

'Emperor's New Clothes - Communications and Freemasonry in the 21st century'

Schlimmbesserung.

A favourite word of mine – it ranks up there with *schadenfreude*, and is likewise typically German in its etymology, having no equivalent in the English language. As I'm sure you're aware, it means to make things worse through an effort to improve. And that is the very danger we face with 21st century communication. After all, Grand Lodge has survived pretty well, thank you very much, for three hundred or so years – so why all of a sudden does it need a Director of Communications, and very soon an Executive Director of Marketing and Communications? Not me I hasten to add. We ought rightly to be wary of Emperor's New Clothes.

Before, I delve into the values and merits of tradition and heritage, not only of our wonderful organisation, but of how we communicate the same, I'm minded of one of my favourite quotes – you'll note that I shamelessly use the *bon mots* of others at will – this is from Nik Roope, founder of Poke (a creative agency in London), who said "On your 100th birthday you'd be disappointed if the Queen only sent you an email."

Sometimes the words "we've always done it that way" are not completely specious - the definition of tradition is "unwritten beliefs and customs handed down from generation to generation, which we all knowingly or unknowingly adhere to in our daily lives." Left unchallenged, traditions like belief systems, can be genuinely counter-productive. Those familiar with HR and employment law, will know how powerful 'custom and practice' becomes, when all too frequently the precedent is set as a result of an unchallenged and often flawed original action. "Theirs not to make reply, theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do and die," to quote Lord Tennyson from *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. And I suggest that we ought to be more circumspect - constructively unreasonable – otherwise in continuing the Crimean War analogy the following is likely to recur:

The central event of said Crimean War was the protracted siege of Sebastopol by a combined British, French, Sardinian, and Turkish army. Actually more of a protracted blockade than a true siege, for most of the operation the two sides fought each from the dubious security of lines of entrenchment that stretched literally for miles, a harbinger of the horror that was to come during the Great War.

One night a particularly exposed British redoubt suddenly found itself the object of a strong Russian attack. Although the British managed to hold the Russians, they were consuming ammunition at a prodigious rate.

Fearing that his position would soon be overrun, the officer commanding the post tore a leaf from a pocket note book. On it he scrawled "In great danger. Enemy pressing hotly. For

Heaven's sake send us some ammunition," the officer signed his name, handed it to an orderly and sent the man to the rear.

The fighting grew more intense, and as ammunition began running low the officer awaited the return of his messenger. Time passed, as the situation seemed to grow ever more desperate. Then, almost as suddenly as it began, the Russian assault ebbed, even as the British troops were virtually down to their last rounds.

Just about then the orderly returned, bearing a message from the Ordnance officer. One wonders what went through the officer's mind when he read, "All communications to this Department must be written on foolscap paper with a two-inch margin."

Where would we be without our rules and tradition.

And to repudiate any malevolent thoughts that some of you might be having, I can categorically assure you that the Ordnance Officer in question was not a forebear of VW Bro Graham Redman.

So what about Hans Christian Andersen and the world of the Fairy Tale? Andersen presented himself to the Danish bourgeoisie as the naïvely precocious child not usually admitted to the adult salon. "The Emperor's New Clothes" is a short tale about two weavers who promise an Emperor a new suit of clothes that is invisible to those unfit for their positions, stupid, or incompetent, and became his exposé of the hypocrisy and snobbery he found there when he finally gained admission. The phrase "emperor's new clothes" has become an idiom about logical fallacies. The story may be explained by pluralistic ignorance. The story is about a situation where "no one believes, but everyone believes that everyone else believes. Or alternatively, everyone is ignorant to whether the Emperor has clothes on or not, but believes that everyone else is not ignorant. Now, I am not in any way suggesting that you'd encounter hypocrisy and snobbery in East Kent or the United Grand Lodge of England for that matter. But in the world of the 'generation Y' or the 'millennial' or more prosaically 'echo boomers' – the children of the 21st century – perception becomes reality, and we cannot allow ourselves to be portrayed negatively. We have to dispel the myths and confront the 'elephant in the room' - a modern-day expression akin to 'the Emperor's new clothes.' An essential factor with both phrases is the willingness of people to engage into an unspoken contract to wilfully disbelieve what they know to be true. It is the nature of beliefs systems such as this that lack an empirical basis and are ostensibly specious. Beware belief systems.

