

# What About the Leadership at Hiram's Store?

by **Sir Knight Joseph M. Gilbert**

Sir Knight White's article "Tending Hiram's Store," March 2012, is interesting in the simplicity with which it addresses solutions to some of the issues facing our organizations today.

It is, however, that very simplicity that limits the scope of consideration. He states, "Any time there is a situation where a formerly successful business starts to fail, it is due to a problem in one or more of the following: product, service, or marketing." Such overstated generalization enables the ensuing discussion that he provides, but it significantly fails to address other factors. In fact, it prohibits the consideration of anything else by its statement that one of the three listed factors is always the culprit.

These simple generalizations fail to consider the most common and overpowering reason for business failure. That is the failure of the business's leadership or at least its management. No matter how much attention is paid to perfecting the product, to providing the epitome of customer service, and to effectively conveying all of that to the public for their consumption, if the leadership of the business fails to lead, the business will fail. If the leadership fails, for example, to insure that adequate financial resources and accountability are in place, failure is certain. If proper personnel policies are ignored, personnel turnover will so consume the time and money of the business to guarantee failure. These are only two examples of many responsibilities that rest solely on the shoulders of the business leadership. They are well outside the limiting reasons of product, service, or marketing.

So too, the future of our organizations rests with our leaders far more than on our product, service, or marketing.

Sir Knight White's simple solutions, such as requiring attendance and designating a "greeter," are window dressing coverings for greater deficiencies. By the way, how would required attendance be enforced?

Leadership means leading. Its duties include defining and articulating the direction of the organization. Where is the goal of each Lodge, Chapter, Council, and Commandery displayed? What is the purpose, the mission of each organization? Why do we exist? How is that communicated to the members - originally to new members and periodically reminded to us all? What are the functions of these organizations that are tied to and support the goals, the stated purpose? If the leadership cannot clearly state, in unambiguous terms, why we exist and why we regularly meet, it is virtually impossible for the rest of us to explain. If the leadership cannot or does not lead, no one can follow.

We often tell our new brothers that they will get ever more out of this than they can put in. But we fail to ever tell them, or even suggest, what it is they will get!

Product, service, and marketing are truly important factors in a business and contribute to success or failure, but they stand silently in the shadow of the organization's leadership as a necessity for future success. It is only effective leadership that can provide the cohesion to enable the diverse functions of an organization to integrate effectively into a useful, productive, contributing, and meaningful organization, whether it is "Hiram's store" or IBM.

It is on that leadership, today's and tomorrow's, more than any other factor or combination of factors, which our Lodges, Chapters, Councils, and Commanderies depend for our future. Let us tend to the functions, duties, and tasks of the organization that are clearly needed. Let us likewise expect the absolutely effective leadership that is an irreplaceable necessity, and without which failure is virtually assured.

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