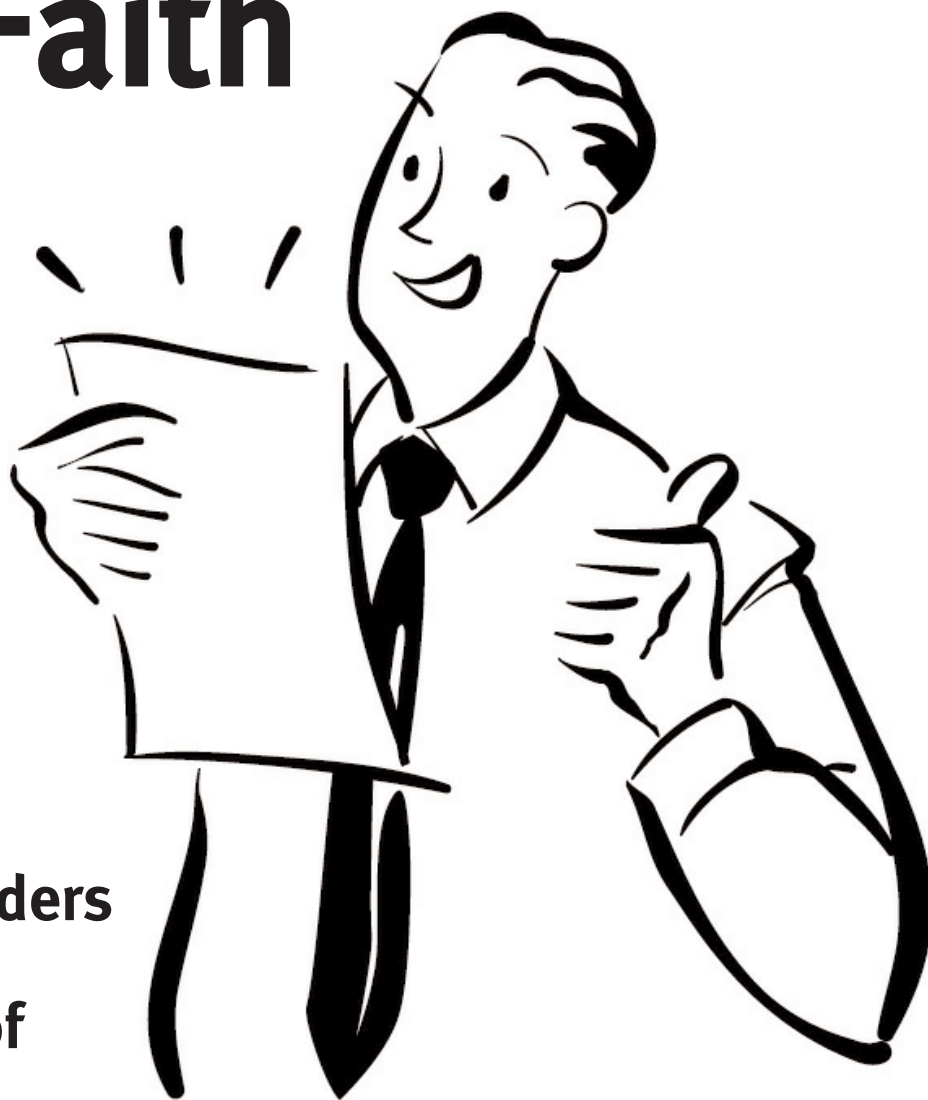


Courage, Vision, Persistence, and Faith



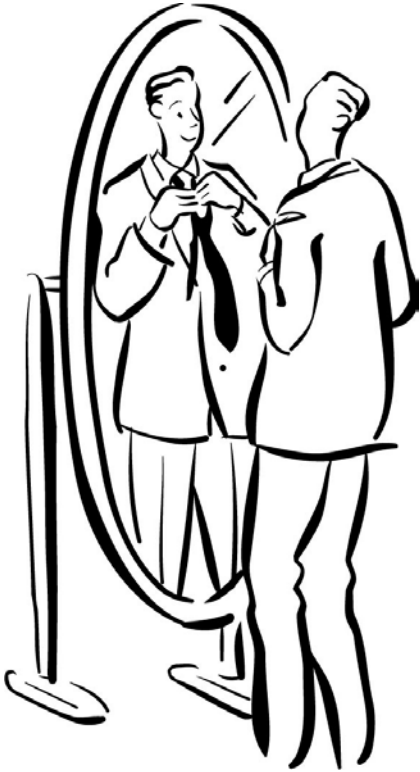
Helping
Grange leaders
with the
problems of
change.