Similarly, it struck me that much of the prejudice and discrimination that we face is due to the fact, to use Dan Brown's words, that "people fear what they don't understand" and like a child's irrational fear of spiders, stays with you for the remainder of your life, unless addressed. Now that is where communication can help, by developing awareness and consideration of what Freemasonry really - is not how it is portrayed by an ill-informed lazy journalist.

The following are the challenges that I believe we face as an organisation.

- Our image is dated and tired - how do we convey our relevance more appropriately and effectively?
- Our messages often lack clarity, are not easily understood and are communicated poorly at all levels.
- How do we engage with a post-industrial, multi-cultural, mobile and materialistic society and compete with a wealth of other leisure options?
- We do not seem to have control of our image – it's mostly defined by others e.g. a hostile media, faith groups and employers – how do we redress this balance?
- How do we project and practise a more family orientated approach?
- A normal entry age of 21 implies we are for the older man – how do we appeal to the younger generation? A fact for you. The only growing demographic in UGLE currently is the 21-30 age group. However, they represent only 20% of the number of members that are over the age of eighty.

So what about change – after all, no one likes change, not necessarily for what it brings, but because of the fear of what they might lose.

Charles Darwin said “It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change.”

Darwin's theory of evolutionary change resonated through the scientific, religious and political communities leading to debate, dissension and in some cases civil disobedience. Many different social and moral positions were taken with widespread disagreement with the primary proposals of his thesis.

However, time has proved his words to be very true; to survive there is a need to adapt, a need to change

The concept of change is not unique, indeed we've experienced social change through revolution and civil war, political change through the ballot box, economic change through work and individual life change brought about by domestic relationships.

Businesses and other organisations are forever talking about the need to change and have departments geared up to manage the many processes which accompany it.

Let's look at some of the changes we have experienced. Twenty years ago, you probably didn't have an email address, and now it's hard to imagine life without email. Fifteen years ago, Facebook and Twitter didn't exist, and now one-and-a-quarter billion people and millions of businesses use it to communicate, and, of course, the Province of East Kent is no stranger to the digital native, and that's not just WBro Roger Waltham.

There's no doubt that technology has played a huge role in how we manage our lives, online banking, virtual shopping and even how we communicate with family and friends using WhatsApp, Skype and Snapchat. Brethren even your hard working secretary uses a computer to send you the Lodge Summons and other Masonic correspondence.

This is the fastest-changing communications and technology landscape we've ever been in where computers, tablets and note books – not to mention smart phones - have had an enormous effect on society.

Change in medicine has resulted in new treatments for diseases and conditions which less than 25 years ago would have been life ending and we know that age itself is no barrier to surgical procedures which a decade ago would have been considered dangerous to the point of reckless.

Just recently a friend had to undergo an eye examination for suspected glaucoma and cataracts – sadly age doesn't come alone. He asked the doctor “how did the medical profession manage years ago without the sophisticated equipment he was using” and without pause he replied “they didn't manage, people went blind and died.”

I mentioned online banking and shopping as two changes in the way businesses operate, we may not like the changes but there is little we can do to resist the rolling stone which once dislodged simply rolls remorselessly onward.

Change for some is a difficult proposition and for many the mere suggestion of change is accompanied by cries of outrage, claims that change will destroy the very fabric of our society and worse that 'things will never be the same again' - however, change while not always 'pain free' is necessary to progress.

What is it about change that creates such a well of emotion and why is changing what we do so very hard for us to undertake as individuals, and even more difficult for organisations. Could it be that the status quo is so much more appealing, offering comfort and control, free from the risk of failure and requiring no input beyond maintaining it.

By and large we tend to like routine which enables us to 'feel in control'.

Fear of change is one of the most common reasons for resistance and opposition to change and a very real fear stops you taking any action at all.

Franklin D Roosevelt speaking in his inaugural address as President of the USA - in 1933 said "So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is -fear itself- nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance."

