How do you think the Pirate Ships of yesteryear were managed? Although we should not hold the operation of pirate ships of 300 years ago as a great example of how to live our lives, their leadership style does give us something to think about. You may be thinking, "Now I know how to get the brethren to cooperate, I can threaten them with having to walk the plank." Actually that was a Hollywood addition to the romance of the pirate's activity.

Pirates of 3 centuries ago elected the Captain, First Mate, Quartermaster, Gunnery Officer, etc. They voted on how the booty would be shared among the senior officers, the cabin boy and the pirate crew. Once they voted on the Articles of Piracy those who were in favour were asked to place their "x" on the document and those that did not vote in favour were asked to either leave the ship or too also sign the document so that there would be unanimous agreement. Buying in by the full crew was essential for survival for the pirates on the high seas. It could be no other way for the pirates to be successful. Sound familiar!

Next they planned their strategy which was essentially their long range planning that they would need on the high seas. They established that when they were in trouble how they would switch from plan "A" to plan "B." You have accepted a piece of work and then 1 or 2 days before the degree you find that work calls you away or you are sick. What is your plan "B?" Of course you arrange for another brother to fill your place. Under no circumstances do you ever call the Worshipful Master during the last week before the degree and say "Sorry I can't make it." Plan "B" means you find a replacement and inform the Worshipful Master who that individual will be. Remember that the Worshipful Master has his ritual to remember, has assigned the other ritual to a large number of the brethren, has put together an agenda for the meeting and is responsible to lead the lodge. A big job!

Pirates knew that they would have to train and practice and work as a team so plans were laid out for the crew. They discussed where on the ocean they would work, as they only wanted the booty and really did not want to fight. All of this was put to a vote in a democratic style. It may come as a surprise but the pirate ship was really a cooperative business owned by the thirty or so pirates on board. To survive they had to have a solid team and trust in each other. Their objectives are amazingly similar to our own.

We could draw a comparison of the Worshipful Master as the Captain of the Ship with the Senior Warden as the First Mate, the Junior Warden as the Quartermaster and the Deacons as the Gunnery Officers, etc.

The Worshipful Master, after he is elected and installed, has the responsibility to ensure that all of the brethren buy into the various decisions that are made by the democratic process. May I caution you to be careful with the vote. Always try for a unanimous decision, and if not, just maybe the motion

should be tabled and discussed further. The Master must be able to maintain the respect of the brethren and continue to influence them to follow his vision or the vision that is established for the lodge through long range planning.

During your year as the Captain of your Masonic Ship there will indeed be challenges that you will be required to face and difficult decisions to make. So may you sail out confidently, knowing that all your sailors are prepared and ready to carry out their duties. And like the captain of a pirate ship, handle your crew with care so you'll never have to face a mutiny.

To assist you in recalling the pirate ship analogy, I have for you a Working Tool of a Worshipful Master - a Pirate Ship.

Congratulations on being elected Worshipful Master of Durham Lodge and I extend to you my very best wishes for a most successful year.

Ahoy Mates! – Robert G. Garrow

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