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A new look at change

If you have been using the Help Guides you have received so far, you know that there are many things you, as leaders, have to do well if your Grange is to survive and thrive. We have provided you with important skills in goal setting, the role of the Grange in the community, the building of a team, and offered you project management tools that you and your team can use to help your Grange become more relevant and appealing and to help it GROW.



These Help Guides suggest that as the leader you are somehow “different” from your members and that your actions need to reflect different goals and standards from those who are asked to follow you. This ability to create “followship” is key to your success and it will not come easily. It takes hard work and dedication and a core set of skills that you need to use time and time again. We hope we have helped you discover these tools and that you have with your team, come to understand their importance in turning the Grange around.

As we have watched our Action Granges over the last two years, we have seen the leaders become frustrated, even angry, at the reluctance of people to change and help their Grange grow. During the Action Grange seminars, the most frequently asked question is “How do we handle the members of our Grange who refuse to allow change?”

So we thought we would address this first and then go on to add additional help in this critical area.

Let’s consider this question: **“Why are people so reluctant to change?”**

As we live our lives, we discover ways of doing things. Early on, we are happy to experiment, to listen to mom and dad, or friends and in this manner we learn our own ways of doing things. Chances are you clean the kitchen much the same way your mom did, or hit the ball as you were taught by your father, and lead your Grange as you observed others doing it. Over time, these ways we decide to do things become behaviors, and this is indeed difficult to change. Even when we know there is a better way.

The behaviors we have, whether they are our patterns of eating, sleeping, relaxing, traveling, speaking, become so engrained in our minds that any change becomes a threat to the comfort of what we have come to know as who we are and this creates fear.

Hence, dull meetings can become the expectation of members and meetings that deviate from that threaten the expectation and are rejected, as “I don’t think I would like that!” or “That’s not why I joined the Grange!”

So fear is typically what keeps us from changing. So if you see this, then we must also ask,

“Fear of what?” The answer, fortunately, is **“Absolutely nothing!”**

Now, there are many things in our life that we should, and do, fear. September 11th and its horrible aftermath, cancer, losing a loved one, crime and personal attacks are all real things to fear.

But as the leader of your Grange or a member of your leadership team, what can happen to you if you decide to change. The answer, again, is absolutely nothing!

What can a group of the “older members” who resist your new initiatives or programs that involve the community, or your proposed changes in your Grange’s governance, or the elimination of meaningless contests do to you? The answer is absolutely nothing! So, let’s put the fear question to bed and get on with leading our Grange into the future.

Prove we are right

Prove we are right about this by working with your team to brainstorm the changes you want to make and the things they could do to you that would cause you to be fearful. We've given you several ideas to begin with.

Proposed change

Reactions that would make us afraid

Changing how we "make"
new members

Changing how our leaders
are selected

Changing how we
communicate with members

Changing how we add
value to our Grange

Changing how we view
our role as the leader
creating changes



Courage

In this Help Guide we are going to help you understand four traits or behaviors you can adopt that are not negative, as fear can be, but positive and uplifting. These are the characteristics of many of the great leaders and you can find evidence of this over and over again.

How do you define courage? Courage and bravery are not the same thing. People who are courageous are often brave, but there are many examples of people behaving in a manner that others describe as brave who are not courageous.

Courage is the enabling characteristic of all great leaders. People who refuse to change often lead their organizations into a disastrous future. Leaders who view change as an opportunity create a preferred future.