Brethren - change has become a constant in our personal and professional everyday lives, managing it has become an expanding discipline and the way we embrace it defines our future. Not my words but those of HM The Queen

I suppose a question I have to address in relation to Masonic communication is this, has Freemasonry changed and if so how. Freemasonry - contrary to some well-meaning opinion formers, has experienced great change in its long history: the evolutionary changes have been many and varied, some quite small others noticeably larger (in Masonic terms) indeed it would be absurd to pretend that over the course of 300 years things are 'just the same'.

Who for instance could have imagined the breadth of ceremonial and ritual changes brought about by the coming together of the two Grand Lodges or with the revisions to the Emulation ritual in the early 19th century and to Taylor's ritual in the 20th century?

You might consider it quite strange that I would ask you to think of an organisation such as Freemasonry as being subject to evolutionary change, after all isn't Freemasonry supposed to be built on a foundation which presupposes it is immune to the vagaries of modern life.

In an edition of the Provincial magazine *Across The Plain*, RW Bro Francis Wakem PPrGM wrote "Freemasonry is an ever evolving institution where change is often slow but ultimately worthwhile". From a conversation with him on the thought process which stimulated his words he said "It is difficult to imagine a more worthwhile outcome than survival".

The words which strike fear in to the heart of many an experienced Freemason are those uttered by a Brother when he asks "why do we do that" and the only answer we can give is – "we have always done it that way". Hardly a resounding endorsement.

Sometimes, to justify our actions or could that be inaction, we try to reinforce matters by citing 'tradition' as the basis on which we do something, and when truly floundering for an adequate response we call upon 'the Founders of the Lodge' for our salvation.

Whereas sometimes the truth is that we often have just gone along with the flow for so many years that we accept what we do as being the right way for our Lodge. Let me examine the notion of tradition as being just, noble and by default immutable. I like tradition, I just love it. I am someone who believes tradition is something we should treasure as part of our heritage and yet I also recognise the dangers associated with allowing tradition to override common sense.

There are some traditions which are quirky, some which are quaint, while others are conceived of necessity and some are introduced solely to mark out or characterise an institutions eminence or place in society.

In 1981 Edward Shils in his book *Tradition* put forward a definition that became universally accepted. According to Shils, tradition is anything which is transmitted or handed down from the past to the present. I think your Lodge Director of Ceremonies definition of tradition is of equal value to that of Edward Shils - that being 'Today's mistake by the Director of Ceremonies is tomorrow's tradition'.

People in general treasure traditions and Freemasons are not immune to such sentimental attachment, particularly when it comes to believing our traditions are ancient. Indeed we are told that Freemasonry is ancient and honourable, having subsisted from time immemorial, but Brethren many of our so called 'ancient' traditions are anything but. What surely cannot be disputed is that all traditions are the invention of someone and not the divine outpourings of a beneficent God, akin to giving the ten commandment to Moses on Mount Sinai, even if tablets of Apple have supplanted tablets of stone.

Some traditions have their genesis in rumour and not fact and are indeed the product of fertile minds, and as such should be carefully studied, not with the intention of abandoning them as flotsam or sacrificing them on the altar of modernity, but of discovering the value which has preserved them for so long, closely examining the background to a tradition in order to understand its relevance and its importance. Don' be afraid to be constructively unreasonable, and ask the question 'why?'

A healthy regard for tradition can give stability to any organisation which is of incalculable benefit to its preservation. Whereas using the comfort blanket of tradition to stifle debate, prevent progress and demean another point of view is to be deprecated. Let me remind

you, the bigot within each of us – especially me - is ever present but often dormant, and very sadly we can all relate examples of how tradition has been used to enforce conformity by coercion and controlling behaviour, sometimes and very sadly, bordering on bullying. It is true that throughout English Freemasonry, the main threat to our future comes from within. Some 20% of Members resign from the Craft before receiving their Grand Lodge certificate. Whilst some leave because they joined Freemasonry for the wrong reasons, the majority leave because they are unable to settle within the Lodge – due to a personal feeling of ‘isolation’ please be tolerant in accepting the fresh ideas new members bring to the Lodge and for acceptance of changes which would enhance openness and enable our newer members to take a much more active part in Lodge activities and decision making Listen to the views and opinions of our new members, and enable them to be fully involved in all Lodge activities. In short, ensure that our actions and attitudes clearly demonstrate to newer members that they are truly valued and respected. And let me assure you, that whilst it is a necessary and valuable activity, selling raffle tickets and serving wine is not the highlight of a new Masons’ experience.

