

Social Media and Freemasonry 2021

Jonathan Lumpkin - 2/4/2021

- A little about what we will cover - GLOVA policy, being a mason online, engagement as a lodge, and a reflection on what we learned in 2020 to leverage for the future.
 - This presentation came to light from a conversation that Worshipful Jack Moorman (WH302), Worshipful Jim from Tuckahoe, and myself we're having at breakfast at Masters and Wardens in late 2019 (sounds almost weird to say now). We were discussing ideas about more engaging programs in the coming year, and got to talking about engagement in general. As this is something I do for work, he asked if I could put something together.
 - I welcome feedback as this is my first 'Masonic' talk, and I am excited about how it is received.
 - Work, and in general then social media starting to Police and more
 - Started with GLOVA IT 2018, originally helping with a new site focused on Library and Museum
 - Now assigned to the GLOVA web team for future projects.
 - Feel free to follow up with me if you every have any questions or suggestions
- As I start, a little follow up on policy
 - Covers a significant amount of topics, not just web and online. Be aware of many of these, as some do include reports needing to go to GLOVA (like social media accounts and websites).
 - Many topics are there to help you chart digital worlds with accordance to the methodical digest and the like.
 - I also find that many of the topics shared in the policy are great for keeping yourself safe online in general, so recommend reading it further
 - like password reuse - many 'hacks' these days like are not hacks of someone breaking into an account, but people using the same password in many areas, making it easy to access more services.
 - How to generate a strong password
 - backing up data
- Communication as a mason online
 - Article 9 of the talks about the use as a VA Freemason.
 - If you identify yourself as a mason publicly, it is not just in person. How you present yourself online is part of that identity
 - it is very easy these days, as we often feel we can 'hide behind the keyboard'.
 - It is important we talk about consent
 - Some people do not want to be identified publicly and policy notes this
 - Petitions or new candidates not to be posted until elected, but ask candidate - we often only do this after degree work
 - Do not tag or post information about a brother unless you have their consent.
 - Be mindful of your own posts and how you engage. For example, is this something you would say in person to someone? Are you contributing to a larger cause in a good way?
 - I think a lot of the Charge at closing often, and think it's useful when being mindful in communication.
 - Every human being - treat how you want to be treated
 - Be ye of one mind - while often referencing a group of people, I take this a lot of also being mindful of my actions
 - aid a reformation (9.04)
 - This is not to say the policy has to change you as a person, just how to align with Masonry.
 - There are many positive lights too

- most importantly - showing what Masonry has done for you as a person, the people you have met, or the places you have traveled.
- using the in person vs online - a new brother could be following you online
- RVA Freemasons - Facebook group. A great place to see what is going on and communicate with other local brethren.
- Beyond Facebook, many other masonic sites, podcasts, and forums.
 - obviously, not all will follow VA ritual, policy, and rules, so use caution when posting, and be careful of mixing what is part of VA Masonry versus what may be acceptable outside of VA.
 - As long as you 'play it safe', I have found topics like podcasts to be VERY enlightening, has made me think of things in new ways, have ideas for programs, and more. Some great podcasts are those put out by the Scottish Rite themselves, but also 'Whence Came You' by Robert Johnson.
- Switching gears - If I reference a brand, is that understood? This is the same as a car, food, electronics, or organizations promote themselves
- The craft, the lodge, and even you as a Mason - can and are part or a brand
- So to get into the key part of our topic - how do we promote that brand?
 - Web
 - This is one of the oldest, tried and true, ways online
 - People (of all generations) pose even their first instincts based on how an organization presents itself online.
 - Does it look modern? up to date? is it engaging?
 - Many uses
 - a repository of lodge information like history, upcoming events, and recent news
 - shared masonry topics, like how to become a mason, interesting masonic history, affiliated organizations, and other masonic education.
 - Let it be a tool for both your lodge, as well as prospective members or visitors. This is something we do differently at my work, but in the since of the lodge, it is great.
 - SEO - how do people find you online?
 - Iterate - don't have to do it all at once. For example, with upcoming migration, could move all content, but on a better platform for growth. Then watch how site is being used, and iterate to build it.
 - Facebook
 - Tuckahoe started a little over two years ago mainly in an effort to drive engagement from both our members, nearby organizations, as well as our work in the community
 - In the first year, had two brethren visit, one from Brazil, the other from Ireland.
 - Community - tag events, other lodges, brethren (if they consent) to show a network. For example, I could tag that I am speaking at this lodge tonight and visiting with brethren from my lodge.
 - RVA Freemasons again - cross post events and lodge happenings
 - drive people to your site - do you have new content you posted, share it!
 - Stick to a schedule and engage. Try to keep a regular posting frequency. Respond to the messages you receive
 - These are all things I feel I (and we) can continue to better on, especially these days. I often run into issues of keeping postings regular, which I strive to do better.
 - Engagement in general
 - Social media is often ethereal - be in the moment. You don't need to craft the perfect post.
 - don't jump in on everything at once. Be where you can engage. You don't need everything, and by trying all at once, you will dilute those areas that may have higher ROI.

- set goals - and its not in traffic or number of likes. Are you happy where you are? Are you engaging? Do others find you engaging? Similar to what we are doing here - we can set goals to continue making that perfect ashler.
- ask for help - many in the community to help, both technical and not technical. Maybe a brother may want to help drive interest or be a great photographer, but not social. Can work together. A lot of this work does not take technical knowledge, just drive, interest, and some ability. Many of the people we have doing social media at work are communication types, not technical.
- 2021 with reflecting on 2020
 - When I first gave this talk in January 2020, it was in a packed room at WH302. Imagine how much masonry, and life changed, just a little over a month or two later.
 - Beyond coronavirus, social media has changed drastically. The spread of (mis)information, the immediate reaction to live events, and more - we look at this differently now.
 - That doesn't have to affect the brand concept I mentioned before, but it should heighten your senses on truth as well as how you present yourself and engage online
 - Instead of just talking about the negative, think about online engagement. For example, everyone knows what Zoom is now. And how our reliance on technology has skyrocketed this past year. Teleworking, staying social, and more.
 - This will have to continue for some time, so how can we, as masons, use this?
 - Using various means to stay in touch with members that can't be here. Recording these talks for example, doing lodge based Zoom meetings, and more.
 - Showing what the lodge is doing online, and engaging with comments.
 - Once we open again, driving people in. Sharing events, connecting with others, etc.
 - Once life 'opens up', there may be a drive for that physical connection, and for something more than a screen. We should be thinking about this now, and what we can provide. It isn't going to be just catechisms or pancake breakfasts or blood drives - it is so much more. That Brotherly connection.
 - We don't have to wait. Keeping our calls up, having video chats, being a brother.
- In closing
 - A lot of what we discussed here doesn't rely on tech - its on navigating a digital world.
 - I am quite excited about this means of communication in many ways
 - Its my preferred way of communication - I am an 'older' millennial, and prefer emails more than phone calls - but thats me
 - your members (and prospects) may not communicate the same way as you. This is ok, as long as you learn that way to communicate. If you do, its a personal investment that gave give major returns, as well as better meet those you are communicating with.
 - Still a largely untapped market - although many of these topics have been around 15+ years, a lot of 'future masons' are still out there, but also a lot of current ones and how the communicate in modern times. There are many men out there looking for something more 'real' and 'social' than social media - we just need to be able to communicate with them.
 - I thank you very much for your time, and welcome any questions you may have! I also am very open to future conversations if you want to talk!