Frances Hesselbein was courageous when she followed her convictions that young girls wanted more out of their organization than a place to learn to sew and cook and changed the Girl Scouts forever.

General Norman Schwarzkopf was courageous when he decided that we could not afford to repeat the Vietnam experience in the Persian Gulf and promised those who joined in the battle a swift victory, a clear meaning for the war, and the promise not to put them foolishly into harms way. Followship was total and complete.

John Glenn was courageous when he was the first man to orbit the earth.



The leaders of many of our Action Granges are courageous when they use the information they receive to make changes to a wide spectrum of their Granges' practices and behaviors, beginning with a focus on members and the importance of the Grange in their communities.

Never enough data

When one looks at the examples above, there is one thing that is clear: Not one of the individuals in these examples, or in many others we could name, knew before they ventured out that they would be successful. As pioneers, they were first into the new territory. There were not many "maps" of what would work because no one had ever gone where they were going.

People who decide to move their organizations, their vision and their future, where others have never been must do so on FAITH.

Hence, for all Grange leaders looking for data on what's best or what's right – there will never be enough data to prove it will work before you give it your best try.

So Faith is an enabling character of the leader and we have seen it at work in our Action Granges time and time again.

Vision

Changes made without a vision of where you intend to go with your organization may just be wasted time. Without a vision for your Grange, you deserve to have to answer the question: Why change?

A vision, as we have described it in the Help Guides, is like a distant trumpet calling you and your team to a place worthy of your time and effort. When we use the words preeminent and relevant we are describing a Grange that is different from many Granges today. Most Granges appear to be mired in the status quo – responding to the needs of a member of years ago and an agrarian society that is long past.

This may be fine if you want to attract only those who prize these past visions. But, if you want to appeal to new members and to younger members, you need to develop a vision for your Grange that is appealing, relevant, preeminent, and involved.

Creating a future vision is more than an activity; it is an imperative. A vision adds clarity to change. Either the changes you are proposing help achieve the vision, and are approved, or are counter to the vision and should not be approved.

Visions give not only clarity but also courage to leaders facing change. Try the following:

Here are four statements from a Grange vision statement. Determine what actions you would want your Grange to approve to help achieve each vision statement. Then consider other actions that may seem reasonable but should never be approved because they do not contribute to the vision.

Vision Statement

Actions that support the vision statement

Relevant in our community

Appealing to younger families

A place where the most able
will lead

Well known and respected



Persistence

Most of the changes you want to consider cannot be made overnight. We are not able to WILL our ideas on others. The act of building a vision community, those individuals who agree to your vision and agree to support it with their actions, takes time and patience. It takes persistence.

Here's an example.

We know of a Grange that wanted to form a Board of Directors with individuals with special interests and skills holding key positions representing the members: Director of Membership Development and Retention, Director of Family and Community Events, Director of Communications and Public Relations.

They knew that some of their members and one member of the Executive Committee would resist these new positions and the new director's responsibilities even before the candidates were announced. The effective leader recognizes the reality in their Grange and knows that it cannot be a stumbling block if the need for a board is viewed as strategic. So the question becomes: How do we make the changes we need to make and not get at odds with the current active members and/or the Executive Committee?

There are a number of possible solutions:

- If your membership is anxious to survive and embraces change, use these individuals to create momentum for change among all of the members of your Grange.
- You may need to approach each stubborn member and one or more members of the Executive Committee one-on-one and ask for support, explaining the rationale for these changes and explaining how the renewal and growth of your Grange can benefit from their approval and support.
- You may need to develop a written proposal and presentation developing the concrete benefits of the proposed changes.
- You may need to include selected members of the Executive Committee as board members in key positions.
- Regardless, if you feel your ideas are good and right for your Grange, you need to take whatever steps you can to make them effective over time. This persistence is a measure of your effectiveness and one of the important reasons why others will agree to follow you.
- You need to understand the needs of your listener and try to satisfy him or her with your arguments. Persistence is a virtue. It includes the long-standing skills of persuasion.
- You need to use logic to support your rhetoric. Logic is the collection of data that supports your position and diminishes the objections you may expect to have to overcome.