As in all walks of life Freemasonry has to evolve and adapt to modern life, and if it does not, it will go the way of the dinosaur and eventually be no more.

A serious point, if I may - Tradition can quite easily create an illusion of permanence, it is anything but. Sometimes we have to recognise the truth of the words written by James Agee who said "You must be in tune with the times and prepared to break with tradition". I am personally persuaded that tradition should be a rudder in our lives and not an anchor - a guide and not a bar to progress.

Society no longer accepts the status quo as being the only way, no longer do men accede to the maxim that they cannot question convention; challenge or disagree with authority - in fact they positively repudiate such notions and reserve to themselves the right to do all three. And of this truth I am sure - what happens in the wider world will one day affect Freemasonry. I wish to go one step further and confirm something which you already know, which is that Freemasons are already questioning the legitimacy of what is said to be 'unchangeable'. To ignore the challenge is simply to bury one's head in the sand, a position which is neither attractive nor dignified, not even for ostriches.

So what of our relationship with the world outside?

For many years, particularly prior to the second world war Freemasonry enjoyed positive media coverage with not only Provincial Grand Lodge meetings being recorded in words and pictures but also 'ordinary' Lodge meetings. It was not uncommon for Ladies nights and Masonic social events to feature prominently in regional or provincial newspapers; and it was certainly the case that stone laying, church services and other civic occasions, where Freemasons were present, were covered in the minutest of detail.

Hitler and his Nazi Party brought about the need for a degree of caution and self-preservation; Freemasonry went underground. Brethren spoke in hushed tones about their membership and took to heart that wartime exhortation – “Careless talk costs lives.”

Freemasonry's links with the media have been very well documented and we need to deal with the media in the 21st century - and let's be clear there is a need to adopt a different modus operandi. #EnoughIsEnough.

Today, we can only claim to be returning, albeit far too slowly to the position Freemasonry occupied pre-war. Our efforts to present ourselves as 'good people' is made difficult by a history of secrecy, the theory of conspiracy and the reporting of fantasy. But we are making good progress nationally and locally.

How do we make further progress?

In recent years, it has been necessary for many organisations to look for initiatives to sustain membership numbers. Freemasonry has not avoided this trend.

Rotary Clubs, for example, are looking to recruit more members, particularly from amongst the younger members of society. They are also examining ways they could become more relevant to prospective members. It's familiar stuff, and it set me thinking about what changes we should consider.

In 1972 the Masters' and Past Masters' Lodge No.130 (Grand Lodge of New Zealand) produced a book of Questions and Answers. One of the questions which appeared in various forms asked "What do we need to do to attract new members, retain existing members and increase attendance" - it speaks volumes about our organisation that 43 years later we are still asking the same questions.

First, I've mentioned tradition, ceremony and ritual - that was not unintended. It is my belief that our ritual sets us apart from many other good organisations; in the language of business, it's a USP - unique selling point. I have no knowledge of a Freemason who actually didn't like the Ritual within the Lodge Room, but I have certainly seen the quizzical look on a Brother's face as he clearly found it difficult to understand or appreciate the Ritual. This leads me to conclude that perhaps we concentrate too much on whether a person becomes a member as opposed to whether he becomes a Mason. You may ask - "but aren't they one and the same?" - I suggest they are not. I should also charge you to look out for *Solomon* - a virtual learning environment which will be available at the end of the year. Next week's edition of *Freemasonry Today* will set the scene.

We spend so little time 'instructing' new Brethren in the Principles of the Craft and hardly any time at all in moralising. Our energies are directed to ceremonies and we appear to gauge success by the number of Initiates we bring into Freemasonry or how quickly we can get a newly made Brother through the offices of the Lodge and into the Chair - as if the Chair is the pinnacle of a Freemason's 'career'. The desire to promote without proper regard for the 'wants' of a Brother has often been cited as a reason why some Brethren leave the Craft, we need to become more aware of what the Brother wants from Freemasonry as opposed to exercising a collective will over his wants and needs and substituting ours.

Secondly, some Brethren advocate shorter meetings in the Lodge Room, allowing more time to be spent at the bar and in enjoying the festive board; their logic whilst not impeccable does have some merit and it is understandable why they press the case. However the

outcome is also predictable, with Freemasonry changing from an organisation primarily concerned with moral and dare I say spiritual development, to one which is more akin to a social or dining club. In modern parlance we would be a 'me too' organisation aping the likes of the Lions and Rotary Clubs. Is that what we want to be, is it what good men who become Freemasons want to be?

Thirdly, John Hamill – formerly Director of Special Projects at UGLE and a regular contributor to the pages of *Freemasonry Today* wrote about the style of dress worn in our Lodges and answered the question - should we 'relax' the dress code? Perhaps in line with that import from America - 'dress down Friday' or in the phrase beloved of modernisers 'casual dress'. Having explained the tradition and the history of Masonic dress, which incidentally was more to do with the norms of the day rather than any peculiarity to Freemasonry, he concluded 'that as 'fuddy duddy' as it might appear the reality was that Brethren actually liked the idea of dressing up for a meeting'.

I see and hear nothing which persuades me that new Freemasons are averse to wearing a dark suit, white shirt and a Provincial tie; indeed I can attest to being buttonholed by Brethren in light blue asking when can they might wear stripey trousers and look decidedly 'cool'. If it is felt that we are suffering an exodus of members who are unimpressed, dissatisfied or mystified with the ritual element of Freemasonry, or who feel conspicuous in a smart suit, white shirt and tie then let the proof be provided in order that proper and constructive corrective action can be taken.

What has affected our organisation is social mobility and the ability to move from A to B quickly and relatively cheaply. The same social mobility which allows us so much freedom can be a two edged sword in that it often prevents Freemasons from being able to attend their Lodges - the short commute is no longer the norm and with Lodges tiling at 6.00pm and often before, the opportunity for a brother working away to get to the meeting becomes ever more difficult. This begs the question, should we meet later - say at 7.30pm and work towards a situation where we are still able to leave the Masonic Hall by 10.00pm rather than 11.00pm

This might require a 3 course meal to become a 2 course meal. It may require fewer and shorter speeches (no bad thing – get on with it I hear you cry) whatever we do there is one thing of which I am convinced - if we do nothing our Lodges will suffer, Freemasonry will suffer.

The activities within the Lodge should be such that the interest of the Brethren is stimulated and maintained. Events outside the Lodge room should be tailored to meet the needs and aspirations of the whole family - the Masonic family

As we face competition for the attention of men, we might do well to think that it may be better to get more Freemasonry into men than men into Freemasonry.

Our society has changed and it continues to change - the pace of change is only increasing. These changes are having an effect of Freemasonry, particularly in the choices being offered to young men; no longer is Freemasonry the 'only' choice for a man wanting to join a society having noble aims and objectives. However I do believe it is only within Freemasonry that

the opportunity exists to study the philosophies and principles by which our lives should be governed.

Life is all about opportunities, challenges and choices - we can choose to change with the times, or we can fight the changes, refuse to adapt and ignore the inevitable outcome until it really is too late to react.

To quote John F Kennedy "Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future."

What we don't want to do, and I would never advocate turning the Craft on its head or make changes simply for changes sake, is simply to indulge personal vanity and I think we can all agree that it is folly to force change without considering the 'end game' - a point eloquently displayed in other areas of our everyday life. In recognising the need to change we must make sure we manage the changes.

Whatever we do there is a truth that I believe to be very important -

"The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new." From Dan Millman's *Way of the Peaceful Warrior A Book That Changes Lives*.

Martin Luther King said "One of the great liabilities of history is that all too many people fail to remain awake through great periods of social change. Every society has its protectors of status quo and its fraternities of the indifferent who are notorious for sleeping through revolutions. Today, our very survival depends on our ability to stay awake, to adjust to new ideas, to remain vigilant and to face the challenge of change."