- You need to use existing relationships in a positive manner to help make your case. If you know of a friend of someone resisting your ideas who supports your position, ask him or her to intervene in helping persuade the individual whose support you need.

When you face an opponent, you can usually win him or her over to your side with logic and persuasion. When you face an adversary, defined as someone who will not "fight fair," do not expect to win without a battle and it may be best to isolate this individual or get them out of the leadership position they hold.



Faith

Faith and knowledge are somewhat different. Knowledge is the use of facts to determine the outcome of a problem. Faith is the absence of total knowledge, but the deep belief that you have the solution to a problem and will not wait for all the data before acting.

Faith is the most important enabling characteristic of a leader. There is not a leader of any organization that can tell in advance or predict with certainty how a solution to a problem, the presentation of change, the development of a new idea, will really be received in an organization.

Some leaders take surveys or use research to help develop with some certainty how people will behave. Surveys are very helpful if done well and at random, but even the best can only help solidify the guesstimate you have made about an outcome.

We have adopted certain faith issues about the renewal of our Granges. Here are a few you have probably considered:

- New members have defined needs for fellowship, connections, and neighborliness we hope they will discover in our Grange.
- New members expect their pathway to membership to be easy, uncomplicated, impressive, effective, and not embarrassing.
- The community will support our Grange if we are viewed as relevant and “with it”.
- If we provide the best leadership for our members, they will support and follow the program the team proposes.
- Relevant organizations are the only ones that will survive.
- If we build our Granges to be attractive and appealing, people will join.

The type of faith we are speaking of here is not the same as religious faith. Here we are asking those who are the leaders to consider their actions, press for change, promote the future, and focus on members even though we do not have all the data to prove we are right.

The absence of faith may not create cowardliness, but it will certainly stall most changes. We have learned of several Granges who used the time driving home from the Action Grange seminars to build a common and exciting view of their Grange for the future. After a 6-hour drive they were convinced that they had a defined pathway and vision for the future. More than that, they had a solid vision community. They were successful in selling their ideas to their members and are making great progress for the future.

This is an act of courage defined by faith!



Conclusion

We know this Help Guide has been different and a bit more complex than the others, but it needs to be included as part of the development of our leaders because change is so difficult and we need all the help we can get to make the right moves in our Granges. Below are 10 right moves; many are built on solid facts, but others require great courage based upon faith.

See how many you can accomplish in your Grange.

- Create and sustain a relevant Grange, open and inviting to the community, and easy to join. When you do, you will get your fair share of new members.
- Create a powerful leader-initiated vision for the future. This will become a more powerful motivator for change and help you overcome the resistance of those who dwell on the past.
- Create a new focus on your customers, your members. Do this by first appointing a team leader for membership and supporting his or her programs for members.
- Create a more powerful community involvement program involving children or the youth to the extent possible and members of the community will seek you out as worth their time and effort.
- Appoint a planning team and develop an annual and long-range plan and budget for your Grange. Make sure that the plan begins the strategic activities that will result in renewal and fund the efforts to a level that will ensure their success.
- Spend time with your leadership in understanding the importance of VALUE and how this concepts fits into your Grange. Use the Help Guide as a tool for greater understanding and accomplishment.
- Communicate with your newest members as often as you can to ensure their continuing support for your Grange. The more you communicate the greater their buy-in will be. Consider using the computer to support this important activity.
- Focus on preeminence as a goal for your Grange. Understand that if you are not the best in town you are second best or worse. Only preeminent organizations will survive.

Remember that you are in charge of your Grange. Not the state or national organization. Only you and your team can really make the difference that will cause your Grange to grow.

Recognize that there is a lot of help available. All of the Help Guides are on the National Grange website and [75+ Ways to Attract and Retain Members](#) is a great handbook for leaders. Consider visiting Spencer Johnson's [Who Moved My Cheese](#) book and study the work of Robert Putnam in [Bowling Alone](#). All of these and many other sources will give you both the help and the encouragement you will need.

Good luck and great courage.