As a purveyor of snake oil, or rather marketer, let me assure you that involves addressing our tired and dated brand and image as an imperative – especially in the follow-up to our tercentenary. Heritage does not have to be tired and dated. Brands need to connect with consumers in meaningful and different ways to be successful. How does the province of East Kent 'connect' with its consumers and target audiences, reassuring them that inside every man there's a Mason?

Michel Brousset, of L'Oreal UK, says "The world has changed: when I started in marketing, product features were the draw; now it's the brand values" - principles and tenets Masonically speaking. To paraphrase Steve Jobs, it's about values - this is a very complicated world, a very 'noisy' world and we're not going to get the chance to get people to remember much about us. So we have to be really clear on what we want them to know about us. And I personally like the marketing from Patek Phillippe – the luxury watchmaker – who to justify the price tag and elevate their brand from an oversaturated market, focus on values that transcend money and time with: "You never actually own a Patek Philippe. You merely look after it for the next generation." Similarly, Freemasonry must focus on these same core values which embrace the importance of family, heritage and legacy. If we are to thrive in this overcrowded age we have to do more than just reach out to people in a way that is personal and meaningful – we have to have a process to help us make decisions on how we connect with people. Roy Disney, nephew of Walt, said "It's not hard to make decisions when you know what your values are." Whatever judgements we make, whether on a personal, social or business level, our values (whether implicit or explicit) provide the

map with which to chart the course. Our challenge is to ensure that we know what our values are, appreciate them, live by them and fully adopt them as “priorities and internal compasses or springboards for action.”

Our branding is part of an overall strategy to build a positive reputation for Freemasonry as an open and forward-thinking organisation. In this fast-changing world, Freemasonry needs to attract and retain the best candidates, the future leaders who will assure the long-term success of the Craft. As we head into the next three hundred years, UGLE has been examining ways in which we can enhance and modernise the face of Freemasonry.

This modernisation is not just about what happens at a lodge meeting, it is also about the image that we project. We need to have an identity, not just a visual identity – brand is so much more than a logo - that is at once instantly recognisable, that represents our values and heritage without being tired and dated and also reflects an organisation that is relevant to society.

The brand will assist in creating a unified approach to Freemasonry’s image with the ability to equip every Province, Metropolitan and beyond with exactly the same set of visual tools with which to communicate.

One definition of communications is “the imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium” and I suggest that it is the ‘some other medium’ that is probably the most exciting and at the same time unnerving part, which is an element of the ‘technology that is encompassing Freemasonry’. That technology must necessarily include the worlds of all things digital and social media.

Social media plays a key role in leveraging our image and reputation. “Freemasonry's next three hundred years is in our hands to secure” and I believe that will inevitably encompass not only eastkentfreemasons.org. but also the Provincial Grand Lodge Facebook page and @EastKentProv on Twitter. We must, however, ensure that we heed three key elements – control, trust and security – and the question is can we guarantee the integrity of each of these? In the words of Bob the Builder, “Yes, we can.” Social media is a canary in a coal mine, when it comes to emerging issues and potential crises. Your actions can either fuel the flames or stamp them out. Scarily, the futurologists out there would argue that these ‘traditional’ social media channels are becoming rapidly outdated and overtaken by cheaper instant messaging services such as Whatsapp, iMessage, Instagram and Snapchat. RIP text messages and I think you’ll all agree that it’s gone too far when W Bro Fitz sends out the next summons by Snapchat.

Marketers talk of the three ways of growing a business:

- Get more customers
- Sell more to your existing customers
- Keep your customers longer

Isn’t the same true of Freemasonry? But before we go out and chain our Master Masons to the ladder of progressive offices, heaping more and more ritual upon them, we need to check that they are ‘captivated’ and not just ‘captive’.

As an aside, how does the Royal Arch and all of the additional or appendant orders fit with 'selling more to our existing customers' and ensuring that they are captivated – 'sticky' in Berwick Street speak?

I am also minded as a sometime marketer of the retention challenge and I have one parallel for you to consider: probably the most significant development in the last ten years or so, within the marketing arena, has been the field of insight – quite simply most businesses and brands struggle to understand who their customers are. Hence now, "to know a customer is not enough – show them you know and care". How does that fit with the challenges that we face with retention of our members, and the very positive part that we all have to play – not just our Mentors and Almoners?

I recall Peter Steiner's famous cartoon "On the internet, nobody knows you're a dog" and the challenge as we strive to gain membership insight is establishing that our members are who they say they are and that we're not retargeting the proverbial Labrador. What people say, what they mean and what they believe, unlike the three Principals in a Royal Arch Chapter, do not necessarily "all meet and agree."

A number of brands have grown their value by developing new 'services', others have enjoyed success by refocusing on their core purpose. Starbucks, which has risen 13 places to 31st in the top 100 brands worldwide "has effectively gone back to being different by focusing on what made it successful in the first place – defining the 'third place' for consumers between work and home," and we must therefore be very careful at how we 'modernise' our brand and image. When asked "What do you plan to do to continue building brand value?" Starbucks assert that "Ultimately it's about our customers and the communities we serve. We're fortunate to be a brand that people feel genuinely connected to no matter where, when or how they find us. We're committed to creating consistent and authentic ongoing engagement." Can we assert the same about Freemasonry, and if not, why not?

Kent Henderson from the Grand Lodge of Victoria who talks of the three great pillars which should form the foundation of the future of Freemasonry, which I'm sorry to say Brother Junior Warden, are not wisdom, strength and beauty, but rather quality ritual, quality festive boards and quality Masonic education. It could be argued that we talk all too glibly in the second degree of 'making the liberal arts and sciences your future study that you may the better be enabled to discharge your duties as a Mason and estimate the wonderful works of the almighty.' And the question is do we? I would suggest not? Our ritual is communication as is Masonic education, and might I suggest – from a personal viewpoint – that if a Lodge meets four times a year that one of those meetings should be devoted to 'Masonic education'. Once again – look out for *Solomon*.

Marketers love their own language, and I love the phrase 'post-demographic consumerism' – effectively attitude versus age. Freemasonry highlights its relevance admirably, and not just because we have an aging membership. All too often there are vast differences between people who look the same on paper based on their demographic profile, so please

humour me with this analogy: two males who were both born in 1948, grew up in England, married twice, have two children, are both wealthy and both like dogs. One is Prince Charles and the other is Ozzy Osbourne. And some stats for you – the fastest growing age demographic for Twitter users is 55-63, and there are more video gamers over the age of 44 than under-18.

It is dangerous to assume potential membership qualities and values based on narrow demographics, which all too frequently defy commonly held value judgements e.g. a report by Voxburner on young people (18-24 year olds) and technology found that they are cautious or cynical about the role that technology plays in their lives, with the vast majority (94 per cent) agreeing that ‘people spend too much time looking at their phones and not enough time talking to each other’. It also went on to conclude that 82 per cent of young people agree that ‘it’s great to take a break from technology every now and again for a few days or more’. Might I suggest that those ‘few days’ could very well be when Lodges and Chapters meet?

And one final analogy for you. I like to think of a strategy or even a straight forward task in terms of the three C’s – clarity, capability and consequence. We’re all clear of the communication challenge and we’re all convinced (I hope) of the consequence of great communication, but what we often lack is the capability to frame and deliver great communication. My role is to work with and support our Provinces and membership – our ambassadors and evangelists - in building that capability. It’s not about what you want to tell your ‘listeners’; it’s about what you want them to think, to feel, and do or not do. It’s about getting feedback – actively listening - and having that ‘conversation’. We communicate in three ways; the way we look, the way we sound and the way we behave. As well as our visual identity, our brand, which includes our logo, colours and typography, our verbal identity is a crucial part of who we are and how we connect with people. We all need to communicate, and to use language, but it’s not just what we say that’s important – it’s how we say it. Our aim should be to unite in the Grand Design of being happy and communicating happiness, with fun and excitement.

As Freemasons we’re proud of our impressive heritage, but we’re just as excited about what we’ll achieve in the next 300 years. The future is where our audiences can get involved with us and become part of our story. Use the present and future tense. Reference our past achievements within the context of what we’re doing today – and will do tomorrow.

And to remove any shadow of a doubt, the days of “theirs not to make reply, theirs not to reason why” are well and truly over. As the Grand Secretary would say “Enough Is Enough.”

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